Class: God and the Old Testament (The Pentateuch and History Books)

Objective – *The Class objective is to get an understanding of scripture as an overview as well as dive into an overview of the Pentateuch and the Historical Books of the Old Testament. Students should be able to walk away able to identify key themes in these parts of the Bible as well as an understanding of the four senses of scripture.*

KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

1. Four senses of Scripture – The different types of meaning that can be gleaned from the scriptures – Literal, Allegorical, Moral, Anagogical.
2. Literal Sense of Scripture – The literal meaning the human author intended to convey through their words.
3. Moral Sense of Scripture – The meaning of scripture that forms us spiritually and teaches us relevant ways to live in the hear and now.
4. Allegorical Sense of Scripture – The meaning of scripture that points to larger points within God's revelation, specifically pointing towards Christ.
5. Anagogical Sense of Scripture – The meaning of Scripture that teaches us about what is to come, creating a clear connection between the temporal world and the eternal world to come.
6. Bible – From the Greek "biblia" which means collection of books or library.
7. Pentateuch – The first five books of the Old Testament.
8. Historical Books – The books of the Old Testament that detail the history of the Israelites.
9. Judges – Early Israelite war leaders that looked over the Israelites serving as a precursor to Israelite kings.
10. Joshua – God's chosen successor to Moses to lead the Israelites into the promised land.
11. Ruth – Moabite woman whose story signifies various theological revelations and point towards things to come.
12. Saul – Israel's first king who fails in his kingship because of worldly pursuits.
13. David – The successor to Saul and great leader of the Israelites despite his moral failures.
14. Judah – When the land of Israel splits into two nations, Judah becomes the nation in the south consisting of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin.
15. Chronicles 1&2 – The books of the Old Testament that detail genealogies from Adam to King David and then details the Kings who ruled in the southern divided kingdom of Judah.

16. Ezra and Nehemiah – Two biblical historic books that detail the return of the Israelites after life in Exile.
17. Tobit, Judith, and Ester – Old Testament Books that details the importance of Faith to God especially in the midst of extreme adversity.
18. First and Second Maccabees – Two books of the Old Testament that detail Jewish revolts to try and restore their kingdom. It contains notes of hope pertaining to a messiah coming, and serves as a precursor to the coming of Jesus.



Senses of Scripture

"For whatever was written previously was written for our instruction, that by endurance and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope. -Romans 15:4

According to an ancient tradition, one can distinguish between two senses of Scripture: the literal and the spiritual, the latter being subdivided into the allegorical, moral and anagogical senses. The profound concordance of the four senses guarantees all its richness to the living reading of Scripture in the Church. (CCC #115)

Literal Sense

The literal sense refers to "that which has been expressed directly by the inspired human authors". It is what the text is obviously communicating after careful and attentive reading, employing when necessary the tools that help determine its historical and literary context (cf. CCC 110). In short the literary sense is the meaning that the human and divine author wished to convey through the text.

CCC #116: The literal sense is the meaning conveyed by the words of Scripture and discovered by exegesis, following the rules of sound interpretation: "All other senses of Sacred Scripture are based on the literal."

CCC #109: In Sacred Scripture, God speaks to man in a human way. To interpret Scripture correctly, the reader must be attentive to what the human authors truly wanted to affirm, and to what God wanted to reveal to us by their words

"Let interpreters bear in mind that their foremost and greatest endeavor should be to discern and define clearly that sense of the biblical words which is call literal" Pope Pius XII Divino Afflante Spiritu #23

Spiritual Sense

Allegorical

The allegorical sense refers to the hidden meaning, or the meaning underneath the text that connects the Old Testament to the New Testament. This includes "typology", that is the events of the Old Testament foreshadowing the events of the New Testament.

CCC #117: We can acquire a more profound understanding of events by recognizing their significance in Christ; thus the crossing of the Red Sea is a sign or type of Christ's victory and also of Christian Baptism (cf I Cor 10:2).

Moral

The moral sense refers to what moral lessons can be learned from the text.

CCC #117 The events reported in Scripture ought to lead us to act justly. As St. Paul says, they were written "for our instruction". (cf I Cor 10:11, Heb 3-4:11).

Anagogical

The anagogical sense refers to the future fulfillment that the texts refers to.

CCC #117 We can view realities and events in terms of their eternal significance, leading us toward our true homeland: thus the Church on earth is a sign of the heavenly Jerusalem. (cf. Rev 21:1-22:5)

THE FOUR SENSES OF SCRIPTURE

Outline: A teaching document on the four senses of Sacred Scripture.

Key terms: analogy of faith, literal sense, spiritual sense, allegorical sense, moral sense, typology, theoria, hermeneutics.

EXCERPTS FROM THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH (CCC)[1]

Sound Interpretation of Sacred Scripture (CCC 109-114).

- In Sacred Scripture, God speaks to man in a human way. To interpret Scripture correctly, the reader must be attentive to what the human authors truly wanted to affirm, and to what God wanted to reveal to us by their words. (CCC 109)
- In order to discover *the sacred authors' intention*, the reader must take into account the conditions of their time and culture, the literary genres in use at that time, and the modes of feeling, speaking and narrating then current. "For the fact is that truth is differently presented and expressed in the various types of historical writing, in prophetical and poetical texts, and in other forms of literary expression." (CCC 110)
- But since Sacred Scripture is inspired, there is another and no less important principle of correct interpretation, without which Scripture would remain a dead letter. "Sacred Scripture must be read and interpreted in the light of the same Spirit by whom it was written." (CCC 111)

Rules for Interpreting Scripture (CCC 111-114)

- The Second Vatican Council indicates three criteria for interpreting Scripture in accordance with the Spirit who inspired it. (CCC 111)

1. Be especially attentive "to the content and unity of the whole Scripture". (CCC 112)
2. Read the Scripture within "the living Tradition of the whole Church". (CCC 113)
3. Be attentive to the analogy of faith. (CCC 114)[2]

The Senses of Scripture (CCC 115-119)

- According to an ancient tradition, one can distinguish between two senses of Scripture: The literal and the spiritual, the latter being subdivided into the allegorical, moral and anagogical senses. The profound concordance of *the four senses* guarantees all its richness to the living reading of Scripture in the Church. (CCC 115).
- A medieval couplet summarizes the significance of the four senses: (CCC 118).

  The Letter speaks of deeds; Allegory to faith;

  The Moral how to act; Anagogy our destiny.

Scripture and The Magisterium (CCC 119)

- It is the task of exegetes to work, according to these rules, towards a better understanding and explanation of the meaning of Sacred Scripture in order that their research may help the Church to form a firmer judgment. For, of course, all that has been said about the manner of interpreting

[1] Holy See, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed. (Libreria Editrice Vaticana), English ed. (Strathfield, NSW: St Pauls Publications, 1997).

[2] Analogy of faith: "By 'analogy of faith' we mean the coherence of the truths of faith among themselves and within the whole plan of Revelation." (CCC 114). Thus, a true, valid and authentic interpretation of Scripture, or a theological writing or understanding, must be in accord with the *analogy of faith.*

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THE FOUR SENSES OF SCRIPTURE

Scripture is ultimately subject to the judgment of the Church which exercises the divinely conferred commission and ministry of watching over and interpreting the Word of God. (CCC 119)

TABLE: THE FOUR SENSES

<table>
<tr><th colspan="3">The Four Senses</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="4">1. Literal Sense: “The literal sense is the meaning conveyed by the words of Scripture and discovered by exegesis, following the rules of sound interpretation: ‘All other senses of Sacred Scripture are based on the literal.’” (CCC 116). The literal sense should not be confused with a historical sense even though the literal sense could be to convey historical information (e.g., the Historical Books), since the literal sense can also involve a spiritual meaning if that is what a given text in Scripture is immediately intended to signify (e.g., Jesus’ parables). The literal sense is thus the immediate or primary or principal meaning of a given Scriptural text according to the nature of the text itself, mind of the human sacred author, and manifest by the text’s genre, linguistic form, historical context, and place within the scriptural canon. A historical sense is one among many tools used to assist exegetes in discerning the literal sense.</td><td colspan="2">Spiritual Sense: “Thanks to the unity of God's plan, not only the text of Scripture but also the realities and events about which it speaks can be signs [that bear spiritual significance]” (CCC 117). It is not that the spiritual sense disregards the literal sense, but it looks beyond it to see deeper meanings, hidden mysteries, and applications that extend beyond the immediate sense literally intended by the sacred author.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">2. Allegorical Sense</td><td>“We can acquire a more profound understanding of events by recognizing their significance in Christ; thus the crossing of the Red Sea is a sign or type of Christ's victory and also of Christian Baptism” (CCC 117). Through this sense “sacred text is treated as a… symbol, or allegory, of spiritual truths.”[3]</td></tr>
<tr><td>Typology is sometimes considered distinct from the allegorical sense, but it can be considered as a particular form of the allegorical sense which focuses on the prefiguring of New Testament figures and events in the Old (i.e. Moses as a type of Christ, the New Moses; Judith as a type of Our Lady etc.). “Essentially it was [and still is] a technique for bringing out the correspondence between the two Testaments, and took as its guiding principle the idea that the events and personages of the Old were ‘types’ of, i.e. prefigured and anticipated, the events and personages of the New.”[4]</td></tr>
<tr><td>3. Moral / Tropological Sense</td><td>“The events reported in Scripture ought to lead us to act justly. As St. Paul says, they were written ‘for our instruction’” (CCC 117). Thus, the moral sense, not to be confused with a moralistic sense, is a reading of Scripture that pertains to moral teaching and exhortation, guiding our behavior and attitudes in accord with God’s Will, instructing us how to live, what to do and what not to do. The homiletic sense (the ‘teaching’ sense) is another term for this level of reading in its broadest meaning. With respect to this mode of Scriptural use, St. Paul writes, “All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (2 Tim 3:16).</td></tr>
<tr><td>4. Anagogical Sense</td><td>Analogical from the Greek anagoge (ἀναγωγή) ‘leading up, ascent’—this level of reading Scripture leads from the literal meaning of the text towards the contemplation and conceptualisation of its eternal significance. “We can view realities and events in terms of their eternal significance, leading us toward our true homeland: thus [for example,] the Church on earth is a sign of the heavenly Jerusalem” (CCC 117). This sense interprets the sacred text in its allusions toward what the state of eternal glory will be like or will involve and concerns the final and ultimate end of creation—the eschaton, the restoration of all things in Christ.[5]</td></tr>
</table>

[3] J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, rev. ed. (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1978), p.70.

[4] Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, p.71.

