



Many Jews were deported to Babylon from about 605 BCE to about 581 BCE ([2 Kings 24:15-25:21](#); [Jeremiah 52:28-30](#)). Isaiah's inspired prophecy, two centuries in advance, foretold that only a remnant with the Jews living in Babylon would choose to return to their homeland after freedom was granted. The following scriptures indicate that there was a community of exiles of Jews from Judah who remained in the Babylon area after Medo-Persian King Cyrus allowed Jews to return to the homeland beginning in 539 BCE. Since "the Scriptures" are "the word of God" ([John 10:35](#) NLT), we can believe whatever they state.

However, in the late 1880's cuneiform tablets discovered in Nippur, Iran revealed that many Jews were still living in Babylon, long after they were granted the freedom to return to their homeland by Persian King Cyrus in 539 BCE.

PROPHECY OF RETURN OF A REMNANT OF JEWS FROM FROM BABYLON

"A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God. For though your people, O Israel, may be like the sand of the sea, Only a remnant with them will return" ([Isaiah 10:21-22](#) LSB). Isaiah's inspired prophecy, two centuries in advance, foretold that only a remnant with the Jews living in Babylon would choose to return to their

homeland after freedom was granted.

“Know this first of all, that there is no prophecy of scripture that is a matter of personal interpretation, for no prophecy ever came through human, human beings moved by the holy Spirit, spoke under the influence of God” (2 Peter 1:20-21 NAB). In this article, we will see the truthfulness of what Peter was inspired to write – that prophecy comes from **“the God who cannot lie” (Titus 1:2 LSB).**

BIBLICAL EVIDENCE MANY JEWS WERE LIVING IN BABYLON

“In the thirtieth year, on the fifth day of the fifth day of the fourth month, when I was in the community of exiles by the Chebar Canal, the heavens opened and I saw visions of God. On the fifth day of the month—it was the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin” (Ezekiel 1:1-2 Tanakh). “The thirtieth year”, “which corresponds to the fifth year of exile” (NAB note), was the 30th year of Ezekiel’s life. “A number of dates in Ezekiel can be cross-checked with dates in surviving Babylonian records and related accurately to our modern calendar. This event occurred on July 31, 593 B.C.” (NLT footnote on Ezekiel 1:1). The point here is that there was a sizable ‘community of Jewish exiles’ living in the Babylon area, which where the Chebar Canal was located, and they had relative freedom.

“In the twenty-fifth year of our exile, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth of the month, in the fourteenth year, after the city was struck down, on the same day the hand of Yahweh was upon, and He brought there” (Ezekiel 40:1 LSB). “This lengthy vision of a new Temple and a restored Israel is dated in v, 1 to April 28, 573 B. C.”

BIBLICAL EVIDENCE OF THE RETURNS OF THE REMNANT

Under King Cyrus

“These are the people of the province who came up from among the captive exiles whom King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had carried into exile to Babylon, who returned to Judah and Jerusalem . . . The sum of the entire community was 42,360, not counting their male and female servants, those being 7,337, they also had 200 male and female singers” (Ezra 2:1,64-65 Tanakh). Ezra reports on this first group of Jewish returnees, which took place about 538-537 BCE. The total number of returnees was therefore about 50,000, a significant number to make such a long and arduous journey, yet, far less than the total number of Jews who were living in Babylon at that time.

Under King Artaxerxes

“This Ezra went up from Babylon . . . And some of the sons of Israel . . . went up to Jerusalem in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes . . . on the first day of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem” (Ezra 7:6-7 LSB). *“This date was April 8, 458 B.C.”—NLT footnote on Ezra 7:9.* Eighty years after the first group of returnees, this second group returned from among the many Jews still living in Babylon at that time.

“These are the chiefs of the clans and the register of the genealogy of those who came up with me from Babylon in the reign of King Artaxerxes . . . Zechariah; through him the genealogy of 150 males was registered . . . Elichoenai . . . with him 200 males. Of the sons of Shecaniah . . . and with him 300 males . . . Ebed . . . and with him 50 males . . . Jeshaiiah , , , and with him 70 males . . . Zebediah . . . and with him . . . 80 males . . . Obadiah . . . and with him 218 males . . . Shelomith . . . and with him 160 males . . . Zechariah . . . and with him 110 males . . . Eliphelet, Jeil, and Shemaiah; and with them 60 males . . . Uthai and Zacur; and with them 70 males . . . of the family of Mahli . . . 18 in all . . . of the family of Merai . . . 20 in all . . . 220 temple servants” (Ezra 8:1-20 Tanakh). Ezra records 1496 family heads returning with him in 458 BCE, plus 38 others. This group is estimated to have been about 5,000 total Jews, who came from among the many Jews still living in Babylon at that time.

