

Chapter IV

The Destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem



Battering Ram & Archers
from Nineveh Marbles



Archers
from Nineveh Marbles

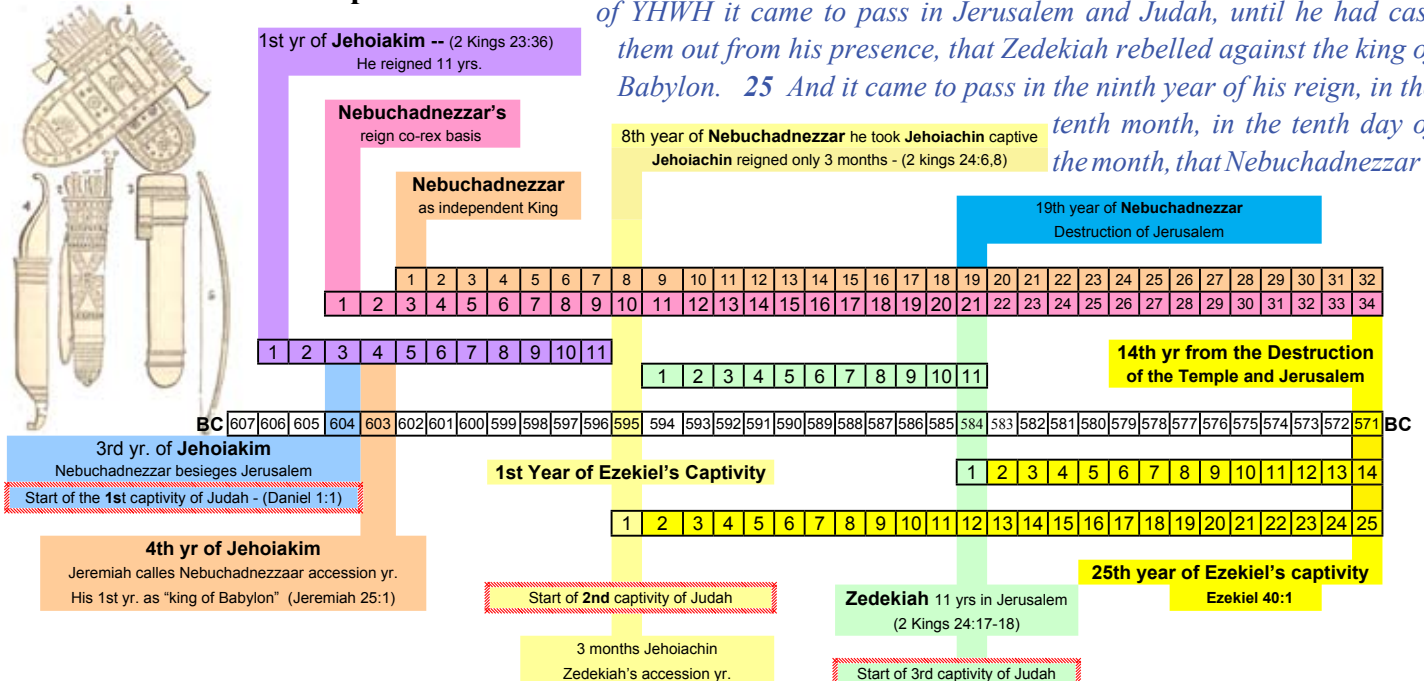
It took 7 years for Solomon to build and only a few days to be destroyed. The center of Jewish religious practice razed to the ground. With its destruction went the last vestige of hope that things would ever be the same. Without the Temple how could the precepts of Torah be kept? With Jerusalem destroyed and the people captive, the great pilgrimages to celebrate the religious festivals for a time were over. YHWH was angry with His people because of their sin. Jerusalem was less than a shadow of its former glory.

