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The first thousand years: an outline of Jewish history, 1926.

"THE FIRST THOUSAND YEARS."

An Outline of Jewish History.

RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER.

THE TEMPLE, SUNDAY MORNING.

NOVEMBER 7, 1926, CLEVELAND, O.



I shall endeavor, friends, during the next few weeks, to tell you a simple and unadorned tale of the most amazing people in the world. I shall try to give you in the briefest outline form the history of a people which, while never great in number, has survived the peoples of greatest magnitude; the history of a people which, while never strong physically, or rich materially, has outlived the strongest and the richest peoples. I shall try to tell you the story of the simple band of men and women from a little corner of the earth, who were scattered all over the face of the world, beset with untold trials and tribulations, persecuted and oppressed, yet living to bless the world, bringing a benediction wherever it came.

I am going to tell you the story of the people of Israel, and this morning I shall try to tell you about the beginning of this amazing little people, the humble beginning; for like all things, like all art, like all science, the beginnings of this people, and of its heroic faith which has startled mankind, are humble.

The traditional account found in our sacred books of the origin and the early history of this people runs something like this: the founder of the race was Abraham. He and his son Isaac, and his grandson Jacob, were the patriarchs of this people, the people of Israel. Jacob had twelve sons, who became the ancestors of the Twelve Tribes of Israel. Jacob and his twelve sons went down to

Egypt from Canaan. There they grew and multiplied, and they were enslaved by the Egyptians, and they remained as slaves in Egypt for a period of about 400 years. Then an emancipator arose in their midst, a great revolutionary spirit who summoned them to freedom.--Moses. Moses led the people out of Egypt, guided them in their wanderings through the wilderness for forty years, brought them within sight of the promised land, and there he died. The leadership was taken over by Joshua, and Joshua brought the Twelve Tribes into Canaan. The land was divided among them, and the tribes remained divided--after they had been a united people under Moses--they remained divided until the rise of the monarchy under Saul. They remained a united people under Saul and David and Solomon, when the kingdom was again divided in two.--the Kingdom of Israel to the North, and the Kingdom of Judah to the South. The Kingdom of Israel endured about 200 years, and was destroyed by the Assyrians in 721 before the common era; the Kingdom of Judah survived 135 years longer, and was destroyed by Babylon in 586 before the common era.

This, briefly, is the story of the political life of Israel as narrated in our sacred books. Like all ancient history found in books, it is too much simplified and idealized to be taken literally. No people begins life as a united people. Peoples begin as small units, families, clans, tribes. In the course of time these tribes are federated, and in the course of time, after a

long period of experience, this federation becomes a nation; and if we read our Biblical accounts more critically and look beneath the surface, we will find the same thing holding true in the case of Israel. Israel, at the outset, was a disjointed group of Semitic tribes, unorganized, not united. Perhaps there were twelve such tribes; perhaps there were more. These tribes were, somehow, conscious of a common origin; they felt that they belonged to a common racial stock, and that consciousness, plus a common environment, gave these disunited tribes a sense of cohesion, that was far from being that sense of national unity which developed only after hundreds of years.

Where did these tribes come from? What was the original home of our people? The original home of our people was in the great Arabian desert, which is the home of all the Semitic people, which to this day is the home of tens of thousands of nomadic shepherd tribes, who wander to and fro across the endless stretches from one oasis to another seeking food and sustenance. That great wilderness, the Arabian desert, was the home of the early nomadic tribes, some of whom became the ancestors of the tribes of Israel.

Now, at some time before the second millennium before the common era, around the year 22 or 2300 before the common era, that Semitic world in the Arabian desert began to seethe with unrest; just as that world 2800 years later, at the time of Mohammed, suddenly began

to seethe anew, and out of that great wilderness tribes went forth to conquer half of the world as Mohammedans. In that early period a great unrest took hold of these peoples, and great migratory movements began. One migration of Semitic people set out eastward and conquered Babylon, and another migratory movement set out westward and conquered Egypt. Now among these invading tribes were some tribes who became the founders of the people or the nation of Israel. We have mention of one tribe, the tribe of Abraham, whose founder was Abraham, a tribe that went eastward to Babylon, and we are told that that Semitic tribe living in Babylon decided to re-migrate, and set out from Babylon to Canaan; and that is the story of the migration of Abraham, the account of which you read in the Book of Genesis. With the migration that went westward into Egypt there were undoubtedly some tribe or tribes by the name of Jacob, who settled in Egypt for a period of time, and found their sojourn there an unhappy experience, and so they, too, decided to re-migrate and left Egypt, and after wandering about in the wilderness for a period of years, again as a nomadic people under the leadership of that titanic historical figure, Moses, they, too, decided to invade Canaan.--Palestine.

