

# 10. Haggai 520



Cyrus of Persia entered Babylon in 539BC, and continued his policy of allowing exiles to return to their own country. A small group of exiles led by Sheshbazzar returned to Judah (see Ezra 1:5-11; 5:13-15; 1 Chronicles 3:18). The foundations of the Temple were laid, but the work was not continued (see Ezra 5:16).

Cyrus was killed in battle in 530. His successor, Cambyses was succeeded in 522 by Darius I. This was an unsettled period, with revolutions breaking out throughout the empire. In *The Hebrew Bible* (Fortress Press, 1985, page 430) Norman Gottwald writes:

‘With the death of Cyrus’s successor, Cambyses, a major uprising shook the Persian Empire. Cambyses was succeeded by Darius. As part of an effort to pacify the empire, Darius decided to launch a more serious drive to recolonize Judah as a strategic military and political salient on the frontier with troublesome Egypt.

In 520 Darius sent Zerubbabel to Jerusalem as governor. Zerubbabel was the grandson of King Jechoniah who had been deported from Jerusalem in 597 (see 1Chronicles 3:19). With Zerubbabel went Joshua the high priest, and, if the historical record from the following century is accurate, they led a large contingent of around forty thousand exiles (see Ezra 2:2-70). This is the period of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah who were hoping that Zerubbabel would re-establish the Davidic dynasty. However, any possibility of such a restoration was dashed when Darius I (522-486) consolidated his control. The Empire remained stable for a century, partly because there were only three kings throughout this time: Darius I (522-486), Xerxes I (486-465) and Artaxerxes I (465-424).

The Judah to which the exiles returned was a very different place from the Judah they had been exiled from some sixty years earlier. The Edomites, under pressure from the Nabatean Arabs had occupied southern Judah, and the population had been drastically reduced and impoverished.