[5] This level of reading may include and build on the moral and/or allegorical sense, and not just upon the literal, since none of the senses are entirely separable from one another. The anagogical sense may also be referred to as the ‘mystical sense’ of reading Scripture, the term ‘mystical’ in its Catholic designation would here refer to the principal

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HOW SHOULD WE INTERPRET SCRIPTURE USING THE FOUR SENSES?

Different Orthodox Approaches to Scripture

The Midrash, an ancient Jewish commentary on the Torah, states that there are seventy faces to the Torah.[6] Applying this understanding to Sacred Scripture in its entirety, we can say that there are seventy faces to the Scripture. This is simply an allegorical way of saying that there are countless valid and truthful ways to interpret each and every verse in the Scripture in accord with the three criteria listed above: 1) fidelity to the content and unity of Scripture, 2) to the living Tradition in which Scripture is situated, and 3) to the analogy of faith. Different valid meanings can thus be deduced from Scripture, even from the same text, insofar as they accord with these criteria.

There have been different 'orthodox' schools of Scriptural hermeneutics (approaches of interpretation) within the Christian tradition, extending not only to the early Church and Fathers, but even extant among the Jewish and rabbinic exegetes.[7] A common delineation has been drawn between the Alexandrian School, allowing for a broader range of meaning to be deduced from Scripture, and the Antiochian school, giving a narrower margin for valid scriptural meanings. The delineation between these 'two schools' and respective approaches has been over-simplified and overstated at times, but insofar as it applies to scriptural hermeneutics as manifest in the tradition of orthodox biblical interpretation, it is valid to speak of an approach that gives broader range to valid scriptural meaning, and an approach that gives less scope for such meanings. These different approaches come down to a more or less narrow application of the three criteria above.

A Narrow Approach to Scriptural Interpretation

An example of a more narrow application of these criteria is in the typical presentation of *theoria*, a term utilized by the Greek Fathers to refer to "the power of perceiving, in addition to the historical facts set out in the text, a spiritual reality to which they were designed to point."[8] This approach of *theoria* is akin to the method employed in *lectio devina*, and can be understood as prayerful insight into the mysteries hidden behind the sacred text.

> [Yet] for *theoria* to operate they [the Greek Fathers] considered it necessary (a) that the literal sense of the sacred narrative should not be abolished, (b) that there should be a real correspondence between the historical fact and the further spiritual object discerned, and (c) that these two objects should be apprehended together, though of course in different ways.[9]

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mysteries of faith (e.g., the Holy Trinity, Christ, the Church) and the prospect of union with God. 'Mystical sense' may be used by some in a broader way to refer to the spiritual sense, specifically, the allegorical and anagogical.

[6] *Bamidbar Rabba* 13.15.

[7] I thus exclude as 'heterodox' those scriptural approaches that negate one or more of the essential criteria of an 'orthodox' interpretation of Scripture. For example, protestant approaches which negate the criteria of interpreting in accord with the living tradition, and by effect, fail also to interpret in accord with the analogy of faith in its fullness. This is not to deny the value and merit of much of Protestant exegesis, which has something to offer, but it is to exclude such an approach from an 'orthodox' one.

[8] Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, p. 76. That this approach to *theoria* is typical need not imply this narrower understanding of *theoria* is necessary to it viz., a broader approach to *theoria* is possible.

[9] Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, p. 76.

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Furthermore, among these Fathers, St. John Chrysostom concretely "divides Scriptural statements into (a) those which allow a 'theoretic' in addition to the literal sense, (b) those which are to be understood solely in the literal sense, and (c) those which admit only of a meaning other than the literal, i.e. allegorical statements [such as in the Song of Songs]."[10] This demonstrates a strict application of the criteria of orthodox scriptural interpretation, limiting the scope of valid or licit meanings that can be elicited or discerned from a given text—some texts allowing for more meanings, others less.

A Broad Approach to Scriptural Interpretation

In contrast to a narrower application of the criteria of orthodox scriptural interpretation, a broader approach allows for a greater scope of valid or licit scriptural meanings from any text of scripture. For example, in accord with this approach, it could be argued that so long as one recognises the literal sense of any given Scriptural text, and does not deny it, then any interpretation in accord with the unity of the Scripture, the Church's Tradition, and the analogy of faith, is a valid and enriching interpretation of the sacred text – even if one's allegorical interpretation has no seemingly explicit connection with the literal and/or spiritual meaning intended by such a text or by the author.[11] This approach is intimated by St. Teresa of Avila concerning her interpretation of a particular text within the *Song of Songs*, where she writes: "I interpret the passage in my own way, even though my understanding of it may not be in accord with what is meant. For if we do not depart from what the Church and the saints hold…the Lord gives us license – from what I think – just as He does when we think of the Passion and consider many more things about the anguish and torments the Lord must have suffered than the Evangelists record."[12] It could be argued this is an instance of eisegesis (reading-into the text what is not there) as opposed to a valid interpretation of Scripture, but the imputation of the broader approach, as reflected by Teresa of Avila, is that such interpretations are real and valid interpretations of Scripture according to their spiritual sense—in no way negating the literal sense, or a primary or official spiritual sense.

From the perspective of the broader approach to orthodox scriptural interpretation, each believer is invited to approach the Word of God through the Scriptures, grounded in the faith of the Church, to glean fresh and personal insights into the mysteries veiled by the sacred text and its literal meanings. Yet this does not mean the literal sense of Scripture is cast aside nor that the teaching authority of the Church is negated by a privatised form of scriptural hermeneutic championed by the Protestant 'reformers,' since the rejection of either or both of these is foreign to an orthodox interpretation of Scripture and is not integral to the broader approach testified to within the Church's hermeneutic tradition.

The Literal Sense and the Broad Approach to Scriptural Interpretation

[10] Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, p. 76.

[11] It could be said that any sound interpretation of Scripture is the intended meaning of such a passage as intended perhaps not by the human author, but by the principle author of the Word: The Holy Spirit. For we cannot be so brash to say that there is only one or two correct spiritual interpretations of any given text; for one single word can communicate seventy truths alone; none of which – given these truths are actual truths by which they are in accord with the teachings of the Church - would contradict each other, and if they did 'contradict' it would only be because they *seem* to contradict to our finite minds.

[12] Teresa of Avila, 'Meditations on the Song of Songs', Chapter 1, 8, p. 219, in *The Collected Works of Saint Teresa of Avila*, vol. 2., trans. K. Kavanaugh & O. Rodriguez, ICS Publications, Washington: 1980, pp. 215-260.

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The literal sense remains the foundation stone upon which the spiritual sense is built upon. The study of the literal sense not only maximizes a grasp of the literal sense of Scripture but expands and fortifies the foundation of the spiritual sense, so that study of the literal sense can be said to lead to the enhancement of spiritual interpretation. Yet a basic grasp of the literal sense can be argued to be all that is *absolutely necessary* for any subsequent valid interpretations according to the spiritual sense. Since it could be proposed that so long as one has the foundation (*literal sense*) by respecting its integrity, and not trying to demolish it, one can build anything on top of it (*spiritual senses*) on the proviso that this interpretation does not assert itself against the literal sense or an official spiritual sense advanced by the Church, or against the analogy of faith. This leads us to the second element in question—the teaching authority of the Church in its role as official interpreter of Scripture (see 2 Thess 2:15; 2 Pet 1:20; 1 Jn 2:19).

The Church's Teaching and the Broad Approach to Scriptural Interpretation

The Magisterium outlines official interpretations of Scripture according to each of their senses, which explicitly or implicitly derive from the interpretations affirmed by the 'college' of Church Fathers.[13] *Dei Filius*, citing and elaborating on the Council of Trent, defines this teaching:

> These [books of the Old and New Testament] the Church holds to be sacred and canonical, not because, having carefully composed by mere human industry, they were afterward approved by her authority or merely because they contain revelation with no admixture of error, but because, having been written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they have God for their author and have been delivered as such to the Church herself.
>
> Since, however, what the holy Council of Trent has laid down concerning the interpretation of the divine Scripture for the good purpose of restraining undisciplined minds has been explained by certain men in a distorted manner, We renew the same doctrine and declare this to be its sense: In matters of faith and morals, affecting the building up of Christian doctrine, that is to be held as the true sense of Holy Scripture which Holy Mother the Church has held and holds, to whom it belongs to judge of the true sense and interpretation of Holy Scriptures. Therefore no one is allowed to interpret the same Sacred Scripture contrary [contra] to this sense or contrary [contra] to the unanimous consent of the Fathers.[14]

The Church, specifically, Her Magisterium—the Pope and the bishops in communion with him, and in connection with this, the consensus of the Fathers, can thus present official interpretations of Scripture according to the literal and/or the spiritual sense. Although not specified in *Dei Filius*, such 'official interpretations' can be distinguished between authoritative and non-definitive interpretations of Scripture, relatively 'official,' which must be accepted and respected with filial obedience, and infallible definitive interpretations of Scripture, absolutely 'official,' which must

[13] 'College' is used here in a figurative sense, different to its use with respect to the 'college of bishops,' but not without a real parallel or similarity.

[14] Vatican I, *Dei Filius* on the Catholic Faith, from Denzinger (DZ) 3007, Heinrich Denzinger and Helmut Hoping, *Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals*, original bi-lingual edition ed., Peter Hünermann, English edition eds., Robert Fastiggi and Anne Englund Nash, forty-third edition (Ignatius Press: San Francisco, 2012).

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be accepted with the assent of supernatural faith.[15] In either case the practical import to the private interpretation of Scripture is the same: one's own scriptural interpretation must not be *contra*—against or contrary—to the official line of interpretation as given by the Church for a given scriptural text. Yet this in no wise excludes any interpretation other than the 'official interpretation' *per se*, as if other interpretations necessarily are *contra* the 'official' one, since other interpretations can be presented in such a way to complement, affirm, and supplement such an interpretation, especially when the official interpretation is explicitly affirmed in the same context of proposing an additional interpretation in the mode of a secondary meaning subject to and affirmative of this 'official' or primary interpretation as held by the Church.

The Interdependence of the Senses and the Church's Approach to Scripture

Each of the senses of Scripture are interdependent, since they each have as their object a dimension of one and the same reality, and one and the same Divine Revelation, arriving at a truth corresponding to its given sense. The authentic faith of the Church has always appreciated the four senses of Scripture and perceives all of these at once, so that, for example, in considering Jerusalem the Church thinks not only of the physical city chosen by God (*literal sense*); but the Church herself (*allegorical sense*); the very Church from whom moral teaching is given to its members (*moral sense*); as well as the heavenly city, the Church triumphant, united as a Bride with the Father, in the Son, by the Holy Spirit—a union already realised now through faith (*anagogical sense*).