BIBLICAL EVIDENCE JEWS REMAINED IN BABYLON AFTER REMNANT'S RETURN

“During all this time I was not in Jerusalem, for in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon, I had gone to the king” (Nehemiah 13:6 LSB). *“King Artaxerxes of Persia is here identified as the king of Babylon because Persia had conquered the Babylonian Empire. The thirty-second year of Artaxerxes was 433 B. C.” (NAB note on Nehemiah 13:6).* **“because I had returned to Artaxerxes king of Babylon.** *Nehemiah had initially been granted permission by King Artaxerxes to go to Jerusalem and rebuild the city. His return to the king indicates his continued loyalty and duty to the Persian empire, which ruled over the region at the time. Artaxerxes is referred to as the king of Babylon, reflecting the historical context where the Persian Empire had absorbed the Babylonian territories. This also shows the geopolitical landscape of the time, where Jerusalem was under foreign rule. in the thirty-second year of his reign.* This provides a specific historical timeframe for Nehemiah’s return to the Persian court, which is around 433 BC. The precision of this date helps to anchor the events of Nehemiah within the broader historical narrative of the Persian Empire and its interactions with the Jewish people. It also highlights the long duration of Artaxerxes’ reign and the stability of his rule, which allowed for such administrative arrangements.” (Bible Hub Study Bible). Nehemiah held a high position in Artaxerxes’ administration, and was a trusted confidant of the king (Nehemiah 2:1-8). The point here is that many Jews still lived and worked Persia, which had assumed the Babylonian Empire territory and subjects.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE OF MANY JEWS LIVING IN BABYLON LATER

Excerpted from *Keshur*, August 11, 2021

Jews and the Murashu Archive

It is well attested that a large number of Jewish exiles carried away by

Nebuchadnezzar were settled in the region of Nippur. James D. Purvis notes, “copies of contracts made by Jews and other documents concerning Jews testify to the existence of Jewish communities in 28 settlements in the Nippur area.”

*The biblical prophet Ezekiel mentions in multiple places “the community of exiles by the Chebar Canal.” This fact is introduced right away in the opening verse of the book: “In the thirtieth year, on the fifth day of the fourth month, when I was in the community of exiles by the Chebar canal, the heavens opened and I saw visions of God” (1:1 NJPS). Evidence for Jewish settlement in the Chebar region (in Akkadian, *naru kabari*), is also known from a number of other cuneiform inscriptions discovered at Nippur.*

An unusually large number of Jewish names known from the Hebrew Bible (especially from the books of Ezra and Nehemiah) eventually found their way into cuneiform texts and inscriptions, including the Murashu archive. Yah (or yaw), one of the Israelite references for God, is often found within Israelite personal names. According to Coogan, “Names [containing] yaw do not occur in Neo-Babylonian sources before the Exile, and their increasing frequency in the late sixth and fifth centuries can reasonably be associated with the gradual emancipation and increased prosperity of Judean exiles in Mesopotamia.”

Furthermore, as William M. Schniedewind adds:

These texts, written in Aramaic and Akkadian, mention about eighty distinctively Jewish personal names (Shabbatai, Minyamin, Haggai). These

people are presumed to be descendants of the Judean exiles who were still living in Babylonia in the late fifth century B.C.E. (i.e., in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah).

Some names, like Ḥanana (חנן, Chanan), Minaḥḥimmu (מנחם, Menachem), Miniamini (מינימין, Minyamin), or names compounded with ālī (אֵל, El) are attested elsewhere in Jewish contexts, but do not guarantee their bearers at Nippur were Jewish. They may have been Arameans or members of another West Semitic group living in Babylonia. However, undisputed evidence for the presence of Jews is furnished by such names as Aḥiyama (אחיה, Ahiyah, Aiyyah), Yaḥulakim (יהולכם, Yeholakhem), Yaḥulunu (יהולינן, Yeholanu), and Yaḥunatanu (יהונתן, Jonathan, Yehonatan), which are compounded with the Tetragrammaton or with some form of this name. We can also include names such as Shabbetai son of Haggai.

Purvis comments, "With the exception of some members of the royal Judahite family and aristocracy, the people . . . were settled on deserted agricultural land. . . . Their status probably did not permit them to be landowners; more likely, they were land-tenants on royal estates." He goes on to write, there is "evidence that the Babylonians settled Jewish deportees at or near the sites of ruined, abandoned cities, perhaps as part of a program to develop unused land resources." Some exiles may have also been conscripted into military or imperial services.

According to Schniedewind:

The neo-Babylonian empire required the deportation of massive populations

for its building programs. Robert McCormick Adam's archaeological survey of central Mesopotamia discovered pronounced increases in the population of the region. He concluded that these increases were due to massive involuntary transfers of people from the Babylonian conquests. These transfers apparently included three separate deportations of Judeans to Babylon (Jer 52:28-30). The Babylonians seem to have tried to rehabilitate this desolate region by populating it with captives. We now have Babylonian texts that confirm that at least some of the Judean exiles were deported to the central Euphrates region. Babylonian sources suggest that these exiles lived together in a "Judean village." They were not citizens of the empire; they were isolated in a type of labor camp.

Purvis argues (along with other scholars), that "the people did not live in 'captivity'; they were settled on deserted agricultural land where they were free, as Jeremiah says, to 'build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce.' "

CONCLUSION

"The living and enduring word of God. For, 'all people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures forever'" (1 Peter 1:23-25 NIV)

The Bible's prophetic record marks it as unique among all sacred texts!

It is very interesting how cuneiform texts discovered in the late 1800's confirmed the Bible record that many Jews remained in Babylon, after the Jews were allowed to return to their

ancestral home of Judah and Jerusalem. This is yet another case where the Bible record is confirmed by archaeological and historical records. This stands in stark contrast to other documents considered to be sacred, such as the Book of Mormon, the Koran, Hindu writings, etc, And, in contrast to other works considered to be sacred, the as more discoveries are made as time passes by, the more the Bible is confirmed as true.