

TIMELINE

History

from the Return to the close
of the Old Testament

538 BC
1ST RETURN UNDER
ZERUBABEL

Return of the first group of exiles under Zerubbabel and Jeshua, they begin to build the Temple but soon quit from a combination of fear and distraction.

520-518 BC
PROPHETS HAGGAI AND
ZECHARIAH PREACH

Haggai and Zechariah preach and remind the people that building God's house is the most important thing they are supposed to do and that He will protect them. They finish the Temple.

483-473 BC
ESTHER

The book of Esther takes place back in Persia. She is Queen and is used by God to rescue her people from threatened destruction; challenged by her uncle Mordecai. Purim commemorates this.

458-456 BC
2ND RETURN UNDER EZRA

Ezra the priest, (a descendant of Aaron, the high priest) leads a much smaller group back. His goal is to teach and spiritually restore the people, who were returning to sinful ways, particularly in marrying heathen women.

444-432 BC
NEHEMIAH'S 1ST TRIP

Nehemiah goes to rebuild the wall, which he does in 52 days. Stays as governor for 12 years; various reforms in partnership with Ezra, including spiritual revival, and economic justice. He also stands up to Israel's enemies.

432-430 BC
NEHEMIAH BRIEFLY
LEAVES AND RETURNS

Upon Nehemiah's return, he finds people had resumed neglect of the Temple, marriage to pagan women, and economic sins. Harsh words and discipline follow.

435 BC
PROPHET MALACHI
PREACHES

Prophet Malachi preaches against the same sins Ezra and Nehemiah pointed out. The people not following God in marriage or Temple observances, rob God by not giving as they should. The book ends with challenges.

430 BC
OLD TESTAMENT
ENDS, BEGINNING OF
400 SILENT YEARS

Promise for those who followed God through it all, *"Then those who feared the Lord talked with each other, and the Lord listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honored His name. 'They will be mine,' says the Lord Almighty, (Mal. 3:16-17)"*

TIMELINE of the Return from Exile to the Close of the Old Testament

The timeline of events when the Jews return from exile in Babylon can be confusing in that the books that describe them in our Bibles are not in historical order and the prophets who preached during this time are at the end of the Old Testament.

In the historical timeline, the book of Esther takes place near the beginning of the book of Ezra. An initial return to the land took place before her story and another return to the land takes place after it.

The prophets Haggai and Zechariah preach approximately 18 years after the first return to encourage the people to finish building the Temple. They had become discouraged and distracted and the prophet's preaching encouraged them to finish the Temple.

Though the Temple was rebuilt, the people needed spiritual rebuilding and God calls Ezra to take a much smaller group back to do that.

His preaching challenges the people, but the walls are not rebuilt, and the city is filled with rubble. God calls Nehemiah to rebuild and clean up the city of Jerusalem which he does.

The prophet Malachi is preaching either somewhat earlier or at the same time Nehemiah is working and challenging the people.

The Old Testament ends with the people never again serving pagan Gods, though as a nation they are not totally committed to worshipping the God who has cared for them through thousands of years.