The individual member of the Church is called to conform to the faith of the Church, the analogy of faith, and this necessitates a communion with the Magisterium, the guardian of the Church's faith. From this place, this rock, sound scriptural interpretation can be built, not over and against what the tradition has handed down, but complementarity to it, starting from where past hands have built, and working toward a fuller realisation of what these have started—a work already complete in Christ the Head, the Revelation of God, and known to the Church in glory, but which remains to be brought to deeper fruition in the pilgrim Church and her members.

Activity: Apply the Four Senses to John 19:25-27, where Jesus, on the Cross, gives Mary to John as his mother; and John to Mary as her son.

[15] See Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* 25.

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The Pentateuch

A. GENESIS

The Book of Genesis prepares the reader for the Pentateuchal legislation; it tells us how God chose a particular family to keep His Revelation, and how he trained the Chosen People to fulfill its mission. From the nature of its contents the book consists of two rather unequal parts; cc. i-xi present the features of a general history, while cc. xii-1 contain the particular history of the Chosen People. By a literary device, each of these parts is subdivided into five sections differing in length. The sections are introduced by the phrase ‘?lléh thôledhôth (these are the generations) or its variant all, zéh s?phér tôledhôth (this is the book of the generations). “Generations”, however, is only the etymological meaning of the Hebrew *tôledhôth*; in its context the formula can hardly signify a mere genealogical table, for it is neither preceded nor followed by such tables. As early Oriental history usually begins with genealogical records, and consists to a large extent of such records, one naturally interprets the above introductory formula and its variant as meaning, “this is the history” or “this is the book of the history.” History in these phrases is not to be understood as a narrative resting on folklore, as Fr. von Hummelauer believes (“Exegetisches zur Inspirationsfrage, Biblische Studien”, Freiburg, 1904, IX, 4, pp. 26-32); but as a record based on genealogies. Moreover, the introductory formula often refers back to some principal feature of the preceding section, thus forming a transition and connection between the successive parts. Gen., v, 1, e.g., refers back to Gen., ii, 7 sqq.; vi, 9 to v, 29 sqq. and vi, 8; x, 1 to ix, 18, 19; etc. Finally, the sacred writer deals very briefly with the non-chosen families or tribes, and he always considers them before the chosen branch of the family. He treats of Cain before he speaks of Seth; similarly, Chain and Japhet precede Sem; the rest of Sem‘s posterity precedes Abraham; Ismael precedes Isaac; Esau precedes Jacob.

Bearing in mind these general outlines of the contents and the literary structure of Genesis, we shall easily understand the following analytical table.

Introduction, Gen., i, 1-ii, 3, consists of the Hexaëmeron; it teaches the power and goodness of God as manifested in the creation of the world, and also the dependence of creatures on the dominion of the Creator.

(I) General History, *ii*, 4-xi, 26.—Man did not acknowledge his dependence on God. Hence, leaving the disobedient to their own devices, God chose one special family or one individual as the depositary of His Revelation.

(a) History of Heaven and Earth, ii, 4-iv, 26.—Here we have the story of the fall of our first parents, ii, 5-iii, 24; of the fratricide of Cain, iv, 1-16; the posterity of Cain and its elimination, iv, 17-26.

(b) History of Adam, v, 1-vi, 8.—The writer enumerates the Sethites, another line of Adam's descendants, v, 1-32, but shows that they too became so corrupt that only one among them found favor before God, vi, 1-8.

(c) History of Noe, vi, 9-ix, 29.—Neither the Deluge which destroyed the whole human race excepting Noe's family, vi, 11-viii, 19, nor God's covenant with Noe and his sons, viii, 20-ix, 17, brought about the amendment of the human family, and only one of Noe's sons was chosen as the bearer of the Divine blessings, ix, 18-29.

(d) History of the Sons of Noe, x, 1-xi, 9.—The posterity of the non-chosen sons, x, 1-32, brought a new punishment on the human race by its pride, xi, 1-9.

(e) History of Sem, xi, 10-26.—The posterity of Sem is enumerated down to Thare the father of Abraham, in whose seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.

(2) Special History, xi, 27-1, 26.—Here the inspired writer describes the special Providence watching over Abraham and his offspring which developed in Egypt into a large nation. At the same time, he eliminates the sons of Abraham who were not children of God's promise. This teaches the Israelites that carnal descent from Abraham does not suffice to make them true sons of Abraham.

(a) History of Thare, xi, 27-xxv, 11: This section tells of the call of Abraham, his transmigration into Chanaan, his covenant with God, and His promises.

(b) History of Ismael, xxv, 12-18.—This section eliminates the tribes springing from Ismael.

(c) History of Isaac, xxv, 19-xxxv, 29.—Here we have the history of Isaac's sons, Esau and Jacob.

(d) History of Esau, xxxvi, 1-xxxvii, 1.—The sacred writer gives a list of Esau's posterity; it does not belong to the number of the Chosen People.

(e) History of Jacob, xxxvii, 2-1, 26.—This final portion of Genesis tells of the fate of Jacob's family down to the death of the Patriarch and of Joseph.

What has been said shows a uniform plan in the structure of Genesis, which some scholars prefer to call "schematism". (i) The whole book is divided into ten sections. (ii) Each section is introduced by the same formula. (iii) The sections are arranged according to a definite plan, the history of the lateral genealogical branches always preceding that of the corresponding part of the main line. (iv) Within the sections, the introductory formula or the title is usually followed by a brief repetition of some prominent feature of the preceding section, a fact duly noted and explained by as early a writer as Rhabanus Maurus (Comment. in Gen., II, xii; P.L., CVII, 531-2), but misconstrued by our recent critics into an argument for a diversity of sources. (v) The history of each Patriarch tells of the development of his family during his lifetime, while the account of his life varies between a bare notice consisting of a few words or lines, and a more lengthy description. (vi) When

the life of the Patriarch is given more in detail, the account usually ends in an almost uniform way, indicating the length of his life and his burial with his ancestors (cf. ix, 29; xi, 32; xxv, 7; xxxv, 28; xlvii, 28). Such a definite plan of the book shows that it was written with a definite end in view and according to preconceived arrangement. The critics attribute this to the final "redactor" of the Pentateuch who adopted, according to their views, the genealogical framework and the "schematism" from the Priestly Code. The value of these views will be discussed later; for the present, it suffices to know that a striking unity prevails throughout the Book of Genesis (cf. Kurtz, "Die Einheit der Genesis", Berlin, 1846; Delattre, "Plan de la Genese" in "Revue des quest. hist.", July, 1876; XX, pp. 5-43; Delattre, "Le plan de la Genese et les generations du ciel et de la terre" in "La science cath.", October 15, 1891, V, pp. 978-89; de Broglie, "Etude sur les genealogies bibliques" in "Le congres scientif. internat. des catholiques de 1888", Paris, 1889, I, pp. 94-101; Julian, "Etude critique sur la composition de la Genese", Paris, 1888, pp. 232-50).

B. EXODUS

After the death of Joseph, Israel had grown into a people, and its history deals no longer with mere genealogies, but with the people's national and religious development. The various laws are given and promulgated as occasion required them; hence they are intimately connected with the history of the people, and the Pentateuchal books in which they are recorded are rightly numbered among the historical books of Scripture. Only the third book of the Pentateuch exhibits rather the features of a legal code. The Book of Exodus consists of a brief introduction and three main parts:

Introduction, i, 1-7.—A brief summary of the history of Jacob connects Genesis with Exodus, and serves at the same time as transition from the former to the latter.

(I) First Part, i, 8-xiii, 16.—It treats of the events preceding and preparing the exit of Israel from Egypt.

(a) Ex., i, 8-ii, 25: the Israelites are oppressed by the new Pharao "that knew not Joseph", but God prepares them a liberator in Moses.

(b) iii, 1-iv, 31.—Moses is called to free his people; his brother Aaron is given him as companion; their reception by the Israelites.

(c) v, 1-x, 29.—Pharao refuses to listen to Moses and Aaron; God renews his promises; genealogies of Moses and Aaron; the heart of Pharao is not moved by the first nine plagues.

(d) xi, 1-xiii, 16.—The tenth plague consists in the death of the first-born; Pharao dismisses the people; law of the annual celebration of the pasch in memory of the liberation from Egypt.

(2) Second Part, *xiii*, 17-xviii, 27.—Journey of Israel to Mt. Sinai and miracles preparing the people for the Sinaitic Law.

(a) xiii, 17-xv, 21.—The Israelites, led and protected by a pillar of cloud and fire, cross the Red Sea, but the persecuting Egyptians perish in the waters.

(b) xv, 22-xvii, 16.—The route of Israel is passing through Sur, Mara, Elim, Sin, Raphidim. At Mara the bitter waters are made sweet; in the Desert of Sin God sent quails and manna to the children of Israel; at Raphidim God gave them water from the rock, and defeated Amalec through the prayers of Moses.

(c) xviii, 1-27.—Jethro visits his kinsmen, and at his suggestion Moses institutes the judges of the people.

(3) Third Part, xix, 1-xl, 38.—Conclusion of the Sinaitic covenant and its renewal. Here Exodus assumes more the character of a legal code.

(a) xix, 1-xx, 21.—The people journey to Sinai, prepare for the coming legislation, receive the decalogue, and ask to have the future laws promulgated through Moses.

(b) xx, 22-xxiv, 8.—Moses promulgates certain laws together with promises for their observance, and confirms the covenant between God and the people with a sacrifice. The portion xx, 1-xxiii, 33, is also called the Book of the Covenant.

(c) xxiv, 9-xxxi, 18.—Moses alone remains with God on the mountain for forty days, and receives various instructions about the tabernacle and other points pertaining to Divine worship.

(d) xxxii, 1-xxxiv, 35.—The people adore the golden calf; at this sight, Moses breaks the divinely given tables of the law, punishes the idolaters, obtains pardon from God for the survivors, and, renewing the covenant, receives other tables of the law.

(e) xxxv, 1-xl, 38.—The tabernacle with its appurtenances is prepared, the priests are anointed, and the cloud of the Lord covers the tabernacle, thus showing that He had made the people His own.

C. LEVITICUS

Called by Rabbinic writers "Law of the Priests" or "Law of the Sacrifices", contains nearly a complete collection of laws concerning the Levitical ministry. They are not codified in any logical order, but still we may discern certain groups of regulations touching the same subject. The Book of Exodus shows what God had done and was doing for His people; the Book of Leviticus prescribes what the people must do for God, and how they must render themselves worthy of His constant presence.

(1) First Part, i, 1-x, 20.—Duties of Israel towards God living in their midst.

(a) i, 1-vi, 7.—The different kinds of sacrifices are enumerated, and their rites are described.

(b) vi, 8-vii, 36.—The duties and rights of the priests, the official offerers of the sacrifices, are stated.

(c) viii, 1-x, 20.—The first priests are consecrated and introduced into their office.

(2) Second Part, xi, 1-xxvii, 34.—Legal cleanness demanded by the Divine presence.

