



The Gentile Empires of the Ancient Middle East

Egyptians - Imperial overlords of Palestine and many surrounding territories for most of 3rd and 2nd millennia BC.

Assyrians - King Sennacherib destroys the northern Kingdom of Israel & its capital Samaria; the ten northern tribes of Israelites are exiled and scattered throughout the Assyrian Empire (721 - 600's BC).

BABYLONIANS - King Nebuchadnezzar captures the southern Kingdom of Judah, destroys the Temple and city of Jerusalem; many Jews taken captive to Babylon for several generations, in what is called the "Babylonian Exile" (587 - 539 BC).

MEDO-PERSIAN EMPIRE:

MEDES - a smaller kingdom which never directly ruled Israel, but helped others defeat the Assyrians and Babylonians; it was then incorporated into the Persian empire, becoming its largest province (by 550 BC).

PERSIANS - King Cyrus conquers the Babylonian empire, allows the Jews to return to Judea and rebuild the temple; the Persians control Judea through approved local leaders (539 - 330's BC).

GRECIAN EMPIRE:

GREEKS - After Alexander the Great becomes King of Macedonia (332 BC), his armies conquer the East (almost the whole Persian empire), but he dies very young (323 BC). His Hellenistic empire is then divided between four generals, who battle each other in the "Wars of the Diadochi." Eventually, two long-reigning dynasties rule in the East:

Ptolemies - Greek rulers from Egypt who also control Palestine at first (ca. 323 - 198 BC);

Seleucids - Greek rulers from Syria who take over control of Palestine later (198 - 141 BC); the tenth in this dynasty (if starting from Alexander) is:

Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who desecrates the Jerusalem Temple by placing statues in it (167 BC), thereby sparking the "Maccabean Revolt"; the Jews soon recapture and rededicate the Temple (164 BC).

[Maccabean/Hasmonean Dynasty] - the Jews briefly regain full independence (141 - 63 BC).

ROMAN Empire:

General Pompey leads the Roman take-over of Israel in 63 BC

Imperial Rome - Begins with Cesar Augustus

At Nero's command Vespasian leads the Roman Army against Jerusalem

Titus destroys Jerusalem in 70 AD