

Leader's Guide: Context is the Key

# *Leader's Guide*

## *Context is the Key*

### *Looking at the Forest*

These leader's guides are designed to help stimulate our thinking in terms of how we can get the most out of the material and help others to fish out insights that perhaps are not so apparent to them. These documents are living papers and will be updated regularly. Feel free to add your own discussion topics!

We will list the section and page number(s) from *The Ezra 7<sup>th</sup> Plan Book 1– First Love: A Heart to Understand* for easy referencing.

### ***Historical Context***

Pages 137 – 146

- 1 Ask the group if they have any questions about the information in this section.
- 2 Review the homework on pages 145 and 146. The following are some suggested answers to the historical homework.

Note that there is some debate as to the exact calendar dates for the reigns of some of the Old Testament Kings, and the exact date of the Exodus due to differing assumptions made. However, there is good agreement over key historical episodes interspersed throughout the Old Testament period. Thus we always have a good reference point to go to or point back to. Thus our Biblical events chronology should be comparable even if we use differing Bible resource material.

- List the Israelite king's reigns who reigned during the life of King Asa of Judah.

### Judah's Kings Reigns

Asa: 910 – 869 BC

### Israel's Kings Reigns

Jeroboam 1: 931 – 909 BC

Nadab: 909 – 908 BC

Baasha: 908 – 885 BC

Elah: 885 – 884 BC

Zimri: 884 – 884 BC

Tibni: 884 – 880 BC

Omri: 884 – 873 BC

Ahab: 873 – 853 BC

From the *Handbook of Biblical Chronology* by J. Finegan.

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- Record the time period of Jonah's and Nahum's preaching to Nineveh. What nation were they preaching to?

According to J.C. Whitcomb in the *Chart of Old Testament Kings and Prophets*:

Jonah: 785 – 773 BC preaching to Assyria

Nahum: 663 – 612 BC preaching to Assyria which captured Israel, the Northern Kingdom, in 722-721 BC, but fell in 612 BC by the hands of the Babylonians.

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- Micah 1:1 - What was the time period of Micah's ministry?

According to J.C. Whitcomb in the *Chart of Old Testament Kings and Prophets*:

Micah: 735 – 700 BC

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- 2Chr 35:18,19 - How many years was it between Josiah's reign and the days of Samuel?

Josiah: 640 – 609 BC

Samuel: 1110 BC – 1016 BC

The information above was taken from *The Books of History* (Smith, J. E. (1995). *The Books of History*. Joplin, Mo.: College Press.)

Taking the midpoint of each person's era (Josiah: 625 BC and Samuel: 1063 BC) the number of years between them is 438. The possible range of dates would span from 501 to 376. So in other words this was a very long time.

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- Rev 16:13-16 - Where is Armageddon? What does it mean? What previous events happened there? (Judges 5:19; Judges 7:1-25; 1Sam 31:1-13; 2Kings 9:27, 2Chron 35:22)

The Valley of Armageddon, or Plain of Esdraelon as seen from the site of ancient Megiddo (*Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*).



**Armageddon** (Gk. *Harmagedōn*). A place where, according to Rev. 16:14–16, the kings of the entire world are to assemble for battle on the “great day of God the Almighty,” the final overthrow of all evil forces by the might and power of God at the end of time.

This name generally is thought to allude to the historic plain of Megiddo near Carmel (the Greek term is equivalent to Heb. *[har]megiddōn* “[mountain] of Megiddo”), where Barak and Deborah defeated the Canaanites (Judg. 5:19). This is also the place where Pharaoh Neco mortally wounded King Josiah of Judah (2 Kgs. 23:29–30 par. 2 Chr. 35:22–24). Zech. 12:11 refers to mourning for Hadadrimmon on the plain of Megiddo (perhaps Adad-remmon where Josiah was wounded). The RSV mg. also places Ahaziah’s death in the city of Megiddo (2 Kgs. 9:27). However, it is not clear why Armageddon might be called the “mountain(s) (Heb. *har*) of Megiddo,” because Megiddo lies southeast of Mt. Carmel (cf. “plain of Megiddo,” 2 Chr. 35:22).

The above was from *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* (Myers, A. C. (1987). *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans.)

Also in Judges 7:1-25 we see that Gideon summoned forces from Naphtali and Asher who would have had to go through this plain of Megiddo to pursue the enemy Midianites. In 1Sam 31:1-13; Saul is defeated by the Philistines and dies on Mt Gilboa and his body is taken to Beth-shan. This defeat is just east of the plain of Megiddo.