(a) xi, 1-xx, 27.—The entire people must be legally clean; the various ways in which cleanness must be kept; interior cleanness must be added to external cleanness.

(b) xxi, 1-xxii, 33.—Priests must excel in both internal and external cleanness; hence they have to keep special regulations.

(c) xxiii, 1-xxvii, 34.—The other laws, and the promises and threats made for the observance or the violation of the laws, belong to both priests and people.

D. NUMBERS

At times called “In the Desert” by certain Rabbinic writers because it covers practically the whole time of Israel’s wanderings in the desert. Their story was begun in Exodus, but interrupted by the Sinaitic legislation; Numbers takes up the account from the first month of the second year, and brings it down to the eleventh month of the fortieth year. But the period of 38 years is briefly treated, only its beginning and end being touched upon; for this span of time was occupied by the generation of Israelites that had been condemned by God.

(1) First Part, i, 1-xiv, 45.—Summary of the happenings before the rejection of the rebellious generation, especially during the first two months of the second year. The writer inverts the chronological order of these two months, in order not to interrupt the account of the people’s wanderings by a description of the census, of the arrangement of the tribes, of the duties of the various families of the Levites, all of which occurrences or ordinances belong to the second month. Thus he first states what remained unchanged throughout the desert life of the people, and then reverts to the account of the wanderings from the first month of the second year.

(a) i, 1-vi, 27.—The census is taken, the tribes are arranged in their proper order, the duties of the Levites are defined, the regulations concerning cleanliness in the camp are promulgated.

(b) vii, 1-ix, 14.—Occurrences belonging to the first month: offerings of the princes at the dedication of the tabernacle, consecration of the Levites and duration of their ministry, celebration of the second pasch.

(c) ix, 15-xiv, 45.—Signals for breaking up the camp; the people leave Sinai on the twenty-second day of the second month, and journey towards Cades in the desert Pharan; they murmur against Moses on account of fatigue, want of fleshmeat, etc.; deceived by faithless spies, they refuse to enter into the Promised Land, and the whole living generation is rejected by God.

(2) Second Part, xv, 1-xix, 22.—Events pertaining to the rejected generation.

(a) xv, 1-41.—Certain laws concerning sacrifices; Sabbath-breaking is punished with death; the law of fringes on the garments.

(b) xvi, 1-xvii, 13.—The schism of Core and his adherents; their punishment; the priesthood is confirmed to Aaron by the blooming rod which is kept for a remembrance in the tabernacle.

(c) xviii, 1-xix, 22.—The charges of the priests and Levites, and their portion; the law of the sacrifice of the red cow, and the water of expiation.

(3) Third Part, xx, 1-xxxvi, 13.—History of the journey from the first to the eleventh month of the fortieth year.

(a) xx, 1-xxi, 20.—Death of Mary, sister of Moses; God again gives the murmuring people water from the rock, but refuses Moses and Aaron entrance to the Promised Land on account of their doubt; Aaron dies while the people go around the Idumean mountains; the malcontents are punished with fiery serpents.

(b) xxi, 21-xxv, 18.—The land of the Amorrhites is seized; the Moabites vainly attempt to destroy Israel by the curse of Balaam; the Madianites lead the people into idolatry.

(c) xxvi, 1-xxvii, 23.—A new census is taken with a view of dividing the land; the law of inheritance; Josue is appointed to succeed Moses.

(d) xxviii, 1-xxx, 17.—Certain laws concerning sacrifices, vows, and feasts are repeated and completed.

(e) xxxi, 1-xxxii, 40.—After the defeat of the Madianites, the country across Jordan is given to the tribes of Ruben and Gad, and to half of the tribe of Manasses.

(f) xxxiii, 1-49.—List of encampments of people of Israel during their wandering in the desert.

(g) xxxiii, 50-xxxvi, 13.—Command to destroy the Chanaanites; limits of the Promised Land and names of the men who are to divide it; Levitical cities, and cities of refuge; laws concerning murder and manslaughter; ordinance concerning the marriage of heiresses.

E. DEUTERONOMY

This book is a partial repetition and explanation of the foregoing legislation together with an urgent exhortation to be faithful to it. The main body of the book consists of three discourses delivered by Moses to the people in the eleventh month of the fortieth year; but the discourses are preceded by a short introduction, and they are followed by several appendices.

Introduction, i, 1-5.—Brief indication of the subject matter, the time, and the place of the following discourses.

(I) First Discourse, i, 6-iv, 40.—God's benefits are enumerated, and the people are exhorted to keep the law.

(a) i, 29.—The main occurrences during the time of the wandering in the desert are recalled as showing the goodness and justice of God.

(b) iv, 1-40.—Hence the covenant with God must be kept. By way of parenthesis, the sacred writer adds here (i) the appointment of three cities of refuge across the Jordan, iv, 41-43; (ii) an historical. preamble, preparing us for the second discourse. iv, 44-49.

(2) Second Discourse, v, 1-xxvi, 19.—This forms almost the bulk of Deuteronomy. It rehearses the whole economy of the covenant in two sections, the one general, the other particular.

(a) The General Repetition, v, *1 -xi*, 32.—Repetition of the decalogue, and reasons for the promulgation of the law through Moses; explanation of the first commandment, and prohibition of all intercourse with the gentiles; reminder of the Divine favors and punishments; promise of victory over the Chanaanites; God's blessing on the observance of the Law, His curse on the transgressors.

(b) Special Laws, xii, 1-xxvi, 19.—(i) Duties towards God: He is to be duly worshipped, never to be abandoned; distinction of clean and unclean meats; tithes and first-fruits; the three principal solemnities of the year. (ii) Duties towards God's representatives: towards the judges, the future kings, the priests, and Prophets. (iii) Duties towards the neighbor: as to life, external possessions, marriage, and various other particulars.

(3) Third Discourse, xxvii, 1-xxx, 20.—A renewed exhortation to keep the law, based on diverse reasons.

(a) xxvii, 1-26.—Command to inscribe the law on stones after crossing the Jordan, and to promulgate the blessings and curses connected with the observance or non-observance of the law.

(b) xxviii, 1-68.—A more minute statement of the good or evil depending on the observance or violation of the law.

(c) xxix, 1-xxx, 20.—The goodness of God is extolled; all are urged to be faithful to God.

(4) Historical Appendix, xxxi, 1-xxxiv, 12.

(a) xxxi, 1-27.—Moses appoints Josue as his successor, orders him to read the law to the people every seven years, and to place a copy of the same in the ark.

(b) xxxi, 28-xxxii, 47.—Moses calls an assembly of the Ancients and recites his canticle.

(c) xxxii, 48-52.—Moses views the Promised Land from a distance.

(d) xxxiii, 1-29.—He blesses the tribes of Israel.

(e) xxxiv, 1-12.—His death, burial, and special eulogium.

The Old Testament: Part Twelve
Three Historical Novels – Tobit, Judith and Esther

Although Tobit, Judith and Esther are placed amongst the *historical books* of the Old Testament, they do not belong there because they are markedly fictional (called by some authors "historical novels") than historical. In his book *Reading the Bible,* Timothy Carmody writes that the books of Tobit, Judith and Esther *"describe the faith of a particular person who acts in accord with God's will and brings about the salvation of the nation or the blessings of God on his or her family. All three books introduce a problem or crisis at the beginning of the book that is developed and eventually resolved in the story"* (p.99). Since Tobit and Judith were written around the time of the Maccabees, and Ester sometime before them, I am placing these three "historical novels" after the Books of Maccabees.

BOOK OF TOBIT

This is the story of a pious Jew in exile who, after many misfortunes and trying events, finally sees the victory of God's providence in a happy family reunion and a peaceful end. Apart from the fascination of the tale itself, the book reflects aspects of Jewish piety during the Hellenistic period. The account is presented as history and as having taken place in Nineveh in the eighth century B.C.

The book tells about the tragedies and triumphs in the lives of three people: Tobit, Sarah, and Tobiah. The author, by weaving the stories together in three different but related plots, has a theological purpose: to show that God can manage the circumstances of people's lives to bring God's plans to fulfillment. The primary message is simple: God rewards those who are faithful.

Some excerpts

3:2-6—Tobit's prayer. Commenting on the Prayer of Tobit, Eugene Hensell, O.S.B., writes:

Prayer is one of the strongest and most pervasive themes in the Book of Tobit. Tobit appears to have been seriously shaken by his previous argument with his wife, Anna— and well he should have been. He had wrongly accused her of stealing a goat. This and his total blindness have put Tobit in a state of despair. He describes himself as grief-stricken in spirit. It is from this perspective that he turns to prayer.

Tobit begins his prayer by acknowledging God as being righteous, merciful, and true. Only God can heal Tobit from his profound sense of despair. Tobit readily admits his own sinfulness. He sees himself as part of a community, and thus he shares fully in the sins of the community. Tobit's prayer leads to his request that God allow him to die. He does not ask for mercy or forgiveness—only death. He sees no real hope for the future. Keep in mind that at this time Judaism did not believe in a resurrection. Everyone ended up in Sheol, which was neither good nor bad. Rewards and punishments had to be given out in the present world.

3:7-17—Sarah's plight. *"Sarah had been given in marriage to seven husbands, but the wicked demon Asmodeas kept killing them off…"* (v.8). *"Why then should I live any longer?"* (v.15).

On the same day that Tobit quarrels with his wife and prays for death, Sarah is taunted by one of her father's maidservants and also prays for death. As the demon keeps killing off Sarah's husbands on their wedding night, she is driven to despair and considers suicide. Out of love for her father, Sarah reconsiders and turns to God in prayer. Commenting on the prayers of Tobit and Sarah in chapter 3, the *Collegeville Commentary* states:

Both a man and a woman turn to prayer in desperate situations. Their prayers are equally significant for the plot. Both pray with phrases familiar from other biblical prayers. Tobit asks to die. He thinks that death is the only solution to his problems. Sarah puts herself completely in God's hands. She illustrates the proper way to pray: she spreads out her hands and turns to face Jerusalem. (p.834)

In **Chapter 5**, the angel Raphael enters the story, but his identity is concealed as he guides Tobiah on his journey.

Chapters 7-8: Tobiah marries Sarah and the demon is expelled

"Raguel said to Tobiah: 'Your marriage to her has been decided in heaven! Take your kinswoman; from now on you are her love, and she is your beloved. She is yours today and ever after. And tonight, son, may the Lord of heaven prosper you both. May he grant you mercy and peace.'"

The climactic moment in Tobit now emerges. Will Tobiah be yet another newlywed killed on his wedding night by the demon Asmodeus? From the beginning, the angel Raphael has already been at work providing Tobiah with the fish organs that will ward off the demon (6:2-6). Now he directs Tobiah to the home of Raguel, his future father-in-law, to set the stage for a successful marriage.

