



The Superpowers Move In

During the period of the Old Testament, 4 superpowers turned their unwelcome attention on Palestine:

- 1 **Egypt.** The great southern power in the Old Testament, Egypt was in gradual decline. This was occasionally halted by a number of powerful kings, some of whom invaded Palestine and challenged the northern superpowers. Judah and Israel were often tempted to form alliances with Egypt against the north.
- 2 **Assyria.** The Assyrians were the first of a succession of empires that swallowed up parts of Palestine. They exiled Israel and subdued Judah. The empire collapsed when Nineveh fell to the Babylonians in 612 BC.
- 3 **Babylon.** The Babylonian Empire took over where the Assyrians left off. They took Judah into exile and successfully invaded Egypt. But their power was eroded by a series of weak rulers. In 539 BC Cyrus the Persian took over the empire with little opposition.
- 4 **Persia.** The Persian Empire was larger than its two predecessors. It was also more humane in returning exiles (Judah among them) to their homelands. The Persian empire was overrun by Alexander the Great