
FROM UR OF CALDEA TO BETHLEHEM OF JUDAH

Mission 4. Kings, prophets and slaves

Research 2. Prophets (3 points)

The prosperity of the monarchy has its price. Each time there is more and more discontent with the demands of the kingdom, its taxes and the work that the people have to do for it. The discontent is such that they are divided in two. Their political and religious leaders take advantage of the poorest and they are unfair with them. Besides, with the mixture of cultures, some worship other gods and they forget their commitment of faithfulness to the Alliance with God. To make things worse, the weakening of their kingdoms have them invaded, oppressed and exiled by other foreign nations.



In this devastating situation, some people try to encourage people and give them hope. They are some men inspired by God to speak for him and to transmit people his word.

Who are the prophets and what is their mission?



The most important prophets from the Northern Kingdom are Elijah and Elisha. At that time of hardships (IX b.C.) they encourage people to keep faithful to their God, but, in spite of their efforts, many people fell in the idolism and social injustice, that is, they were not faithful to the Alliance with their God.

Weakened, they could not face the Assyrian armies.

Do you remember the name of the Prophets coming from the Northern Kingdom?

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The prophets from the Southern Kingdom, the Kingdom of Judah, are Isaiah (VIII b.C.) and Jeremiah (VII-VI b.C.). In the year 587 b.C., the king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar conquered the Southern Kingdom and its inhabitants were deported to Babylon, where they remained for almost 50 years.

In the Bible the following prophetic books have been preserved:

- The books from the 12 so called “minor prophets” (their books are not long enough).
- The books from the 4 so called “major prophets” (their books are long). The major prophets are: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel.

In that exile years, the prophets and some priests and learned people (who could read and write) were devoted to maintain the faith and the identity of their people in the foreign land (to encourage to obey the Law of Moses; to rest on the seventh day; to remember their ancestors and their traditions; to celebrate their cult with prayers, sacrifices, and celebrate their festivities) and they began to compile and write many of their traditions.

What did the prophets, the priests and learned people do to maintain the faith and the identity of their people?

In the 539 b.C., Cyrus, King of Persia, allows the return of the Jew to their former land (Palestine). The common identity as a nation and the idea of a land of their own emerged.



They rebuilt the temple and they organised their life around the Law and cult, with their hope on the Messiah they waited for. They created the Sinagoges as meeting places for the prayer and study of the Law. In that way, Judaism emerged as an organised religion.

However, in the 333 b.C. Alexander the Great conquered the Middle East and Israel becomes part of the Greek Empire. Finally, in the year 63 b.C., Palestine becomes a Roman province.