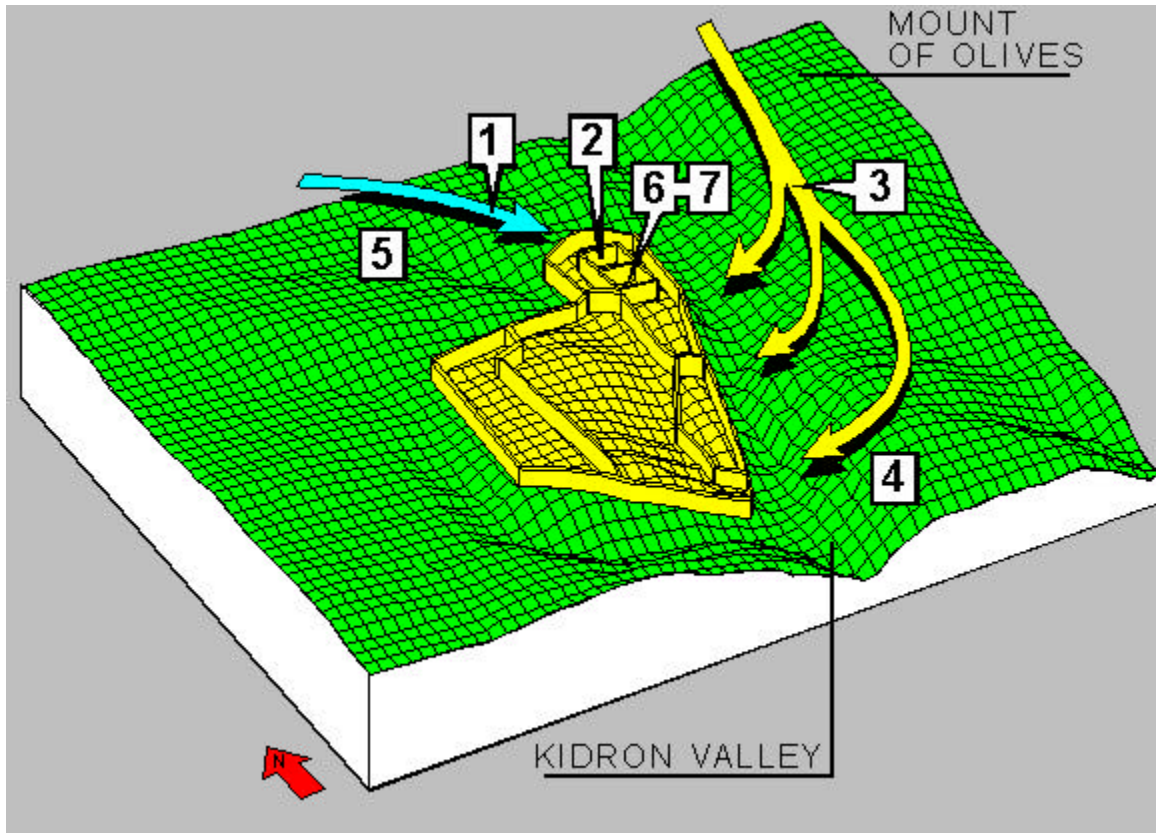


The Siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians

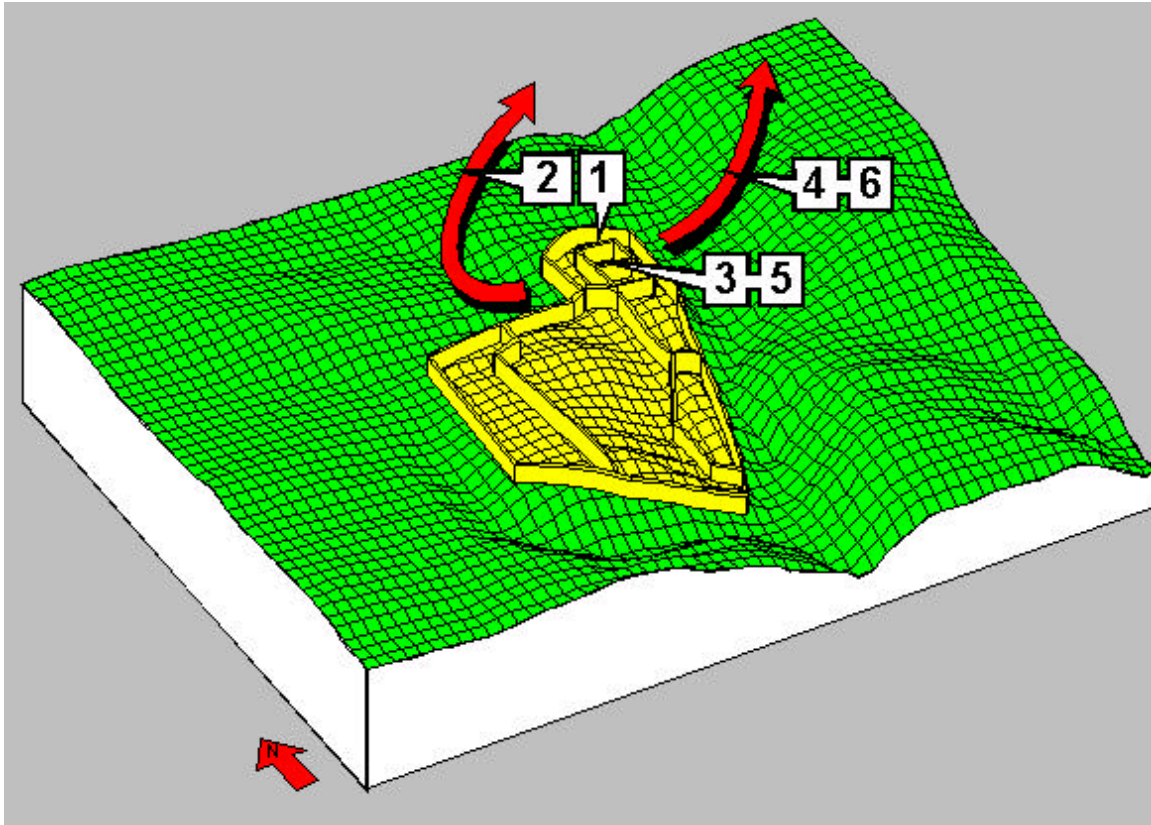


Inside the Siege

Jerusalem had surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar, emperor of Babylon, in 597 BC. He put Zedekiah on the throne. But Zedekiah hoped to throw off Babylonian rule. He became a focus for discontent in the region.

- 1 Foreign ambassadors come to Zedekiah to plot against Babylon. Jeremiah the prophet wears a wooden yoke and urges them to submit to Babylon or be destroyed (Jeremiah 27).
- 2 A false prophet, Hananiah, breaks Jeremiah's yoke in the temple. He says Babylon's power will be broken. Jeremiah starts to wear an iron yoke (Jeremiah 28).
- 3 Nebuchadnezzar hears of Zedekiah's rebellion. He besieges Jerusalem with siege mounds (2 Kings 25:1-2).
- 4 An Egyptian army approaches to relieve Jerusalem. The siege is lifted temporarily (Jeremiah 37:1-11).
- 5 Jeremiah tries to leave the city on family business, but is arrested at the city gate (Jeremiah 37:12-21). Siege is renewed and food supplies run out.
- 6 Jeremiah is imprisoned in the palace courtyard. Thrown into a dry cistern for telling people to surrender to Babylon. Rescued later (Jeremiah 38:1-13).
- 7 Kept in the courtyard, Jeremiah buys a field. He is confident that God will one day restore the land to Israel (Jeremiah 32:1-15).