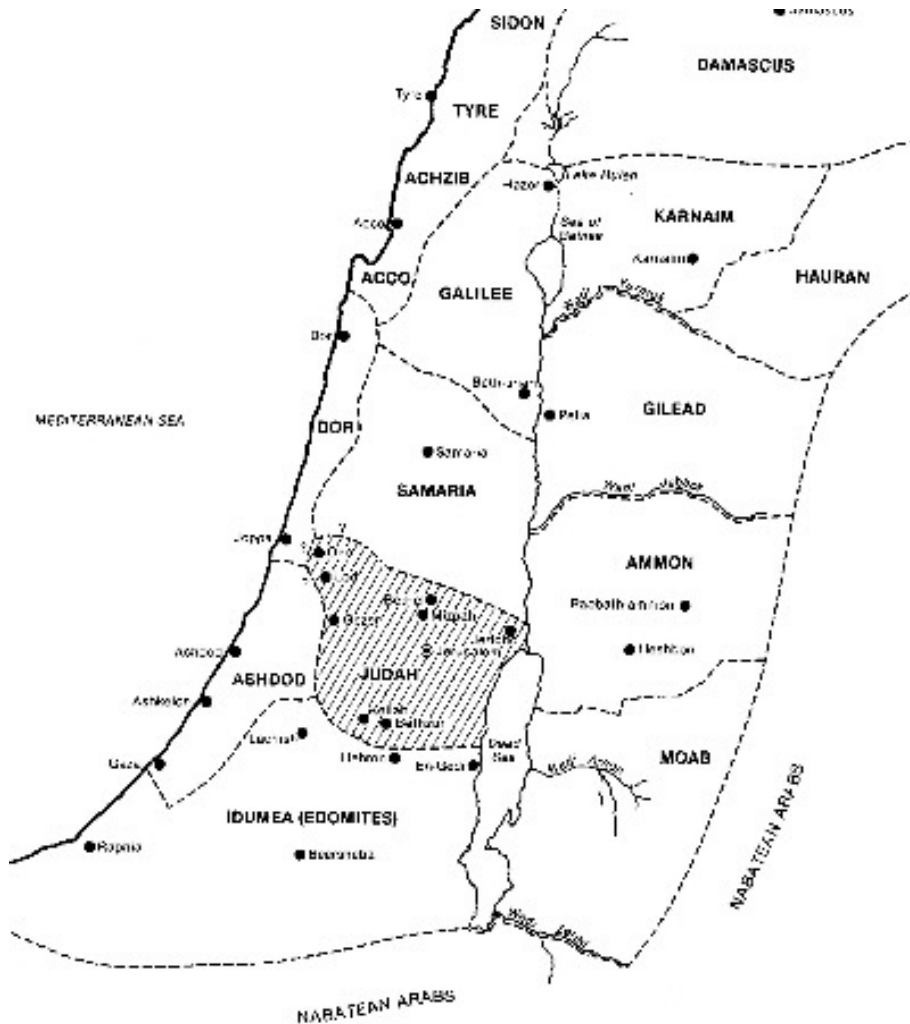
Population 35,000 down from 75,000

75% remained on the land. 25% returned exiles

Not surprisingly there were those in Judah who were reluctant to welcome the returning exiles (see Ezra 3:3; Zechariah 8:10). They were not happy to hand back the land they had occupied. The mixed population in Samaria, north of Jerusalem, did not want to revert to having a strong neighbour on their southern border. The zeal of the returning exiles met with strong resistance and their attempts to carry out their mission of rebuilding the temple were thwarted (see Ezra 4:4-5).

# Back in Judah

- Judah was part of the Trans-Euphrates satrapy ['protectorate'].



- 538 : Edict of Cyrus permitting return of exiles to Jerusalem with the financial support to rebuild their temple (see Ezra 1:2-4; 6:2-5)

- 537 : Small initial group under Sheshbazzar (Ezra 1:5-11; 5:13-15; 1Chronicles 3:18). Temple foundations laid, but the work not continued .

(Ezra 5:14ff).

# Judah before the exile

# Judah (Yehud) after the exile

**JUDAH AFTER THE FALL OF ISRAEL  
722-640 B.C.E.**



**JUDAH AS A PROVINCE OF THE PERSIAN EMPIRE  
445-333 B.C.E.**



530 **Cyrus** was killed in battle in 530 and was succeeded by his son, Cambyses

522 **Cambyses** died rather mysteriously on his way back from a successful campaign in Egypt.

‘With the death of Cyrus’s successor Cambyses, a major uprising shook the Persian Empire. As part of an effort to pacify the empire, **Darius** decided to launch a more serious drive to recolonize Judah as a strategic military and political salient on the frontier with troublesome Egypt’(Gottwald).