Now, the conquest of Palestine by these Hebrew tribes - for that is what we shall call them from now on - was not accomplished by a united group of tribes at any one given period of time. The conquest was accomplished by

single tribes or by groups of tribes, and over a period of perhaps 200 years. Some of the tribes invaded Canaan through the south, and some through the extreme northeast, and some across the Jordan. It was not a single conquest but a prolonged conquest of a country by groups of tribes. These tribes settled in various parts of Palestine, each one living its own life, and yet all of them conscious of a certain racial tie. When emergencies arose, when some tribe was attacked by a foreign tribe or by the natives, the Canaanites, that tribe would call for help from a brother tribe, and temporary alliances were formed due to the emergency which arose. Thus, for example, when the Canaanites threatened some of the tribes of the Hebrews who had settled in Palestine, Deborah arose and united five tribes to war against the Canaanites.

Now in the eleventh century a great nation invaded Palestine and threatened the very life and existence of these Hebrew tribes. That nation was the nation of the Philistines. Where they came from, we know not. Probably they came from the Isle of Crete. They invaded Palestine; they conquered part of the country, especially the coast cities, and they menaced all the tribes of the Hebrews. In that emergency the tribes found it necessary to form a strong confederation, and guided by the prophet Samuel, and by their first king, Saul, they formed a united political group, a monarchy. And a monarchy was established. Saul's career is a tempestuous one; it is one of constant

warfare. He did not succeed in breaking the power of the Philistines, but he succeeded in putting a check to their advance, and in one of the battles with the Philistines Saul, himself, and his son were killed. Saul was succeeded by David, of the Tribe of Judah. David was a man of war, a courageous fighter, a brilliant leader, a statesman. David not only broke for all time the power of the Philistines, but set out upon an aggressive warfare to subdue all the neighboring tribes,--the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Edomites, and even Syria to the north. David extended the boundaries of that little country to the furthestmost limits, and decided to build the city of Jerusalem, and made it the center of the political and the religious life of the people. Upon the death of David, Solomon became king over the united people. Solomon's reign is the Golden Age in Jewish history. It was an age of prosperity. Solomon made alliances with neighboring kings; Solomon built a merchant marine; his ships went far at sea; Solomon built highways; Solomon built beautiful public buildings and palaces. Great wealth and riches poured into the country. Solomon built the Temple, which for hundreds of years remained as the central shrine of the faith of the people.

But with all the magnificence of an Oriental potentate which was Solomon's, there was beneath it a great deal which was ugly and which was destined to undermine the kingdom; first, by the heavy taxation which was made necessary by this splendor and these royal edifices and temples

which Solomon built. The people began to grumble under the yoke of taxation. And Solomon, too, built for himself a vast harem, mainly for diplomatic purposes, because marriage was a form of establishing diplomatic alliances with neighboring people, and these foreign wives brought into the country foreign cults and foreign idolatry, and the people who were faithful to the worship of Jehovah grumbled against this desecration of the faith; and even during the splendid reign of Solomon a revolution broke out, which was quickly crushed and the leader sent to Egypt. But upon the death of Solomon the kingdom split into two. His son was not strong enough or wise enough to hold the people together, and in 937 before the common era the countries divided into two,--the kingdom of the North, the Kingdom of Israel, with its capital in Samaria, and the kingdom of the South, the Kingdom of Judah, with its capital in Jerusalem.