7:11—Sarah is given in marriage. Raguel assures Tobiah that despite Sarah's bad luck with previous husbands, this marriage has been made in heaven. Then Raguel calls in his daughter Sarah and gives her off to Tobiah. A marriage contract is set up according to the Law of Moses.

8:1-3—Expulsion of the demon. When Tobiah enters the bedroom, he remembers Raphael's instructions and performs the necessary ritual of burning the fish's heart and liver. The ritual works and Raphael pursues the demon to make sure he never returns.

After Sarah's parents leave the prepared bedroom, Tobiah asks his wife to rise from their bed so that they can pray together. The newlyweds praise God and recall the blessings to Adam and Eve as helpmates for one another (Gn 2). Tobiah affirms his holy and wholesome intentions. He is motivated by love and not lust. Together in prayer they go to bed.

The next day, Raguel and his wife prepare a feast for the newlyweds and Raguel asks that the celebration, which normally lasts seven days, be extended to fourteen days. We can only imagine the happiness in Raguel's household.

Chapter 11: Tobit is healed of his blindness

"Blessed be God, blessed be his great name, and blessed be all his holy angels! May his great name be with us, and blessed be all the angels throughout all the ages! God it was who afflicted me, and God who has had mercy on me. Now I see my son Tobiah!"

As the traveling party gets close to Nineveh, Raphael reminds Tobiah that he will be the instrument of healing for his father and instructs him on what to do. After an emotional reunion, Tobiah immediately works to restore his father's eyesight. When Tobit's blindness is healed, he breaks into a prayer of thanksgiving. The *Collegeville Commentary* notes:

Tobit prays in praise of God, whom he sees both as a source of affliction and as a source of healing. He thus declares one of the major theological principles of the book: God is free, and God's actions are beyond human understanding. Tobit, although he believes that God rewards obedience and punishes wickedness (1:12-13; 4:6, 21), accepts his blindness as coming from God (3:5). Throughout his affliction he never turns away from God and never ceases praying. His prayer as his sight is restored is a striking manifestation of his own extraordinary faith. (p.840)

In John 9, Jesus rejects the belief that the blind man was born blind because of sin, the sin of his parents. Christians believe that while our good and loving God *allows* bad things to happen to good people (e.g., Jesus himself), he is not a God who sends or causes bad things to happen to us.

12:15—Raphael reveals his real identity to Tobit and Tobiah, and delivers a farewell discourse. He announces his departure and tells them of his role in directing past events in their lives. He strongly exhorts them to be faithful to God's commandments and to one another, and makes a promise that "those who regularly give alms will enjoy a full life."

Raphael's role throughout this story demonstrates the providence of God. He prepares Tobiah for the healings of Tobit and Sarah. He guides Tobiah on their journey, always encouraging a spirit of prayer. And he always leaves room for human freedom in response to God's guidance.

Catholics believe that God has given each one of us a guardian angel to be our Raphael in the journey of life. Hopefully, all of us have a relationship with our guardian angel—daily seeking his guidance, help and protection.

Chapter 14: Tobit's parting words

"Now, children, I give you this command: serve God faithfully and do what is right before him; you must tell your children to do what is upright and to give alms, to be mindful of God, and at all times to bless his name sincerely and with all their strength" (v.19).

(For more on Tobit, see my *Commentaries on the Books of the* Old Testament, Article 40.)

BOOK OF JUDITH

In its introduction to Judith, the *Collegeville Bible Commentary* reads:

The book of Judith was written during the period of the Maccabean revolt. Its setting is in an earlier period, but many details reveal the author's interest in his own time rather than that of the seventh century B.C. In the story, an Israelite town is besieged by Holofernes, commander-in-chief of the Assyrian army. The town leaders despair of help from God and declare that if deliverance does not come within five days, they will surrender. A beautiful widow, an observant Jew, upon hearing the decision of the elders, scolds them for their lack of faith. She prays, placing herself in the hands of God. Finally, she prepares her weapon – beauty. Using her beauty, she beheads Holofernes and delivers her people.

The message of the book is that victory comes not from human might but through the power of God. God can deliver his faithful people at whatever time and in

whatever way God wishes. Even though the way of deliverance may look like folly from a human point of view, the story of Judith demonstrates that the real fools are those who place their trust in human power and weapons. The whole army of Holofernes is defenseless against God's weapon – the beauty of a faithful woman. (p.844)

In its introduction to Judith, the *Catholic Bible – Personal Study Edition* states:

The book of Judith is a piece of literature for difficult times. It was hoped that the reader would take to heart the lesson that God was still the master of history who could save Israel from her enemies. There is a parallel with the time of the Exodus: As God had delivered the people by the hand of Moses, so God could deliver them by the hand of the pious widow Judith.

The story of Judith is full of unexpected turns. The most obvious, especially to those who first heard or read the story, is that a woman – not a man – saved Judah in time of severe distress. Judith is more faithful and resourceful than any of the men of Bethulia. She is more eloquent than the king and more courageous than the leading citizens of the city. While the king, priests, and leaders, show themselves incapable of dealing with the crisis, Judith stands up to the threat posed by Holofernes, and takes decisive action to end that threat. (p.54)

Division of chapters

Part 1: The Assyrians pose a threat to Israel (Chapters 1-7)

Part 2: Judith saves Israel from Assyrian invasion Chapters 8-16)

Chapter 8: Enter Judith

"Judith was beautifully formed and lovely to behold… No one had a bad word to say about her, for she was a very God-fearing woman." (v.8)

After establishing through genealogy that Judith (meaning Jewess) is a true Israelite, the author tells us that she is beautiful within and without.

Chapters 9-10: Judith prepares to take down Holofernes

"Your strength is not in numbers, nor does your power depend upon stalwart men; but you are the God of the lowly, the helper of the oppressed, the supporter of the weak, the protector of the forsaken, the savior of those without hope." (v.11)

Judith makes a twofold preparation for war. The first is prayer. Judith's prayer posture is one of radical humility before God: prostration. Her attire is symbolic of penitence: sackcloth and ashes. She begins by reminding God of the mighty deeds performed for her ancestors (9:2-4). Then Judith professes that her trust is not in horses and chariots but in the power of God, and so she calls upon God to win the victory for her. Next, Judith attends to enhancing her physical beauty. After bathing, she uses everything available to make herself look beautiful and captivating. Commenting on this part of Judith's preparation for war, The *Collegeville Commentary* states:

Judith understands the goodness of her body. She knows that her physical beauty is good and that it comes from God. She also knows that the power of her beauty comes from within her, from her holiness, from her faithfulness to God. Since both her exterior and interior beauty come from God, her beauty must be devoted to the service of God. God intends to use her beauty as a weapon to liberate the people. She will wield the weapon to the best of her ability.

The response of others to this second preparation of hers testifies to its effectiveness. The men of her own city are astounded at her beauty (10:7). After she arrives at the enemy camp, the guards of Holofernes gaze at her face in awe because of its wondrous beauty (10:14). The crowd that gathers within the camp at her arrival marvels at her beauty. They say to one another: "Who can despise this people that has such women among them? It is not wise to leave one man of them alive, for if any were to be spared they could beguile the whole world (10:19)." (p.852)

At the end of the chapter, Judith is led into the presence of Holofernes. All marvel at Judith's beauty.

Chapters 12-13: Judith beheads Holofernes

After bathing, she besought the Lord, the God of Israel, to direct her way, for the triumph of his people. (12:8)

When all had departed, and no one, small or great, was left in the bedroom, Judith stood by Holofernes' bed and said within herself: "O Lord, God of all might, in this hour look graciously on my undertaking for the exaltation of Jerusalem; now is the time for aiding your heritage and for carrying out my design to shatter the enemies who have risen against us." She went to the bedpost near the head of Holofernes, and taking his sword from it, drew close to the bed, grasped the hair on his head, and said, "Strengthen me this day, O God of Israel!" Then with all her might she struck him twice in the neck, and cut off his head. (13:4-8)

Commenting on Judith's murder of Holofernes, John Collins writes:

The great scandal of the story is Judith's willingness to deceive the Assyrian general, violate his trust, and kill him in a gruesome manner. There is a biblical precedent for her action, in Judges 4-5, where Jael the Kenite, shelters Sisera in her tent and then drives a tent peg into his skull. There is no apology for the violence of the action. The survival of the people is at stake, and Judith is a heroine. That a woman performs this great deed, accords with the theology of the book of Judges, where God affects his deliverance through improbable means, to show that it is not an achievement of human power. (Introduction to the Hebrew Bible, p.548)

CHAPTERS 14-15: The Assyrians flee in fear

"On hearing what happened, those still in their tents were amazed and overcome with fear and trembling. No one kept ranks any longer; they scattered in all directions and fled along every road, both through the valley and in the mountains. Those also who were stationed in the mountain district around Bethulia took to flight. Then all the Israelite warriors overwhelmed them." (15:1-3)

Concluding Remarks. In its concluding remarks on Judith, the *Collegeville Commentary* states:

The people of the author's time, who suffered under Seleucid persecution, needed to hear the message of the Book of Judith. The message remains pertinent for us, who face powers of evil beyond our strength. The story of Judith teaches us that the power of God can bring victory even through the most vulnerable. Judith's example exhorts God's people to persevere in hope. Uzziah proclaims: "Blessed are you, Judith, by the Most High God, above all the women on earth…. Your deed of hope will never be forgotten by those who tell of the might of God." And all the people answer "Amen! Amen!" (p.857)

(For more on Judith, see my *Commentaries on the Books of the Old Testament,* Article 41.)

BOOK OF ESTHER

The Book of Esther, like Tobit and Judith, is regarded by most scholars as a historical fiction about God's providential care for his people, the Israelites, living outside their homeland in an increasingly hostile environment.

The story is set in the Persian Period of Israel's history (the same period as the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah) during the reign of King Ahasuerus, known in most English translations as Xerxes (486-465 BC). The action takes place in Susa, a city in the Babylonian empire. Amongst other things, the Book of Esther shows that the Jews who did *not* return to Jerusalem following Cyrus' decree were still counted as God's people.

Briefly, this book tells the story of how Esther, a Jewish woman, becomes the Persian Queen with the help of her Uncle Mordecai, and intervenes to stop the evil plans of Haman, a royal official of the king, from killing all the Jews in one day.

In its introduction to Esther, *The Catholic Serendipity Bible* reads:

Mordecai and Esther are examples of the righteous wise who, remaining faithful to their God, are able to reverse the tables on their wicked opponents. Esther is a literary masterpiece that reads like a modern suspense novel, complete with plot twists, irony, intrigue, revenge, and plenty of feasting.