The Fall of Jerusalem, 586 BC

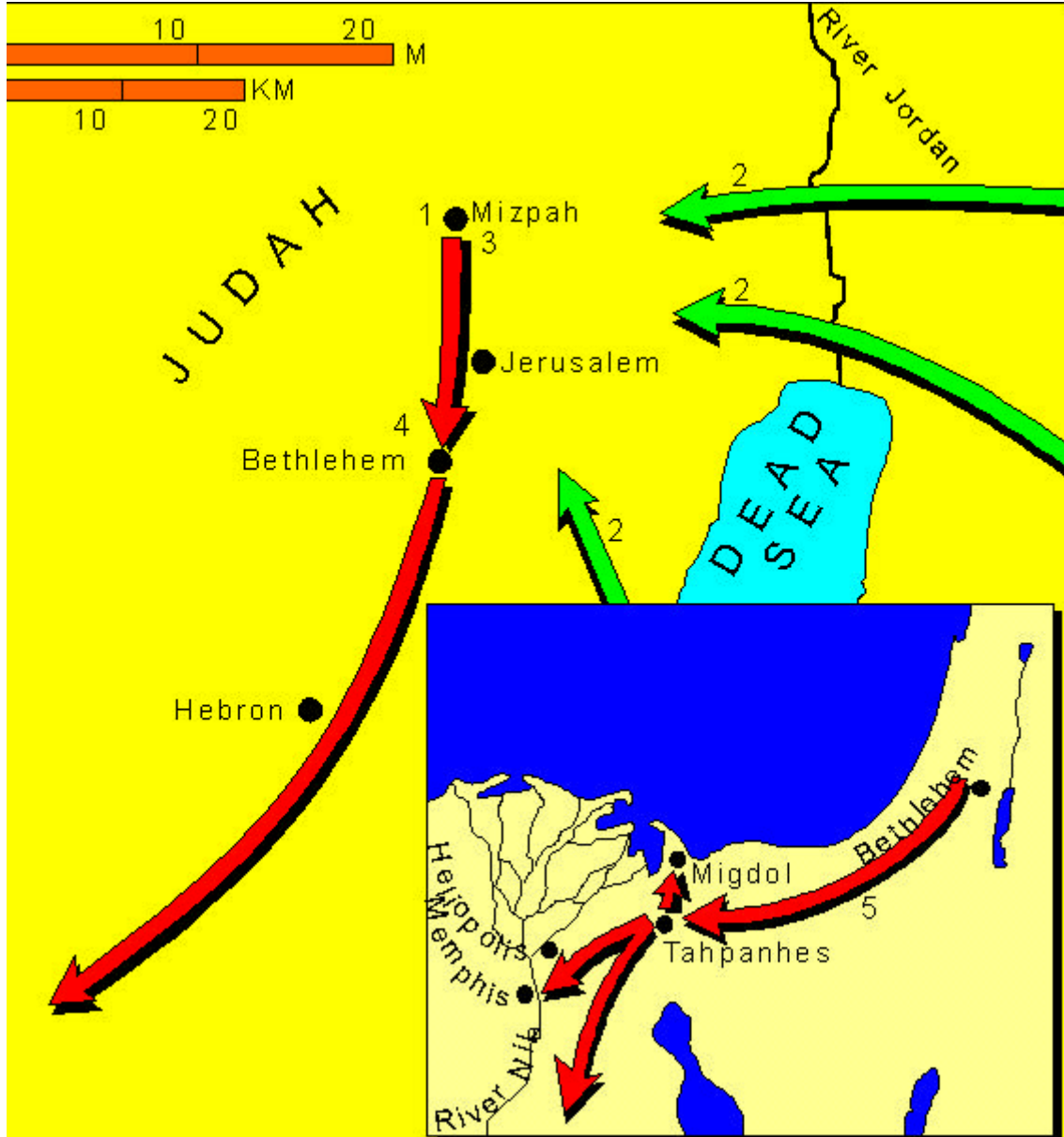


Jerusalem Falls

- 1 After 18 months of siege, in 586 BC, the Babylonians break through Jerusalem's wall. Babylonian high officials enter the city and sit in the middle gate (Jeremiah 39:1-3).
- 2 That night Zedekiah and his troops flee the city. They are soon captured near the Jordan Valley. Zedekiah's troops desert him, his sons are killed and he is blinded and led into exile (2 Kings 25:3-7).
- 3 The commander of Babylon's army enters Jerusalem. He burns down the temple, palace, and important buildings of the city. The walls are demolished.
- 4 The people of Jerusalem are taken into exile, leaving only the poorest farm workers.
- 5 The commander also removes the remaining temple equipment and anything of value (2 Kings 25:8-17).
- 6 Jeremiah is spotted among the prisoners by the commander, who has orders from Nebuchadnezzar to release him. Jeremiah goes to live with his friend Gedaliah, new Babylonian governor of Judah (Jeremiah 40:1-6).

The rebellious city receives the punishment the prophets had predicted for it. The destruction is God's judgment on his unfaithful people.