The story of the Kingdom of Israel is the story of 200 years of conflict, struggle, war, the rise and fall of dynasties, an occasional period of prosperity, but long periods of depression and unhappiness, and in 721 Assyria, bent upon the conquest of Egypt, and determined to conquer Palestine, which is on the way to Egypt, subdued the country, took the leaders, the learned and the outstanding men and women of the kingdom, and exiled them. They brought new settlers, new colonists into Israel and colonized them, there. Those who were exiled were lost. You have heard of

the Lost Ten Tribes, and these are the Lost Ten Tribes. They were not lost in the sense that we do not know where they are; they are lost in the sense that they assimilated with the peoples in whose midst they were placed and disappeared; they lost their identity; they ceased to exist. And in Israel there remained the poor; they, in the course of time, mingled and blended with these colonists which the Assyrians settled, and they ceased to be as Jews, and of them there remain to this day a handful of people of the country. . called the Samaritans,--some thirty or fifty families. That was the end of the great Kingdom of Israel.

The Kingdom of Judah survived longer. The Kingdom of Judah was fortunate in having one dynasty,--the dynasty of David; and fortunate, also, in having kings who ruled over long periods of time, thereby giving stability to the political life of the country. Its political history is not glorious; it does not match the splendor of Assyria, Babylon or Egypt. It was very much a football to these great kingdoms all the time. But in 586 or a little earlier than 597, Babylon found it necessary to conquer this kingdom of Judah, and conquered it and laid it waste, destroyed the Temple, blinded the king and exiled the leaders, the best of the people. The Judean exile did not assimilate like the Israelitish exile 135 years before them. They were carried off to Babylon, but they had enjoyed 135 years of prophetic teaching; they had been impressed by a religious idealism which the peoples of the Kingdom of

Israel had not had; they had 135 years more of amalgamation and concentration as a people, and so they took with them to Babylon an invincible hope of restoration, the will to survive, the determination not to assimilate, and it is of these exiles, of whose return we shall speak next week, that we, the Jews of today, are the descendents. This, briefly, is the political story of Israel from its early nomadic days to the fall of Jerusalem in 586.

Now, I want to tell you a word about the religious history of this people. Judaism, like the Jewish people itself, is an historical development. Judaism is not, friends, a one revelation, begun at one moment in time, perfect and complete. Judaism is a successive revelation, an unfoldment of moral and spiritual ideals within a peculiar, sensitive and gifted people over a period of centuries. The beginnings of our religion are, indeed, very humble; again, I say, like the beginning of all things. Before a man can reach physical and mental maturity he must pass through the groping stages of childhood; the stages of lisping, and the stages of ignorance, and the stages of weakness, physical and mental. And so it is with all human sciences, with all human art. The great cathedral and the beautiful Greek temple was not the first artistic creation of the human race. It is almost the last artistic creation, until future times may improve on it. The cathedral begins in the mud hovel, in the cave; just as Michael Angelo's ancestors fifty thousand years ago probably

cut the first sculpture in the stone of a cave where he lived. And so it is with religion. Beginnings are extremely humble, and the religion of our forefathers, these nomadic Semitic tribes, was like the religion of all peoples; they believed that all things were the dwellingplaces of spirits,-- the wind, the storm, the tree, the mountain, the sea, the sun, the moon; each was a personality; each was the habitat of a jinnee or a spirit,--a spirit which had to be propitiated by sacrifices or dispelled by magic. He had to establish relationship with these things about him in the physical world. They menaced him.. And so he sought through the simple ritual of sacrifice or magic to come to some sort of an accord with the world of spirits about him.

That is the beginning of the religious thought of the human race. Now in the course of time a few spirits or one spirit emerges superior or supreme; and among our forefathers in the wilderness, in the course of time, out of all this world of spirits there emerged one spirit supreme,--Yarveh, the Creator; he who causes us to be; the source of life; the protector; the provider; whose dwelling-place was a sacred mountain,--Horeb.

Now, in the wilderness the ritual of our forefathers was an extremely simple one. They had no extensive priestly hierarchy; they had no temples; they were shepherds; they wandered about from place to place. The religious ritual was extremely simple. Again, religion and morality had very little to do with one another.

Religion was a matter of ritual and ceremony. Jehovah, of course, came to be regarded as the defender of the social customs; and that is quite significant, because one of the great social customs among our forefathers, when they were nomads, was this extremely rare custom of social equality. Among nomads there are no wealthy people, and there are no lords, and there are no potentates. Each is the equal of the other. There was a marvelous democratic spirit and an economic equality among shepherd, wandering peoples, and, as I have had occasion more than once to point out, in discussing the peculiar passion of the Jew for economic justice and for freedom in the world, that passion traces itself right back through our history, back into the dim distant past of our origin, when for thousands of years our forefathers lived under a most complete and perfect democratic system of life, and that love of freedom became part of our blood and of our psychology. Now Yarveh became the defender of that social custom of equality, of freedom.