After Jehoiachin was removed his uncle, Zedekiah was placed on the throne of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar. Zedekiah ruled for 11 years. His first year of rule was 594 BC. In his 9th year of rule in keeping with the tradition of his fathers he also rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar. This caused Nebuchadnezzar to come up and besiege Jerusalem a 3rd time. This siege of Jerusalem lasted from the 9th year of Zedekiah until his 11th year. This time the city and the Temple were not spared. Both the city and the Temple were completely burned and destroyed. Except for a few of the poor, the remaining people were taken captive to Babylon. This started the 3rd captivity of Judah. Here is the account from the Scripture:

2 Kings 24:18 - 25:12

¹⁸ Zedekiah was twenty and one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. ¹⁹ And he did that which was evil in the sight of YHWH, according to all that Jehoiakim had done. ²⁰ For through the anger of YHWH it came to pass in Jerusalem and Judah, until he had cast them out from his presence, that Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon. ²⁵ And it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadnezzar ²

Table 3.1 -- The captivities of Judah



came, he, and all his host, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it; and they built forts against it round about. And the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah. ³ And on the ninth day of the fourth month the famine prevailed in the city, and there was no bread for the people of the land. ⁴ And the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled by night by the way of the gate between two walls, which is by the king's garden: (now the Chaldees were against the city round about:) and the king went the way toward the plain. ⁵ And the army of the Chaldees pursued after the king, and overtook him in the plains of Jericho: and all his army were scattered from him. ⁶ So they took the king, and brought him up to the king of Babylon to Riblah; and they gave judgment upon him. ⁷ And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters of brass, and carried him to Babylon. ⁸ **And in the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month, which is the nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, came Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem:** ⁹ **And he burnt the house of YHWH, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man's house burnt he with fire.** ¹⁰ *And all the army of the Chaldees, that were with the captain of the guard, brake down the walls of Jerusalem round about.* ¹¹ *Now the rest of the people that were left in the city, and the fugitives that fell away to the king of Babylon, with the remnant of the multitude, did Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carry away.* ¹² **But the captain of the guard left of the poor of the land to be vinedressers and husbandmen.**

From this account we have two ways of determining the year of the destruction of Jerusalem. We can use the 11th year of Zedekiah in combination with what we know about the chronology of the other kings of Judah to arrive at the year. We can also calculate the date based on 19th year of Nebuchadnezzar. They both give the same date of 584 BC. This year marked the start of the 3rd captivity of Judah and a desolation period in Judah and Jerusalem. The destruction of Jerusalem was complete and total. The center of Israel's political and religious life was destroyed. Its inhabitants became captives in a strange land.



There is another extremely important passage in Ezekiel that has relevance to the destruction of Jerusalem. I will exam it more closely in our later investigations. For now it will only be briefly mentioned. It is found in Ezekiel chapters 8-10. Here we see the precursor to the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem. In the 6th year and the 6th month Ezekiel received a vision. He goes on to describe this vision in chapters 8-10. What he sees is the departure of the Shekina from Jerusalem and the Temple. In context this 6th year and 6th month of Ezekiel 8 is in reference to the number of years from the start of their captivity (Ezekiel's). This supposition is verified later by the prophet Zechariah. For now we will just note that the 6th year and the 6th month of Ezekiel's captivity is when the Shekina departed the Temple and Jerusalem. This was near the end of the year 590 BCE and just over 6 years before the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem in 584 BCE.

Jeremiah 38:23

²³ So they shall bring out all thy wives and thy children to the Chaldeans: and thou shalt not escape out of their hand, but shalt be taken by the hand of the king of Babylon: and thou shalt cause this city to be burned with fire.