Jeremiah taken to Egypt



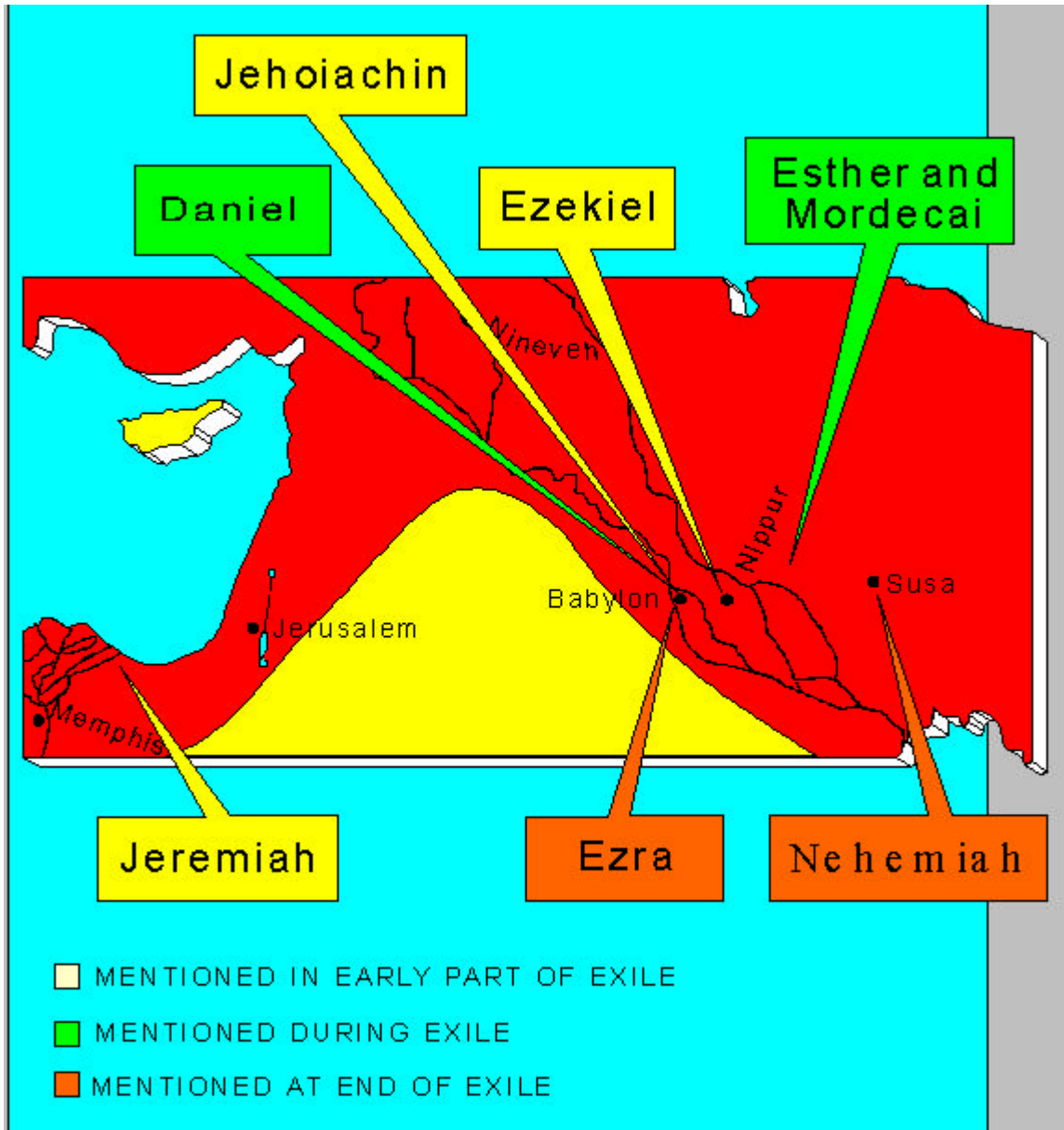
Kidnapped to Egypt

Jeremiah the prophet is forcibly taken to Egypt.

- 1 Gedaliah is made governor of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar after the exile of King Zedekiah.
- 2 Scattered exiles from Ammon, Moab, and Edom return to Judah and help to gather the first harvest after the invasion.
- 3 Ishmael, a member of the old royal family, leads a group of 10 escaped Judean soldiers to Mizpah. There they murder Gedaliah whom they see as a puppet of Babylon.
- 4 A large group, terrified of reprisals from Babylon, sets out for Egypt. At Bethlehem they kidnap Jeremiah, forcing him to go with them.
- 5 The group travels as far as Tahpanhes in Egypt. They settle in various parts of the country.

- 6 Eighteen years later, as Jeremiah prophesied, Nebuchadnezzar conquers Egypt and takes Jews from there into exile. Jeremiah himself probably died in Egypt (2 Kings 25:22-26; Jeremiah 40).

The Exiled Prophets



Who's Who in the Exile

- 1 **Jehoiachin**. Exiled from Jerusalem at 18, having ruled 3 months. Probably kept under house arrest until 37 years later given a place of honour in the royal court. Seen as important figure by the Jewish exiles. Probably died during the exile (2 Kings 24:1-15; 25:27).

- 2 **Daniel.** Exiled with King Jehoiachin. Selected for training to serve in the royal court of Babylon. Daniel rose to become head of the royal advisers. Later in the exile, he was put in charge of all the Empire's governors. Some traditions say he returned to Jerusalem at the end of exile.