Now, these tribes come into Canaan. Canaan is inhabited by people much more advanced culturally than these primitive, crude, nomad people. The Canaanites are farmers; they are agriculturists; they have built cities; they have permanent dwelling-places; they have temples; they have shrines; they have wealth; their culture is higher. And it is a law of human progress that the higher culture dominates the lower culture, even though the lower

culture may be that of the victorious people. When the Romans conquered Greece politically, Greece conquered Rome culturally. And so it was with these conquering nomad tribes who poured into Canaan and settled there. They were beguiled by the civilization and the culture of the Canaanites, and also by the religion of the Canaanites. Now, the religion of the Canaanites had to do with agriculture. Their god was Baal, the god of heaven, the god of the sun, the god of the rain; their goddess was Astarte, the mother goddess, the earth goddess. Their faith was a trinitarian faith,--a father, a mother, a son. Now when these nomadic peoples came into Canaan they accepted the faith of the Canaanites; first, because it was more magnificent than their faith; it was more elaborate in ritual; it was more attractive in outer form; and, secondly, and more profoundly, because, even while their god was the god of the desert and the god of the wilderness, here in the new land there were other gods, and if they were to live successfully in this land they must be at peace and good will with the gods of the new land. But while they accepted these gods of the Canaanites, they did not abandon the god of the desert, for, after all, he was their tribal god, and he brought them victory in their war upon these Canaanite peoples. And so they synchronized their faith; they combined the worship of Jehovah with the worship of Baal; and that continued for some time. The worship of Baal, however, was not that simple worship

of the Yarveh of the wilderness; it was elaborate, and its ritual was replete with all forms of crass immorality.

Now other peoples stopped there at this synchronism-faith, at this polytheism, this idolatry. The Babylonians stopped there, in spite of their marvelous civilization; the Egyptians stopped there; the Greeks stopped there; but somehow this little people enclaved in this desert world on this strip of the Mediterranean, this little people in its religious thinking did not stop there. Now, why? I don't know why, frankly. I can only define. I can't explain. I can't explain why, of all peoples of the earth, the Greeks alone should carve the most wonderful statues and sing the most beautiful songs. I can't explain the temper and the temperament and the peculiar genius and gift of every people. Of course racial factors enter and geographic factors enter, and all that; but it is such a difficult thing, scientifically, to analyze. Suffice it to say that this people had a peculiar gift, a peculiar sensitiveness for religious and moral values, and that out of this people, in this myriad, there suddenly arose in the ninth century a brood of dynamic spirits, whom we call the prophets, who revolutionized the thought of the ancient world and who projected into civilization new ideals, utterly unheard of, of true religion and true morality,--human beings who had a peculiar passion for humanity and divinity, and who, in marvelous words of burning fervor, expressed these ideals which have since become the most precious

heritage of mankind.--the prophets, a whole school of them, from the ninth to the sixth century before the common era.--Elijah, Amos, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and, the greatest of all, Jeremiah.

Now, what was the message and what was the mission of these prophets? Their message was two-fold: first, the unity and the spirituality of God. There can be no synchronism. If God is God spiritually, then he must be one. And so out of the desert--and that is significant--the home of the pure worship of Yaweh, there suddenly appears on the scene Elijah, a man with long hair, dressed in a wild garment, a mind like a thunder-bolt; he appears suddenly in the midst of Israel and cries out, "How long will ye halt in two opinions? If ye are for Baal, worship him; if ye are for Yaweh, worship him." - the first challenge of prophecy to this synchronistic religion of the people. Elijah was the first, not the last. All who followed him insisted that there can be but one God.--the God of the Universe; not the God of Palestine, not the God of the desert, but the God of the World and the God of the Universe, one and spiritual.