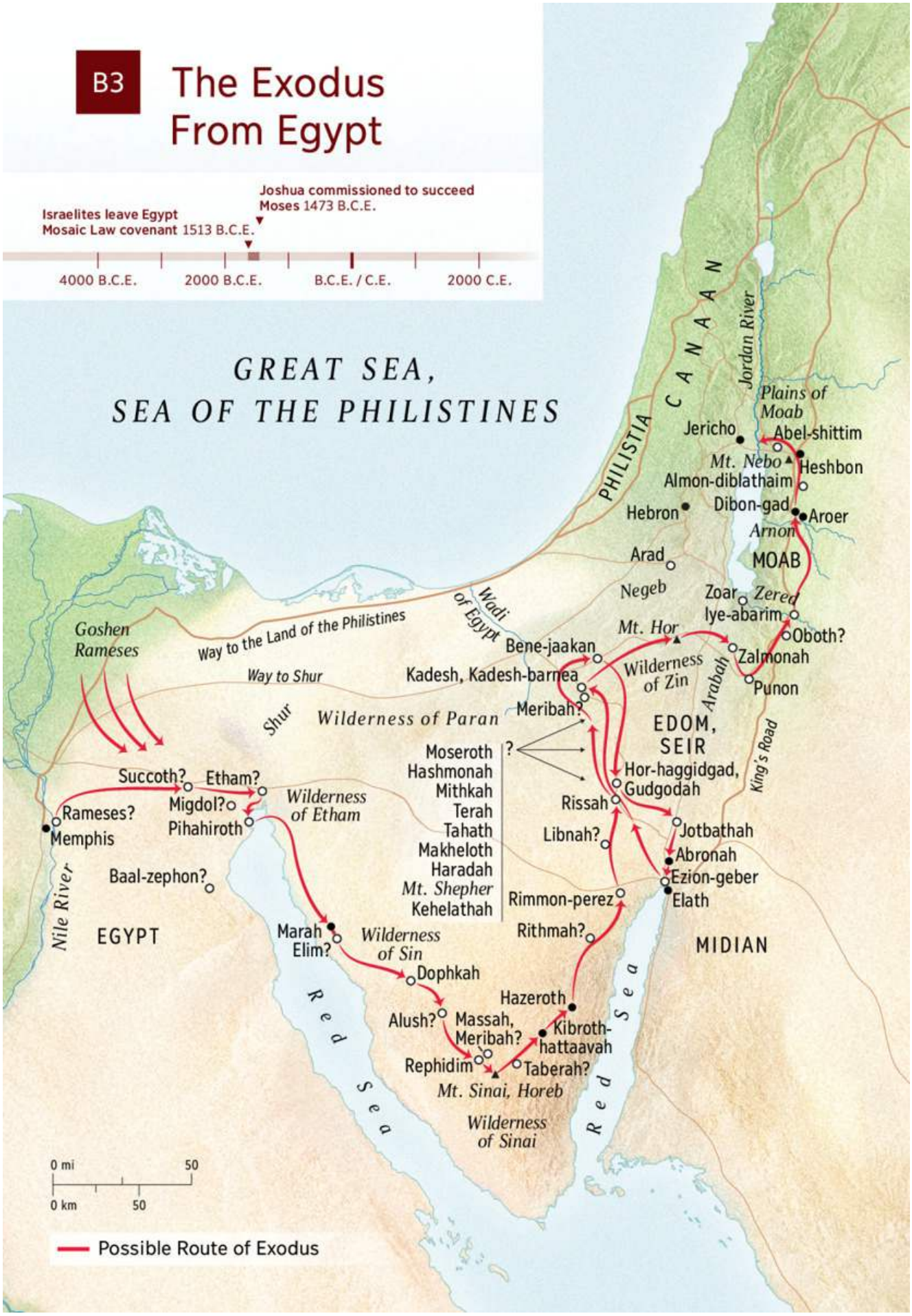
Commentators also point out that the book was written to teach Jews how to live a productive life in Diaspora (outside their homeland).

Two versions of the book. This book has come down to us in two versions: one in Hebrew and another in Greek which has over 100 verses more than the Hebrew. The Greek version is found in Catholic bibles and the Hebrew version in the Jewish and Protestant bibles. A unique and troubling feature of the shorter version is the distinct omission of the mention of God. This fact nearly caused its exclusion from the Canon of Scripture. Addressing the non-mention of God in the Hebrew and Protestant bibles, Protestant Scripture scholar J.G. McConville writes:

As for the fact that the name of God does not appear in the book, this does not mean that it is not 'theological,' or does not teach about God. The silence about God is quite deliberate, not to make the point that he is inactive in human situations, but on the contrary, that he is hidden behind all events. This is the implication of the numerous coincidental occurrences in the book. The story can become, therefore, a powerful statement about the reality of God in a world from which he appears to be absent. (The Daily Study Bible Series – Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther, p.153)

As we shall see, the Greek edition, which the Catholic Church uses, has explicit references to God and adds a religious dimension to a secular story.

The 100+ verses in the Greek and Catholic bibles could add some confusion to our reading of the text. The additional verses are scattered throughout the ten chapters of the book and are designated by the letters A to F. The regular chapter numbers apply to the Hebrew text.


B3
The Exodus From Egypt
Joshua commissioned to succeed Moses 1473 B.C.E.
Israelites leave Egypt Mosaic Law covenant 1513 B.C.E.
4000 B.C.E.
2000 B.C.E.
B.C.E. / C.E.
2000 C.E.
GREAT SEA, SEA OF THE PHILISTINES
PHILISTIA
CANAAN
Jordan River
Plains of Moab
Jericho
Abel-shittim
Mt. Nebo
Heshbon
Almon-diblathaim
Dibon-gad
Aroer
Hebron
Arnon
MOAB
Arad
Negeb
Zoar
Zered
Iye-abarim
Oboth?
Mt. Hor
Zalmonah
Punon
Wilderness of Zin
Arabah
King's Road
EDOM, SEIR
Bene-jaakan
Kadesh, Kadesh-barnea
Meribah?
Wadi of Egypt
Way to the Land of the Philistines
Goshen
Rameses
Way to Shur
Shur
Wilderness of Paran
Moseroth
Hashmonah
Mithkah
Terah
Tahath
Makheloth
Haradah
Mt. Shepher
Kehelathah
?
Hor-haggidgad,
Gudgodah
Rissah
Libnah?
Jotbathah
Abronah
Ezion-geber
Elath
Rimmon-perez
Rithmah?
MIDIAN
Succoth?
Etham?
Migdol?
Pihahiroth
Wilderness of Etham
Rameses?
Memphis
Baal-zephon?
Nile River
EGYPT
Marah
Elim?
Wilderness of Sin
Dophkah
Alush?
Massah, Meribah?
Rephidim
Hazeroth
Kibroth-hattaavah
Taberah?
Mt. Sinai, Horeb
Wilderness of Sinai
Red Sea
Red Sea
0 mi
50
0 km
50
Possible Route of Exodus


B6
Settlement of the Promised Land
Tribes receive land after conquest 1467 B.C.E.
Saul anointed as king 1117 B.C.E.
4000 B.C.E.
2000 B.C.E.
B.C.E. / C.E.
2000 C.E.
Judges
1 Othniel
2 Ehud
3 Shamgar
4 Barak
5 Gideon
6 Tola
7 Jair
8 Jephthah
9 Ibzan
10 Elon
11 Abdon
12 Samson
Sidon
Damascus
Baal-gad
Mt. Hermon
Tyre
Abel-beth-maacah
DAN
Dan, Laish, Leshem
Beth-anath
Kedesh
NAPHTALI
ASHER
Bashan
Hazor
MANASSEH
Acco
Wadi of Kishon
Chinnereth
Sea of Chinnereth
Ashtaroth
Golan
Bethlehem
ZEBULUN
Harosheth
Jokneam
Mt. Tabor
Havvoth-jair?
Dor
Ophrah
Hill of Moreh
Megiddo
ISSACHAR
Kamon
Edrei
Kedesh, Kishion
Spring of Harod
Debir
Taanach
Beth-shittah
Beth-shean
Ibleam
Ramoth (Ramoth-gilead)
Hepher
MANASSEH
Abel-meholah
Jabesh-gilead?
Land of Tob
Shamir (Samaria)
Thebez
Zaphon
Mt. Ebal
Mt. Gerizim
Shechem
Succoth
Mahanaim
Pirathon
Jordan River
Jabbok
Penuel
Aphek
Tappuah
Mizpah, Mizpeh
Joppa
EPHRAIM
Shiloh
Jogbehah
AMMON
Timnath-serah
DAN
Wadi of Sorek
GAD
Rabbah
Bethel
Mizpah, Mizpeh
Gilgal
Abel-keramim
GREAT SEA, WESTERN SEA
Jabneel
BENJAMIN
Beth-haram(n)
Mephaath
Timnah
Eshtaol
Gibeah
Minnith
Ekron
Zorah
Jerusalem
Heshbon
Bezer
Ashdod
Lehi
Ashkelon
Bethlehem, Ephrathah
REUBEN
Libnah
Adullam
Ether, Tochen
Kedemoth
Eglon
Lachish
Hebron
Salt Sea
Dibon
Gaza
(SIMEON)
Etam
En-gedi
Aroer
Debir
Anab
Arnon
Ziklag
Ain
Goshen
Chesil, Bethul
Hazar-susah
Beth-marcaboth
MOAB
Sharuhen, Shaaraim, Shilhim
Ashan, Ain
Beer-sheba
Hazar-shual
Baalath-beer, Ramah, Baal
JUDAH
Ezem
Wadi of Egypt
Zered
Beth-lebaoth, Beth-biri
Negeb
Ascent of Akrabbim
Mt. Halak
Wilderness of Zin
EDOM, SEIR
0 mi
20
0 km
20
Azmon
Hazar-addar
Karka
Kadesh, Kadesh-barnea
Enclave Cities of Simeon
Enclave Cities of Manasseh
Cities of Refuge

Kings Defeated by Joshua

Joshua 12:7-24

The first half of the book of Joshua recounts the many battles fought during the conquest of the Promised Land. At the very end of this account, Israel's conquests are summarized in a list of kings defeated by Moses and Joshua. Moses' victories in the Transjordan are listed first, followed by Joshua's victories in the land west of the Jordan River. Each of these defeated kings ruled over a single city-state (and sometimes its surrounding territory), and the cities listed were scattered throughout the entire land allotted to the Israelites by Moses and Joshua. It appears, however, that Israel was not always able to maintain control over some of the cities that were defeated, for several of them are noted as the headquarters of various rulers who oppressed the Israelites during the period of the Judges (e.g., Jerusalem, Gezer, Taanach, Dor, Megiddo, and Hazor; see Judges 1-4).