- 3 **Ezekiel.** Exiled with King Jehoiachin. He prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem, and later, that the exiles would return to Jerusalem with its rebuilt temple. Probably died before the end of exile.
- 4 **Esther and Mordecai.** Esther became queen to Xerxes, the Persian emperor, not long before the return of Nehemiah to Jerusalem. With her cousin Mordecai, she prevented the persecution of Jews throughout the Persian Empire. Mordecai became a powerful figure in Xerxes' court.
- 5 **Jeremiah.** Forced to go to Egypt at the start of Judah's exile by a group who fled after killing the Babylonian governor of Judah. He spent the rest of his life in Egypt (Jeremiah 43).
- 6 **Ezra.** A high official in the Persian Empire—'minister for Jewish affairs.' Emperor Artaxerxes I sent him to Jerusalem to reform the people there in accordance with Jewish Law. He led the fourth group of exiles home (Ezra 7).
- 7 **Nehemiah.** Cupbearer to Artaxerxes I, Nehemiah was sent by the emperor in 45 BC to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. He led the third group of exiles home (Nehemiah 1).
- 8 **Ordinary people.** Many Jews in the exile became prosperous (see Ezra 2:68-69). Living in ghettos in Babylon and other places, they stayed together. But despite their wealth they despaired at the loss of their land and heritage. Psalm 137 expresses their feelings.