And their second message was morality. God is just; God is love; God is truth; God is the source of morality. Because God is just he is the particular friend of the needy, the poor, the orphan, the widow; he is the enemy of the oppressor and the exploiter. Because God is just he can be worshipped only through the just life; and

because God is love he can be worshipped only through the life of love and kindness. Therefore the ritual of God is not the offering of sacrifices, nor the observance of holidays, nor the practice of mechanical cults, but the true and only true worship of God is a life of goodness and integrity and honesty and kindness. And because God is spirit God can be communed with not through these crude forms of divination that was practiced by all primitive peoples, but by contemplation, through prayer, through meditation and through the life of purity and goodness.

These were the two tremendous innovations in the religious thinking of mankind which this breed of heroic souls called the prophets brought to the world. And these prophets were not professional teachers; they were not necessarily priests; they were workingmen, carpenters and dressers of sycamore trees and shepherds; not because they regarded it as their life's profession, or they were attracted by the profession, but because they were driven by the emergencies of the life about them, by the things which they saw, the inequalities, the injustice, the immorality of the world about them; and they were driven to it by that inner fire, that inner passion which was theirs. "The Word of God was like a burning flame in my soul," says one of the prophets, "which I could not hold back; I had to preach." They were persecuted for it. We still persecute our prophets and crucify them. They

were hated for it; but they preached that healing message, that new revelation unto their people. With the result that Judah, enjoying this teaching for about a century and a half longer than the Kingdom of Israel, was able, when calamity overtook it, to endure and to survive. With the prophets the message of Judaism is completed; the essential ideals of our faith are fashioned. God is one; God is spirit; God is justice. Ethical monotheism, the lifework and teaching of the prophets, is now the possession of the people of Israel, and will in time become, through them, the possession of all mankind; and because that small people of Judah had these truths with them, they became an immortal people, for they identified their destiny with ideals that are immortal. Exile will no longer destroy them. From the fires of the temple their faith will rise, cleansed and purged and strengthened. They will return from exile and they will rebuild their life; and even though they will be destroyed a second time, and a second time sent, and this time into a longer and more horrible exile, lasting not fifty years but nineteen hundred years, that people, remaining true to those healing and saving ideals, those immortal ideals, will endure all the hostility and the hate of the world, will heal and bless the world.

And we shall, in our next lecture, friends, see how this people sets about as a missionary people to preach these prophetic ideals to mankind; we shall see in

our next lecture out of that faith there revolves a sister faith, which is destined to reach out and touch the millions of the human race. We shall see next time how they sought to safeguard this faith by building fences of law and regulation about it. The beginnings have been made. The far cry from the nomadic Semite in the wilderness to the prophet Isaiah or Jeremiah, that stride was taken by this strange and amazing people, the people of Israel.

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Religion

Sermon Nov 7, 1926
220

1. Little God. like the J. people is an historical development.
It is not an instantly revealed - but a progressive
unfolding of the moral esp. idea in a people
naturally qualified to experience such unfolding -
① The beginning humble - like those of art, or science
is all human that. Just as man before he can
attain phys. & mental maturity must pass thru
the groping stages, childhood. The beginnings
are not the criteria of the fulfillment - They have
historical value - but they are not values themselves -
② Faith & Semite tribes are faith & primitive man -
③ Pan-victim - Full of spontaneous - wind-storm -
fire - not - sun - moon. To propagate god
by sacrifice - a compel them by magic
④ A few or one deity emerges supreme -
among tribes & small Yahweh - the
god of the underworld - the source of life -
the creator and provider - who dwell
in the top of a mountain - Their
tribal god. shepherd- nomadic
⑤ Ritual very simple - no Temples - no
Priest-hood - seal spots & Temples revel
⑥ little to do with Morality - which rapidly
understood that violations of tribal customs
was persecution today - it was not understood
that god was supreme just as that of that
his ritual is just as divine. A ceremonial
relation of Yahweh became definite of tribal standards
quality & simplicity -
2. Canaan - a higher civilization - an agricultural
and commerce - people - wealth & culture -
- but - lowest civilization yields to higher
from - peace -

② Took in Rel. of Canaanites - also here in new
law there was new form - ^{agriculture} ~~agriculture~~ ^{agriculture} ~~agriculture~~ - the
first, a Trinity of deities - sun - frt -
Earth - frd - + om - of sun.