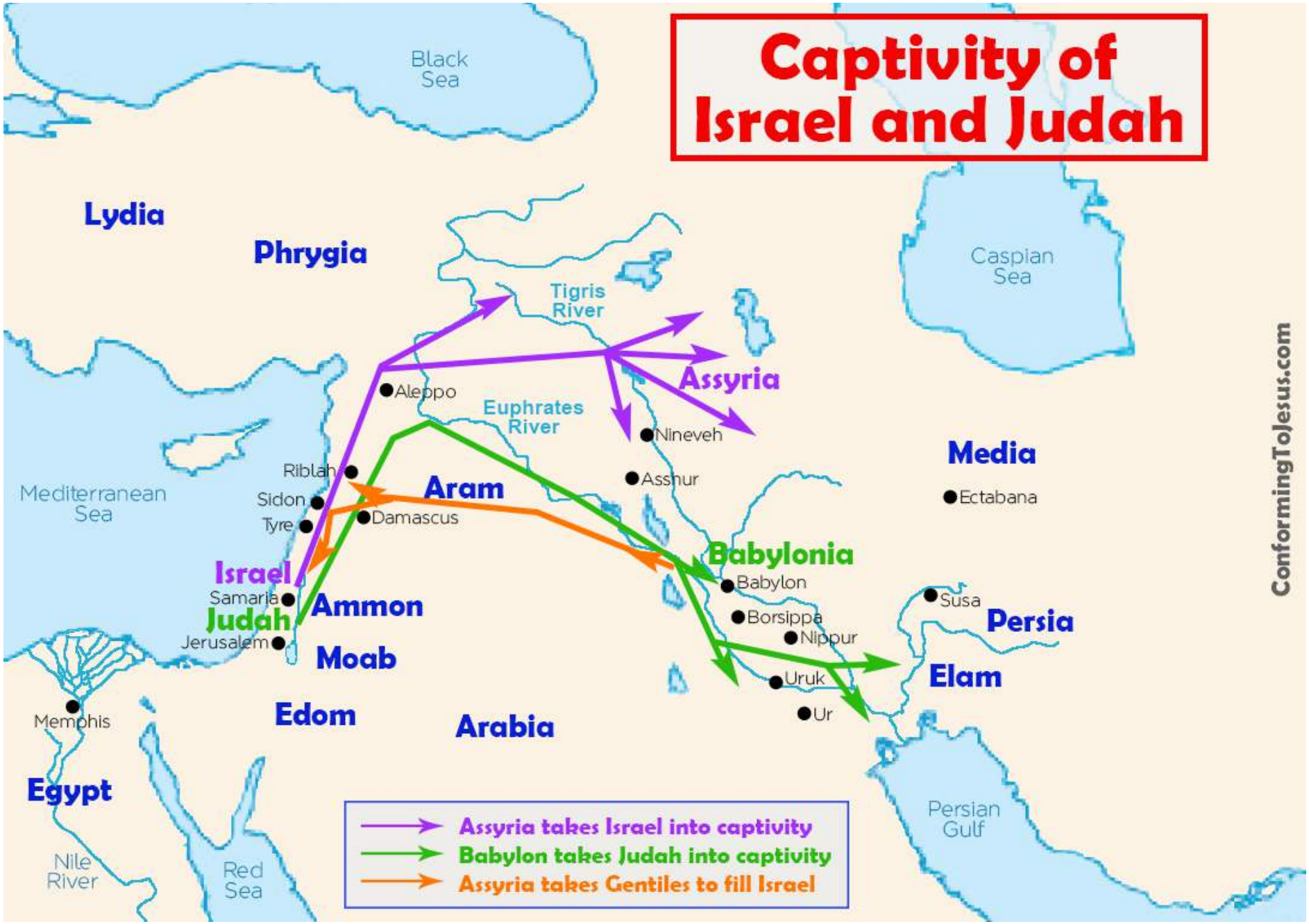



B7
Kingdom of David and Solomon
David's reign 1077-1038 B.C.E. Solomon's reign 1037-998 B.C.E.
Davidic covenant c. 1070 B.C.E.
4000 B.C.E.
2000 B.C.E.
B.C.E. / C.E.
2000 C.E.
David's Kingdom
Solomon's Kingdom
Imports
Exports
Euphrates River
Tiphsah
HAMATH
SYRIA (ARAM)
Hamath
To Syria, Hittites: Horses, Chariots
Orontes River
Riblah
Zedad
Ziphron
Hazar-enan
Tadmor (Palmyra)
ZOBAH, ARAM-ZOBAH
Lebo-hamath
Gebal
Copper
Berothai
From Tarshish: Gold, Silver, Ivory, Apes, Peacocks
SIDONIANS (PHOENICIA)
Lebanon Mts.
Anti-Lebanon Mts.
BETH-REHOB
Syrian Desert
Sidon
Damascus
Mt. Hermon
Tyre
Dan
Abel
Land of Cabul?
MAACAH, ARAM-MAACAH
From Tyre: Cedars, Junipers, Gold
Hazor
Argob
Bashan
GESHUR
Helam
Jezreel Valley
En-dor
Dor
Megiddo
Lo-debar
Mt. Gilboa
Rogelim
Beth-shean
Salecah
Jabesh-gilead?
Tob
Succoth
Mahanaim
Joppa
Zeredah
Shiloh
Gilead
AMMON
To Tyre: Barley, Wheat, Wine, Olive Oil
Ramah
Gilgal
Rabbah
Gezer
Jerusalem
Heshbon
Ekron
Gath
Bethlehem
Medeba
PHILISTIA
Gaza
Hebron
Aroer
En-gedi
Ziklag
Jattir
Bethel
MOAB
Beer-sheba
Ramoth
Mizpeh
Aroer
Valley of Salt?
Wadi of Egypt
Negeb
Tamar
Copper
Punon
Wilderness of Paran
EDOM
Arabian Desert
From Egypt: Horses, Chariots
From Ophir: Gold, Gems, Timber
From Arabia: Gold, Silver
0 mi 20
0 km 20
Ezion-geber
Eloth, Elath
Lower Beth-horon
Upper Beth-horon
Gibeon
Geba
Gezer
Gibeah
Kiriath-jearim
Anathoth
Baal-perazim
Nob
Bahurim
Ekron
Jerusalem
Gihon Spring
En-rogel Well
Beth-shemesh
Gath
Azekah
Bethlehem
Valley of Elah
Socoh
Adullam
Tekoa
Keilah
Giloh
Wilderness of Judah
Sirah Cistern
Hebron
Jeshimon
Ziph
Horesh
Carmel
Eshtemoa
Maon