- List the reigns of the Roman emperors of the first century.

|           |               |                      |
|-----------|---------------|----------------------|
| Augustus  | (63 BC–AD 14, | reigned 31 BC–AD 14) |
| Tiberius  | (42 BC–AD 37, | reigned AD 14–37)    |
| Caligula  | (AD 12–41,    | reigned AD 37–41)    |
| Claudius  | (10 BC–AD 54, | reigned AD 41–54)    |
| Nero      | (AD 37–68,    | reigned AD 54–68)    |
| Galba     | (3 BC–AD 69,  | reigned AD 68–69)    |
| Vespasian | (AD 9–79,     | reigned AD 69–79)    |
| Titus     | (AD 39–81,    | reigned AD 79–81)    |
| Domitian  | (AD 51–96,    | reigned AD 81–96)    |

Trajan (AD 53–117, reigned AD 98–117)

The above information was from the *Tyndale Bible Dictionary* (Elwell, W. A., & Comfort, P. W. (2001). *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*. Tyndale reference library. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.)

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- What was the time period in the days of Ruth, of Esther?

### Ruth

If the genealogical information is complete in Ruth 4:18–22, the events took place during the life of David's great-grandfather and mark the birth of his grandfather. Allowing a 35-year generation span, the events would have taken place somewhere about the turn of the 11th century BC, or about 100 years before David's birth.

### Esther

The book of Esther is an anonymous composition. The reference in 9:20 that Mordecai "recorded these things" implies that part, if not all, of the book was written by him. The absence of God's name in the book of Esther may be due to the fact that the author intended the book to become part of the official Persian court record. The use of God's name might have prevented that from happening.

The author of the book had considerable knowledge of Persian court life and customs. Thus, Mordecai might be identified with a Morduka mentioned as a Persian court official in the reign of Darius I (521–486 BC) and Xerxes (486–464 BC)

The above information was from the *Tyndale Bible Dictionary* (Elwell, W. A., & Comfort, P. W. (2001). *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*. Tyndale reference library. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.)

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- What nation ruled the land where Joseph was in prison showing favor to the Hebrews?
- What nation ruled later and was mean to the Hebrews?

Depending on what source of information we read, the nation ruling the land was either the Hyksos, an eastern nation ruling in that area for a relatively short time, or a new Egyptian Pharaoh who had just recently expelled the Hyksos from the land.

As the nation of Israel within Egypt grew larger and potentially more powerful, the successive Egyptian Pharaohs who could not appreciate what Joseph did in the past and were more concerned about Israel as a threat rather than an ally. Thus they treated them more harshly.

- Isa 28:21 – What happened at Mt Perazim?
- What happened in the valley of Gibeon?

Isaiah 28:21 *For the Lord will rise up as at Mount Perazim, He will be stirred up as in the valley of Gibeon, To do His task, His unusual task, And to work His work, His extraordinary work.*

- What happened at Mt Perazim

2Samuel 5:17 - 21 *When the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines went up to seek out David; and when David heard of it, he went down to the stronghold. Now the Philistines came and spread themselves out in the valley of Rephaim. Then David inquired of the Lord, saying, "Shall I go up against the Philistines? Will You give them into my hand?" And the Lord said to David, "Go up, for I will certainly give the Philistines into your hand." So David came to Baal-perazim and defeated them there; and he said, "The Lord has broken through my enemies before me like the breakthrough of waters." Therefore he named that place Baal-perazim. They abandoned their idols there, so David and his men carried them away.*

- What happened in the valley of Gibeon?

*Josh 10:10-12 And the LORD confounded them before Israel, and He slew them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, and pursued them by the way of the ascent of Beth-horon and struck them as far as Azekah and Makkedah. As they fled from before Israel, while they were at the descent of Beth-horon, the LORD threw large stones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died; there were more who died from the hailstones than those whom the sons of Israel killed with the sword. Then Joshua spoke to the LORD in the day when the LORD delivered up the Amorites before the sons of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, 'O sun, stand still at Gibeon, And O moon in the valley of Aijalon.'*

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- How old was Jacob when he met Rachel?

Believe it or not Jacob was about 75 years old when he met Rachel. Follow the trail below.

### ***Chronological facts from Genesis***

Abraham 100, Sarah 90 when Isaac born. Abraham died at 175, Sarah at 127.

Isaac 40 when married to Rebekah. Isaac 60 when Jacob and Esau born.

Esau 40 when he married Judith and Basemath – Jacob still not married

Jacob serves 7 years for Leah, 7 more years for Rachel (although he marries both in the same year after the first 7 years), and six more years for his flocks (20 years total).

Assume Joseph was born toward the end of the 20 year period say year 16 to account for his other siblings being born.

Rachel dies giving birth to Benjamin between Bethel and (Ephrath) Bethlehem, but after the chaos in Shechem, where we can assume Dinah was then (at Shechem) at least 13 years old.

Joseph 17 when kidnapped to Egypt.

Isaac dies at 180.

Joseph 30 when made overseer and then married.

Egypt will have 7 years of plenty then 7 years of famine. Assume Joseph, at 30, becomes the overseer during the first year of plenty.

Before the famine comes Joseph has two sons (so within the first 7 years of plenty).

Jacob is 130 when he comes to Egypt, and two years of famine have already passed making Joseph is 39. The difference in age being 91.