① Elatistic ritual - immorality -

③ Syncretism - Yahweh was not alone.
He ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~desert~~ ^{desert} ~~for~~ ^{for} led them in battle, & gave
them victory over natives -

4. But Israel was not destined to stop at
this stage as Egypt did - & Babylon -
never emerged from polytheism & idolatry -

① Why? One cannot explain - no can they break
- member self - force carries the most heart.
machines & son the most heartless - why
of all tribes - there should emerge standards
the world? - why broad & dynamic souls
should suddenly open new vistas?
- an inarticulate longing for divinity
and humanity? - Remnant of life
Prophets ^{amongst} 9-6 centuries.
^{meeting} ^{of} ^{cultures} - growth & wealth -

5. Unity - moralize Faith - ^{not by words}

① Elijah - "How long will ye halt...."

② No heaven there - universal -

③

6. "In all his ways are just - a god of faithfulness & without
iniquity - just and right is he" -

① god of justice - defender of weak - poor -

② .. "less" - "from they neglect a thought -

③ god worship is justice then - not merits -

④ god can be only let us in domination, but in com.
^{temptation} ^{to} ^{sin}

7. Summary Character & main ~~principles~~

7. Ethical ~~things~~ ^{things} there. - There has been ~~the~~ -

8. By the 60. Israel's ^{rel.} message was ^{completed} perfected.

The ~~very~~ ^{very} ~~lot~~ ^{lot} ~~idea~~ ^{idea} had been fully ~~presented~~ ^{presented} in
and ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~prophecy~~ ^{prophecy} & ~~seen~~ ^{seen} - Nevertheless it was
an ~~immortal~~ ^{immortal} people - it had ~~lived~~ ^{lived}
itself well ~~up~~ ^{up} with ~~immortal~~ ^{immortal}, ~~dead~~ -

Exile ~~can~~ ^{will} not ~~destroy~~ ^{destroy}. From the

~~ashes~~ ^{ashes} ~~rise~~ ^{rise} of The Temple the faith rose
again ~~prayed~~ ^{prayed} by fire & ~~purified~~ ^{purified} -

It was to return, upheld by great ~~ideas~~ ^{ideas}.
And when ~~destroyed~~ ^{destroyed} a ~~new~~ ^{new} ~~time~~ ^{time} - still
there ~~same~~ ^{same} ~~ideas~~ ^{ideas} - sustained it there
2000 years of wandering ~~rest~~ ^{rest}. Just
in the ~~same~~ ^{same} ~~period~~ ^{period} of ~~ideas~~ ^{ideas} -

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wealth in days s.d. Inequality -
corruption - prophecy

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1. Jud. like Jew an histor. devel - no single revelation -
 - ① Beginnings humble - art - childhood - .. no criteria & ultimate -
2. Faith & secret fakes - promotion war
 - ① Pan. v. fabrum - full, spirits - miracle - sacrifice magic
 - ② A few or one deity emerges ויהי -
- Creator - ויהי ויהי -
 - ③ Rel. temple - Shepherd - no Temple Priestly - hierarchy
 - ④ little to do with morality - but for equality - simplicity.
3. Canaan - higher civilization wealth & culture - yield like Romans - also Rel. Aggression Baal - bestards - elaborate - unmoral
 - ① by criticism
4. Israel wd destined to stop - why? 9-6 Prophecy
5. Unity - Morality
 - ① Elijah - New theme
6. "For all his ways are just" ① justice - for ② love
 - ③ Rel. - ④ alienation -

1. Traditional View

2. Claus - not 12. awareness of common origin.

3. Home - Arabian desert - Migrations - East-West.
Abraham - Jacob.

4. Conquest - roughly 600 years - Emergency -
c. 1000 B.C. - Philistines 1100 B.C. - Samuel -
Saul -

5. David. ① Judah -
② Crushes Phil - aggressive - boundaries -
③ Jerusalem -

6. Solomon ① Golden Age
② Prosperity - Treasures - Trade - Palaces.
③ Temple.
④ Taxation - Rebellion - Death.
⑤ Division 931 B.C.

7. Israel - lasts to 721 - Exile - Assimilation

8. Judah - lasts longer - Permanent dynasty -
- Babylon - 597 Jehoiachin, 586. Zedekiah -
- did not assimilate - Return.