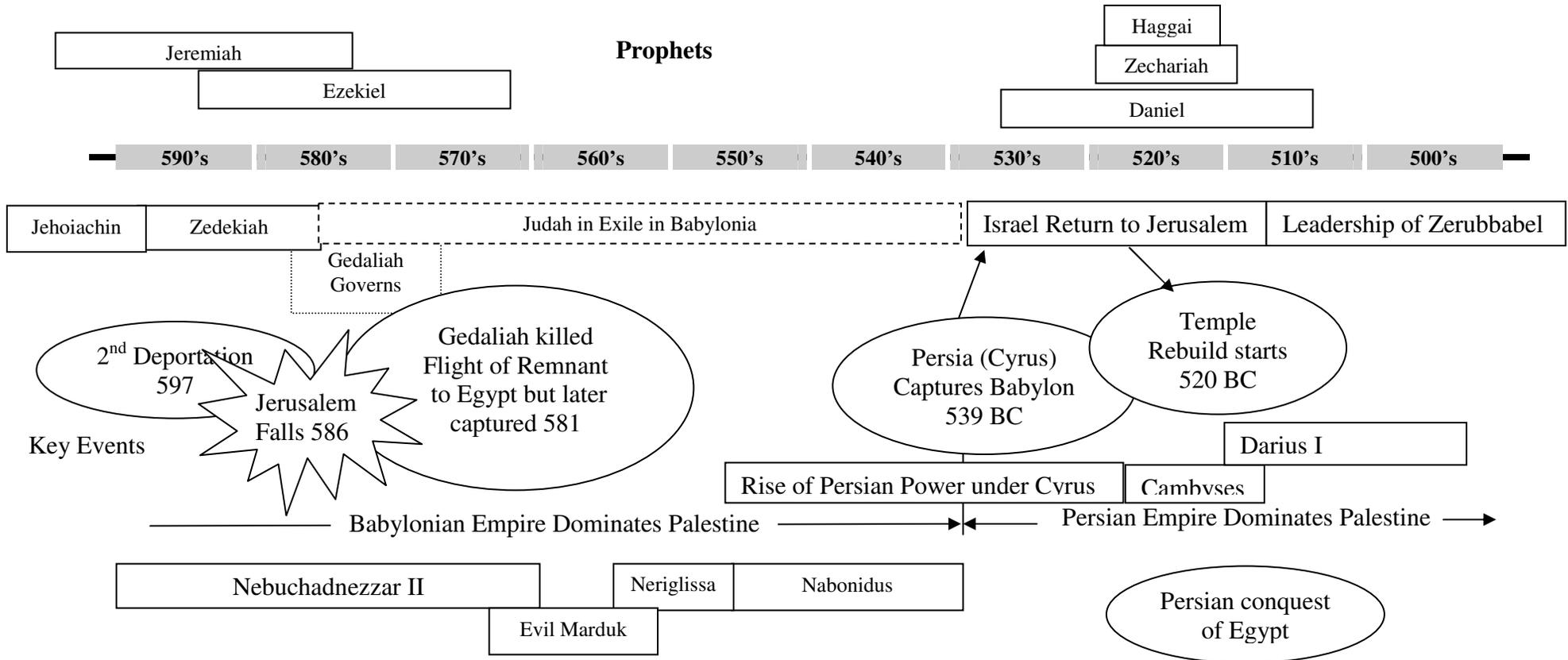


# Sixth Century B.C. – Israel’s Timeline



## Summary of the Century:

The sixth century BC is characterized at the time when all of Israel including Judah was dispersed among other nations. During this time, Judah went into exile in Babylon and the Northern kingdom remained dispersed in the nations the Assyrians had settled them in. The Babylonian Empire was the predominant power in the region and dominated Palestine although not to same level of intensity as the Assyrians had during the previous century. The major event of the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the century was the destruction of Jerusalem in 586BC by the Babylonians and subsequent exile of Judah. The major event in the latter part was the overthrow of the Babylonian empire by Cyrus of Persia who allowed the Israelites to return to Jerusalem and reconstruct the temple.

## More Detail;

Early in the century, the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar II came against Judah and their king Jehoiachin after a short reign of 3 months and carried him into captivity. At this time a deportation of the royal family and a plundering of Jerusalem occurred. Zedekiah was placed on the throne of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar as he left. Some time after he left, Zedekiah conspired with other leaders in the region and a rebellion was undertaken around 590 BC which appears to relate to the withholding of tribute. A local prophet Hannaniah had falsely prophesied in favor of a successful rebellion and short captivity for Judah but Jeremiah opposed him on God's behalf and even sent a letter to the exiles encouraging them to settle in for a long exile. Jeremiah was ultimately imprisoned. In his act of rebellion, Zedekiah sealed Israel's fate as Babylon returned in force set siege to Jerusalem. Two years later in 586BC Jerusalem fell and many people died. Nebuchadnezzar executed the ruling class and carried many of those who were not killed into exile. A remnant of poorer people were left under the governorship of Gedaliah at Mizpah and Jeremiah was freed. The great destruction prophesied for so many years because of Judah's sins had finally occurred.

Not long after this, Gedaliah was assassinated by Ishmael an officer in his court at the instigation of the Ammonite king Baalis. Ishmael was not able to retain control long and in 581 Babylon returned again to deal with the insurrection and exiled some more of the people. At this time some of the remnant in Judah fled to Egypt and took Jeremiah with them. Jeremiah prophesied against them. The Babylonians ultimately followed, captured or killed some of them and took others into exile. Jeremiah was again freed.

Near the middle of the sixth century BC, Cyrus the Persian began assembling power for the Persian empire through conquests of Lydia and Media. In 539 BC the Persians conquered Babylon, took control of the areas the exiles lived and began a two century domination of Palestine. Cyrus saw himself as a restorer and granted the Israelites permission to return to Jerusalem shortly after he conquered Babylon. The temple itself was also to be reconstructed at Cyrus expense but it was not completed until the reign of Darius I. Cyrus also appointed a governor over the area of Judah named Sheshbazzar. During his term the return of the Israelites to Judah is thought to have been limited and focused on those whom "God stirred" to go back and work to restore the temple. Following Cyrus as king of Persia was Cambyses who conquered Egypt. During his reign more people returned to Israel as recorded in the book of Ezra under the leadership of Zerubbabel who was member of the Davidic family. The century ended with Darius I succeeding Cambyses as king of Persia and Zerubbabel governing Judah.