***Based on the above then ...***

- Jacob is 91 when he had Joseph.  
Note that it states in Genesis chapter 37 that Joseph was Jacob's son of his old age.
- If Joseph was born on the 16<sup>th</sup> year of Jacob's stay with Laban that would mean Jacob met Rachel when he was about 75.
- If we assume Dinah was the youngest of the family being a year younger than Joseph and at least 13 years old at Shechem, and Benjamin was born a year after that it means that Joseph is 15 years older than Benjamin.
- Joseph 17 when kidnapped to Egypt, making Jacob 108.
- Isaac dies at 180, making Jacob 120. Esau is still living, he helps to bury Isaac.
- Joseph's sons were born before the famine comes so probably when Joseph was between 31 - 35 years old.
- So when Jacob 130, sees Joseph 39, in Egypt, Benjamin is 24 years old — a young man now. When Joseph was kidnapped Benjamin was about 2 years old.



- Jacob dies in Egypt at 147. Thus when Jacob near death, pronounced his blessing on Joseph's sons they were already between 20 and 22 years old. Benjamin, Joseph's brother was 39.

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- What prophets helped Ezra and Nehemiah rebuild the temple and walls?

From *Chart of Old Testament Kings and Prophets* by J.C. Whitcomb

Haggai – 520 – 505 BC

Zechariah 520 - 516

Also from *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Archer, G. L. (1998). *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (3rd. ed.).) (470). Chicago: Moody Press.)

In Ezra 5:1–2, we read: “Now the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that were in Judah and in Jerusalem; in the name of the God of Israel prophesied they unto them” (ASV). Alongside this should be placed Ezra 6:14–15: “And the elders of the Jews builded, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo.... And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king” (516 B.C.).

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- What Kings of Judah spanned the ministry of Jeremiah?

Jeremiah ministered from 626 BC to sometime past 586 BC. The kings reigning in Judah during that time were:

|            |                      |
|------------|----------------------|
| Josiah     | reigned 640 – 609 BC |
| Jehoahaz   | reigned 609 BC       |
| Jehoiakim  | reigned 609-598 BC   |
| Jehoiachin | reigned 598-597 BC   |
| Zedekiah   | reigned 597-586 BC   |

The above list of kings is from *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, (Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.)

Also from *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Archer, G. L. (1998). *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (3rd. ed.]) (470). Chicago: Moody Press.)

Jeremiah began his ministry at about twenty years of age in the thirteenth year of Josiah, that is, 626 B.C. For the greater part of his life he lived in his hometown of Anathoth (for he was of a priestly family) and appeared at Jerusalem at the annual feast days of the Jewish religious year. He seems to have been well off financially, since he was able to purchase the forfeited estate of a bankrupt kinsman without apparent difficulty. Under God-fearing Josiah, he remained unmolested by the government and enjoyed such cordial relations with that king that he composed an eloquent lamentation at the time of the king's death at the battle of Megiddo. Yet, even among his fellow priests and relatives, Jeremiah had built up considerable ill will because of his forthright rebuke of their infidelity to the Covenant and his condemnation of their worldly practices.

After Josiah's death, with the rise of the idolatrous faction and the pro-Egyptian party, a serious reaction resulted against Jeremiah and all he stood for. It was only through the interposition of a few God-fearing elders and princes that Jeremiah escaped arrest for his unpalatable arraignment of the nation in the "Temple Sermon" of chapters 7–10. From that time on he seems to have been forbidden to enter the temple precinct, for he had to send aloud his secretary Baruch as his spokesman whenever he had a message of God to proclaim before the people. He therefore dictated his prophecies to Baruch that they might be read aloud to the people of Jerusalem. But soon this copy was turned over to King Jehoiakim, who destroyed it in his fireplace, section by section, as it was read to him by his own secretary. Later, King Zedekiah, a successor of Jehoiakim, permitted the prophet to be incarcerated by the nationalistically minded nobles, who saw Jeremiah as a traitor because he had urged the nation to submit to Babylon. Nevertheless, Zedekiah was secretly fearful of God's messenger because of the fulfillment of his past predictions relative to the Chaldean invasion of 598. He therefore had the prophet rescued from death when he was at the point of perishing in his brutal confinement and he kept him hidden from danger until the fall of Jerusalem.

When the forces of Nebuchadnezzar finally stormed the city, it was only natural that Jeremiah was offered by the conquerors a place of honor and a pension in Babylon (since he had constantly urged the Jews to submit to Nebuchadnezzar as God's instrument for chastening them). Yet Jeremiah chose to stay with the remnant of his own people in Palestine and minister to the bands of guerrillas or partisans who had remained behind after the great deportation to Babylonia. But after the treacherous murder of Gedaliah by the treacherous Ishmael he was abducted and carried off to

Egypt by the fugitive remnant of the Jews, who preferred to take refuge in the land of the Nile rather than to remain in Palestine and face the wrath of Nebuchadnezzar. In Egypt, Jeremiah prophesied for several years longer, and it was probably there that he died.

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