

Isaiah of Jerusalem

- Isaiah 11–39 is attributed to Isaiah of Jerusalem, the prophet whose brief biography is described.
- Isaiah of Jerusalem was living in Judah when the Northern Kingdom fell to Assyria in 721 B.C.
- During Isaiah’s lifetime, Judah fell under the control of the Assyrians. In 701 B.C. King Hezekiah asked Egypt for help in rebelling against Assyria. In response, the Assyrians returned and captured key Judean towns. Hezekiah knew he was defeated, so he called a truce and agreed to pay a large sum of money for the Assyrians to leave and not destroy Jerusalem. The Assyrians retreated. The people thought they were safe, but Isaiah preached otherwise. His message: unless you repent of your sins of injustice, God will bring severe punishment—not to crush you but to purify you.
- Implicit in Isaiah’s message is the belief that God can always bring new life, birth, and creation out of death, destruction, and pain.

Questions

How does Isaiah’s message compare to that in the story of Noah?

How do both Isaiah and Noah present the same type of God?

The Return from Exile

A summary of the four major stages in the Judeans' return from Exile:

1. Shechbazzar led some of the exiled Jews back to Judah in 538 B.C. Zerubbabal began rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem, but the Samaritans prevented them from finishing it. (The Samaritans believe that God can be worshiped anywhere, and that the Israelites didn't need the Temple.)
2. Zerubbabel (a member of the family of David) led another group back to Judah. The prophets Haggai and Zechariah urged the people to continue building the Temple. Jeshua (from a prominent priestly family) completed the new Temple in 515 B.C. (This Temple stood until 19 B.C. when Herod built a third Temple.) The second Temple may have had nearly the same dimensions as the Temple of Solomon.
3. Ezra, a priest, led another group of exiles back to Judah in either 458 or 398 B.C. Ezra brought with him a copy of the Mosaic Law and urged the people to follow it.
4. Nehemiah led a fourth group of exiles back to Judah in 445 B.C. He was appointed governor of Judah and built walls around Jerusalem. He, along with Ezra, implemented reforms in worship.