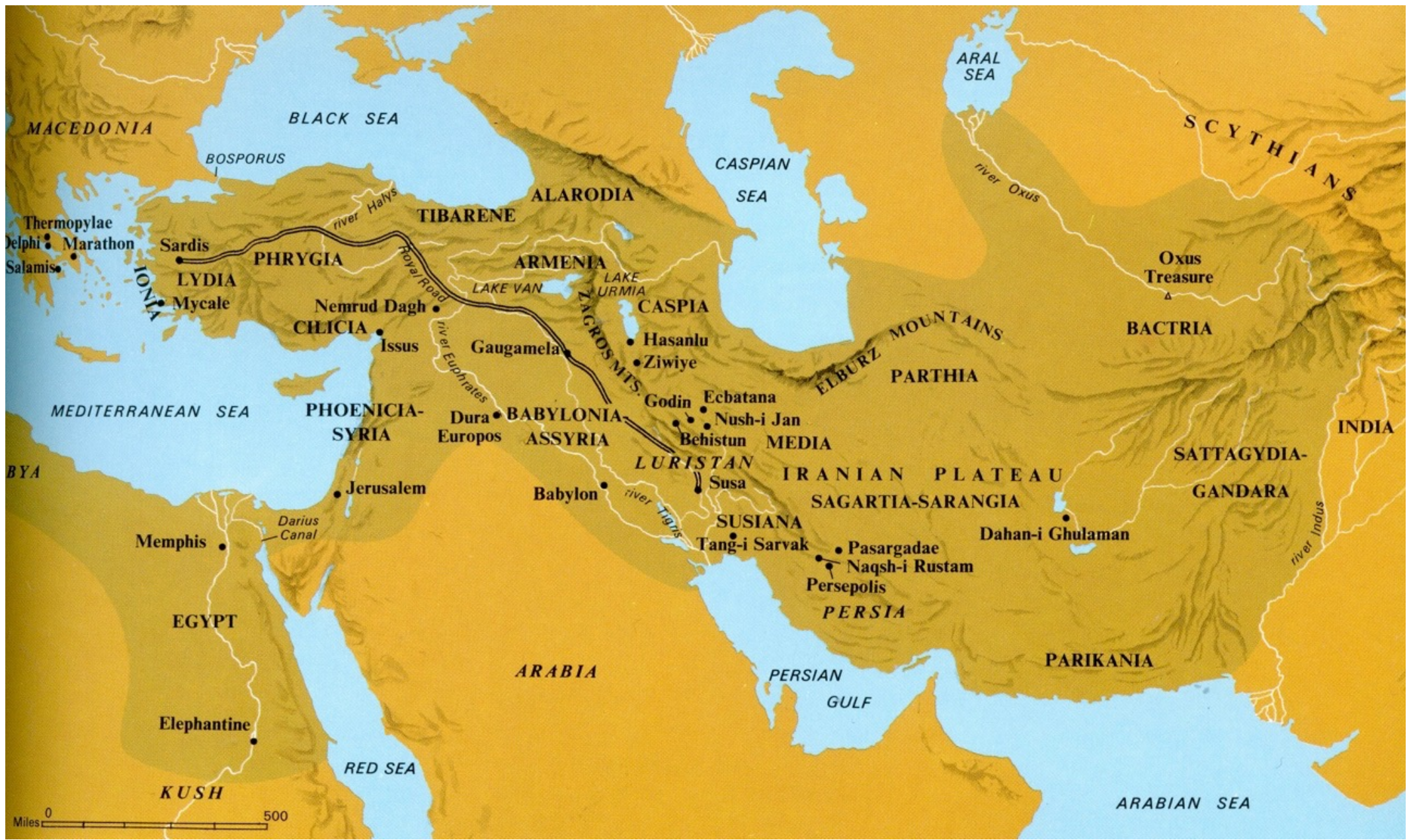




The Persian Empire remained stable for a century:

Darius I (522-486), Xerxes I (486-465) and Artaxerxes I (465-424).

This dashed hopes of a restoration of a Davidic king.



MACEDONIA

BLACK SEA

BOSPORUS

Thermopylae  
Delphi  
Marathon  
Salamis

IONIA

Sardis  
LYDIA  
Mycale

PHRYGIA

Nemrud Dagh  
CILICIA  
Issus

TIBARENE

ALARODIA

ARMENIA

LAKE VAN  
LAKE URMIA

CASPIA

Hasanlu  
Ziwiye

CASPIAN SEA

ARAL SEA

river Oxus

SCYTHIANS

Oxus  
Treasure

BACTRIA

MEDITERRANEAN SEA

PHOENICIA-  
SYRIA

Jerusalem

Dura  
Europos

BABYLONIA  
ASSYRIA

Babylon

LURISTAN

Susa

IRANIAN PLATEAU

SAGARTIA-SARANGIA

SUSIANA  
Tang-i Sarvak

Pasargadae  
Naqsh-i Rostam  
Persepolis

PERSIA

Dahan-i Ghulaman

PERSIAN GULF

PARIKANIA

SATTAGYDIA-  
GANDARA

INDIA

river Indus

Memphis

Darius Canal

EGYPT

Elephantine

KUSH

ARABIA

ARABIAN SEA

0 500  
Miles

## Haggai 1:1 (message 1)

In the second year of King Darius [520],  
in the sixth month, on the first day of the month,

- 520 : Mission of Zerubbabel and Joshua with 40,000 Jews  
(Ezra 2:2b-70; 1Chronicles 3:19).

the word of YHWH came by the prophet Haggai [ḥāgag: to make a pilgrimage]

to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah,

Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, the eldest son of the exiled king  
Jehoiachin (see also Ezra 3:2).

and to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest.