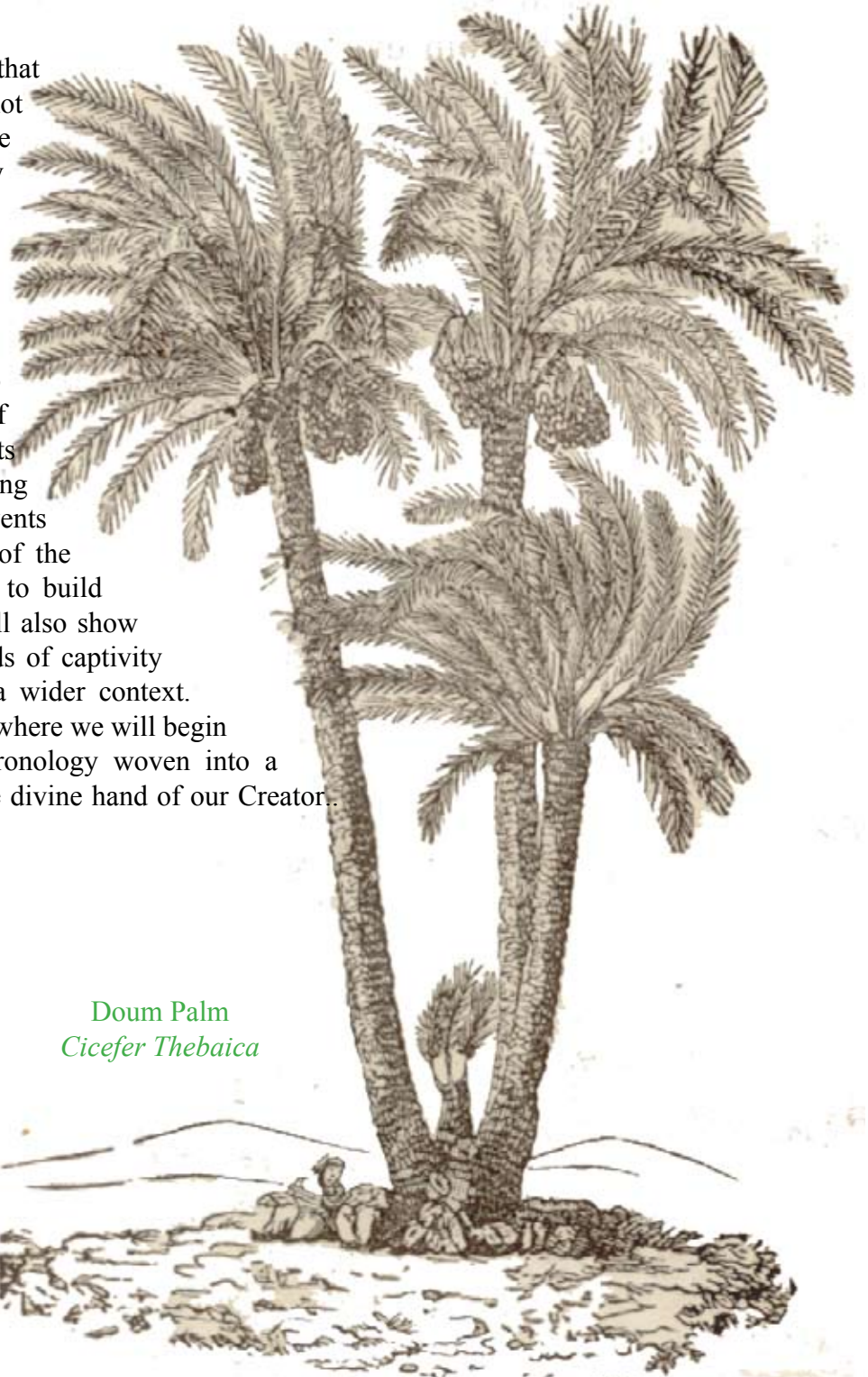
With the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, 20 of the 70 years of Jeremiah have passed. The prophets Daniel and Ezekiel along with all but a very small remnant of the people are captives in the land of Babylon. Their hope and yearning is to return to the land of Israel and restore Jerusalem.

In these 1st 4 chapters we have been able to synchronize the following events and show their contextual relevance to each other:

1. The period of Daniel's captivity which started in the year 604 BC.
2. This marked the start of 1st captivity of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar.
3. The captivity of Ezekiel and the 2nd captivity of Judah began in the year 595 BC.
4. The captivity of Jehoiachin and the 1st full year of Zedekiah's rule fell in the year 594 BC.
5. The Destruction of Jerusalem fell in the year 584 BC.
6. This date is synchronized by the 11th year of Zedekiah and the 19th year of Nebuchadnezzar.
7. The year 584 BC also started the 3rd captivity of Judah.

It is important to note here that as we have seen all Judah was not taken captive at one time. There were several successive periods of captivity beginning in 604 BC. So too we find that the return of the captives to Judah and Jerusalem did not happen all at one time. The return also involved several successive periods. Also important, especially as it relates to the "command to restore and build" of Daniel 9, was the successive attempts to build the Temple. In the following chapters we will identify the events and people surrounding the return of the Judean captives and their struggles to build the Temple and Jerusalem. We will also show how each of these successive periods of captivity and return relate to each other in a wider context. This wider context or macro-view is where we will begin to see these various threads of chronology woven into a tapestry of exceptional genius by the divine hand of our Creator.

2 Chronicles 36:18-21 ¹⁸ *And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of YHWH, and the treasures of the king, and of his princes; all these he brought to Babylon.* ¹⁹ **And they burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof.** ²⁰ *And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia:* ²¹ **To fulfil the word of YHWH by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years.**



Doum Palm
Cicefer Thebaica