Divided Kingdoms of Israel and Judah

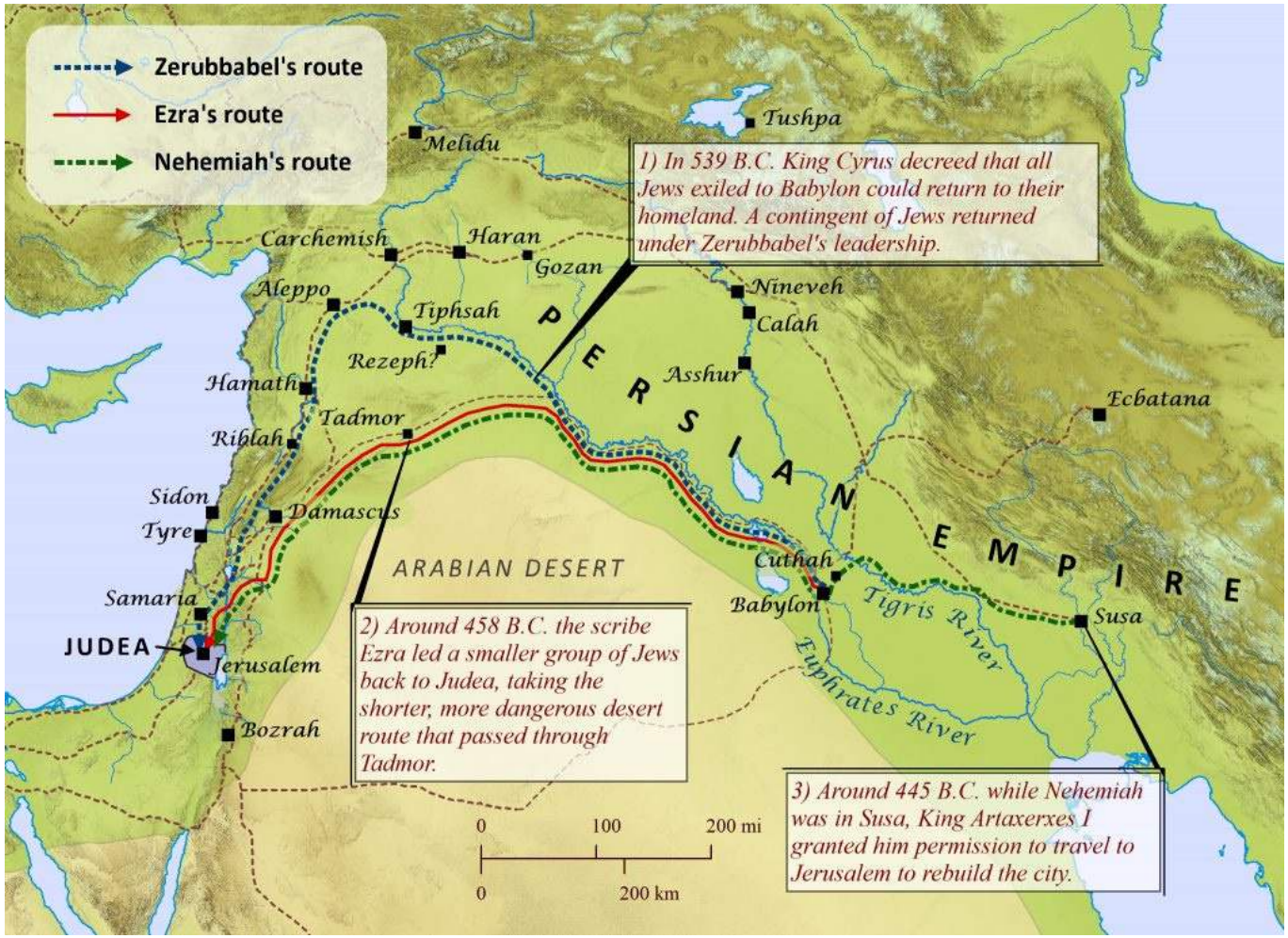


Map of the Assyrian and Babylonian Captivity of Israel and Judah



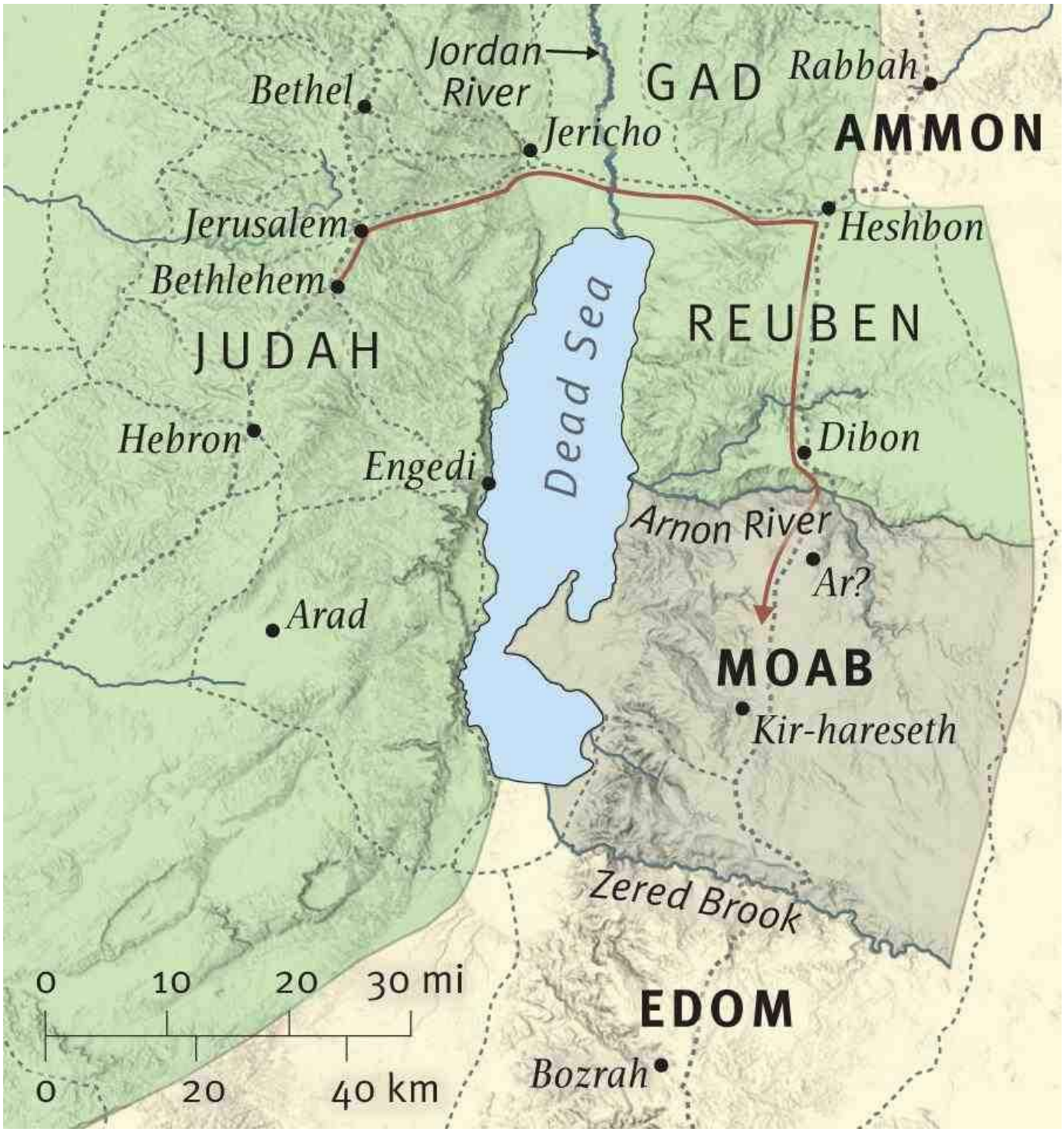
Jews Return from Exile

After many Judeans (now called Jews) had been living in exile in Babylonia for several decades, the Persian king Cyrus the Great conquered Babylon in 539 B.C., and a year later he decreed that all exiled Jews in his kingdom could return to their homeland (Ezra 1:1-4; 2 Chronicles 36:22-23). A short time after this a group of about 50,000 Jews returned to Judea, which was now a very minor province within the vast Persian Empire (Ezra 1-2). This first group of returnees was led by the newly appointed governor Zerubbabel (who was perhaps also called Sheshbazzar). This first group of Jews immediately restored the altar of the Temple (Ezra 3-4), and then by 516 B.C. they finished rebuilding the Temple of the Lord (Ezra 6; Haggai 1). Several decades after this in 458 B.C., King Artaxerxes I appointed the Jewish scribe Ezra to lead another group of about 5000 Jews to Judea to restore proper Temple worship (Ezra 7-8; Nehemiah 7). None of these Jews under Ezra's leadership would have been among those originally exiled from Judea, since Jerusalem had fallen to the Babylonians over 120 years earlier (2 Kings 24-25; 2 Chronicles 36; Jeremiah 39; 52). Then around 445 B.C., Nehemiah, a Jewish official in the Persian royal court, obtained permission from Artaxerxes I to travel to Judea to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Soon after Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem he organized those living in Jerusalem and the nearby towns into work teams and completed the walls in 52 days (Nehemiah 2:1-10).



The Setting of Ruth

A famine in Judah forces Naomi and her husband to leave Israel and move to Moab, where their sons marry Moabite women. When Naomi's husband and sons die, she decides to return to her home in Israel, and her daughter-in-law Ruth chooses to go with her. Ruth lived during the time of the judges.



Israel under the Maccabees

As the Seleucid Empire continued to lose land to rival powers and internal revolts, Antiochus IV Epiphanes sought to unify his diverse domain by forcing Greek religious and political practices upon all his subjects (1 Maccabees 1; 2 Maccabees 6-7). Eventually his harsh policies fomented open rebellion by faithful Jews under the leadership of Mattathias Maccabeus and his sons (1 Maccabees 2; 2 Maccabees 8). Beginning in Judea in 167 B.C., the Maccabean leaders established an independent kingdom and gradually accumulated more and more land until their domain roughly equalled the territory allotted to the twelve tribes of Israel (1 Maccabees 3-16; 2 Maccabees 9-15).



Divided Kingdom

Kings of Israel (North)

No.	King	Date BC	Bad/Good	Years Reigned	Relation to Predecessor	End of Reign	Scripture Reference
1	Jeroboam I	930–909	Bad	22		Stricken by God	1 Kings 11:26–14:20
2	Nadab	909–908	Bad	2	Son	Killed by Baasha	1 Kings 15:25-28
3	Baasha	908–886	Bad	24	Son of Ahijah	Died	1 Kings 15:16–16:7
4	Elah	886–885	Bad	2	Son	Killed by Zimri	1 Kings 16:6-14
5	Zimri	885	Bad	7 days	Captain of Chariot	Suicide by Fire	1 Kings 16:9-20
6	(Tibni)**	885–880	Bad	7	Son of Ginath	Died	1 Kings 16:21-22
7	Omri	885–874	Bad	12	Captain of Army	Died	1 Kings 16:23-28
8	Ahab	874–853	Bad	22	Son	Wounded in Battle	1 Kings 16:28–22:40
9	Ahaziah	853–852	Bad	2	Son	Fell to His Death	1 Kings 22:40–2 Kings 1:18
10	Joram	852–841	Bad	12	Brother	Killed by Jehu	2 Kings 3:1–9:25
11	Jehu	841–814	Bad	28	(none)	Died	2 Kings 9:1–10:36
12	Jehoahaz	814–798	Bad	17	Son	Died	2 Kings 13:1-9
13	Jehoash	798–782	Bad	16	Son	Died	2 Kings 13:10–14:16
14	Jeroboam II	793–753	Bad	41	Son	Died	2 Kings 14:23-29
15	Zechariah	753	Bad	6 months	Son	Killed by Shallum	2 Kings 14:29–15:12
16	Shallum	752	Bad	1 month	(none)	Killed by Menahem	2 Kings 15:10-15
17	Menahem	752–742	Bad	10	(none)	Died	2 Kings 15:15-22
18	Pekahiah	742–740	Bad	2	Son	Killed by Pekah	2 Kings 15:22-26
19	Pekah	740–732	Bad	20	Captain of Army	Killed by Hoshea	2 Kings 15:27-31
20	Hoshea	732–722	Bad	9	(none)	Exile to Assyria	2 Kings 15:30-17

* Shading indicates divisions between the nine dynasties that ruled the Northern Kingdom.
** Tibni, who unsuccessfully contended with Omri for the throne after Zimri's death, does not count as a separate dynasty. His name is in the chart because his reign is mentioned in the Bible, and because he is included in some lists of kings of Israel.

Kings of Judah (South)

No.	King	Date BC	Bad/Good	Years Reigned	Relation to Predecessor	End of Reign	Scripture Reference
1	Rehoboam I	930–913	Bad	17	Son of Solomon	Died	1 Kings 11:42–14:31
2	Abijah	913–910	Bad	3	Son	Died	1 Kings 14:31–15:8
3	Asa	910–869	Good	41	Son	Died	1 Kings 15:8-24
4	Jehoshaphat	872–848	Good	25	Son	Died	1 Kings 22:41-55
5	Jehoram	848–841	Bad	8	Son	Stricken by God	2 Kings 8:16-24
6	Ahaziah	841	Bad	1	Son	Killed by Jehu	2 Kings 8:24–9:29
7	Athaliah	841–835	Bad	7	Mother	Killed by Army	2 Kings 11:1-20
8	Joash	835–796	Good	40	Grandson	Killed by Servants	2 Kings 11:1–12:21
9	Amaziah	796–767	Good	29	Son	Killed by Court	2 Kings 14:1-20
10	Uzziah	792–740	Good	52	Son	Stricken by God	2 Kings 15:1-7
11	Jotham	750–732	Good	16	Son	Died	2 Kings 15:32-38
12	Ahaz	735–715	Bad	16	Son	Died	2 Kings 16:1-20
13	Hezekiah	715–686	Good	29	Son	Died	2 Kings 18:1–20:21
14	Manasseh	697–642	Bad	55	Son	Died	2 Kings 21:1-18
15	Amon	642–640	Bad	2	Son	Killed by Servants	2 Kings 21:19-26
16	Josiah	640–609	Good	31	Son	Wounded in Battle	2 Kings 22:1–23:30
17	Johoahaz	609	Bad	3 Months	Son	Exiled to Egypt	2 Kings 23:31-33
18	Jehoiakim	609–598	Bad	11	Brother	Died in Seige	2 Kings 23:34–24:5
19	Jehoiachin	598–597	Bad	3 Months	Son	Exiled to Babylon	2 Kings 24:6-16
20	Zedekiah	597–586	Bad	11	Uncle	Exiled to Babylon	2 Kings 24:17–25:30