Joshua : the grandson of Seraiah, the chief priest who was killed at the  
time of the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 (2Kings 25:18; 1Chronicles 6:14-15).



## Haggai 1:2-8

Thus says YHWH of hosts: These people say the time has not yet come to rebuild YHWH's house. [537-520]

Then the word of YHWH came by the prophet Haggai (message 2) saying: Is it a time for you yourselves to live in your panelled houses, while this house lies in ruins?

Now therefore thus says YHWH of hosts: Consider how you have fared. You have sown much, and harvested little; you eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and you that earn wages earn wages to put them into a bag with holes.

Thus says YHWH of hosts: Consider how you have fared. <sup>8</sup>Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honoured, says YHWH.

## Haggai 1:9-11

You have looked for much, and, lo, it came to little;  
when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? says YHWH of hosts.  
Because my house lies in ruins,  
while all of you hurry off to your own houses.

Therefore the heavens above you have withheld the dew,  
and the earth has withheld its produce.

And I have called for a **drought** on the land and the hills,  
on the grain, the new wine, the oil, on what the soil produces,  
on human beings and animals, and on all their labours.

## Haggai 1:12-15

Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, and Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of YHWH their God, and the words of the prophet Haggai, as YHWH their God had sent him; and the people feared YHWH.

Then Haggai, the messenger of YHWH, spoke to the people with YHWH's message, saying, **I am with you**, says YHWH.

And YHWH stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and worked on the house of YHWH of hosts, their God, on the twenty-fourth day of the month, in the sixth month.

## Haggai 2:1-5 (message 3)

In the second year of King Darius, in the seventh month, on the twenty-first day of the month, [Sukkôt]

the word of YHWH came by the prophet Haggai, saying:  
Speak now to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah,  
and to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest,  
and to the remnant of the people, and say,

Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory?  
How does it look to you now? Is it not in your sight as nothing?  
Yet now take courage, O Zerubbabel, says YHWH; take courage,  
O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; take courage, all you  
people of the land, says YHWH; work, for **I am with you**, says  
YHWH of hosts, according to the promise that I made you when  
you came out of Egypt. **My spirit abides among you; do not fear.**

## Haggai 2:6-9

For thus says YHWH of hosts: Once again, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land; and I will shake all the nations, so that the treasure of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with splendour, says YHWH of hosts.

The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, says YHWH of hosts.

The latter splendour of this house shall be greater than the former, says YHWH of hosts; and in this place I will give prosperity [šālôm] says YHWH of hosts.

Haggai 2:18-19 - 2 months later (message 4)

Since the day that the foundation of YHWH's temple was laid, consider: Is there any seed left in the barn? Do the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree still yield nothing? From this day on I will bless you.



## Haggai 2:20-23 (message 5)

The word of YHWH came a second time to Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the month:

Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I am about to shake the heavens and the earth, and to overthrow the throne of kingdoms; I am about to destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations, and overthrow the chariots and their riders; and the horses and their riders shall fall, every one by the sword of a comrade.

On that day, says YHWH of hosts, I will take you, O Zerubbabel my servant, son of Shealtiel, says YHWH, and make you like a signet ring; for **I have chosen you**, says the YHWH of hosts.

## Back in Judah after the Return from Exile (539)



Prior to the exile the temple was closely linked with the king's palace. The ordinary populace came to it only on special occasions. This changed after the exile, when the temple functioned as Jerusalem's social and economic centre.