

## THE BIBLE A BOOK OF ACCURATE PROPHECY



*This eight-part series in Awake! is examining an outstanding feature of the Bible—its prophecies, or predictions. The articles will help you to answer these questions: Are Bible prophecies merely the work of clever humans? Do they bear the hallmark of divine inspiration? We invite you to weigh the evidence.*

# Flee From Babylon!

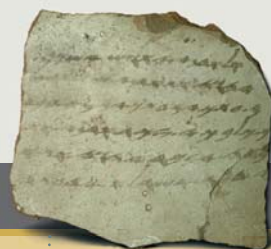
**I**N THE preceding article in this series, we considered three prophecies found in the Bible regarding the offspring of Abraham. The evidence shows that God fulfilled those promises through the ancient nation of Israel, who were descendants of Abraham.

Ancient Babylon was another nation that played an important role in Bible history, particularly during the seventh century B.C.E. Let us consider three Bible prophecies con-

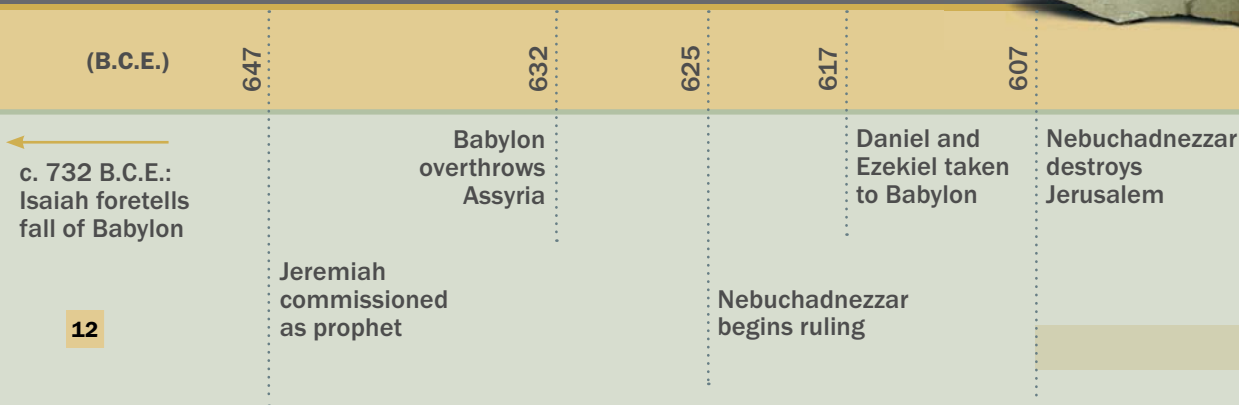
cerning this kingdom and see if they point to evidence of divine inspiration.

The prophet Moses warned the ancient people of Israel: “If you should at all forget Jehovah your God and . . . walk after other

***The Lachish Letters support Jeremiah’s description of the Babylonian conquest of Judah***



## TIME LINE OF BABYLON



gods and serve them and bow down to them, . . . you people will absolutely perish.” (Deuteronomy 8:19; 11:8, 9) Still, the Israelites repeatedly rebelled against God by turning to idol worship.—1 Kings 14:22-24.

In time, God’s patience ran out, and he allowed his wayward servants to fall into the hands of the Babylonians. Under King Nebuchadnezzar—also spelled Nebuchadrezzar—Babylon’s forces came against Israel, where they laid siege to Jerusalem. Was this siege significant? Let us consider what the prophet Jeremiah wrote nearly 20 years before the event occurred.—Jeremiah 25:1.

**Prophecy 1:** *“For the reason that you [the Israelites] did not obey my [God’s] words, here I am sending . . . to Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, . . . and I will bring them [the Babylonians] against this land and against its inhabitants . . . And all this land must become a devastated place, an object of astonishment, and these nations will have to serve the king of Babylon seventy years.”—Jeremiah 25:8-11.*

**Fulfillment:** After an extended siege, Nebuchadnezzar sacked Jerusalem in 607 B.C.E. He also conquered other Judean cities, including Lachish and Azekah. (Jeremiah 34: 6, 7) He deported most of the survivors to Babylon, where they were held captive for 70 years.

### What history reveals:

- The Bible identifies Nebuchadnezzar as being the king of Babylon about the time of Jerusalem’s destruction. Archaeological evidence supports the Bible’s testimony about his existence. A cameo made of onyx stone is on display in Florence, Italy. It bears an inscription that says in part: “In honour of Merodach, his lord, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, in his life-time had this made.” Nebuchadnezzar ruled from 624 to 562 B.C.E.

- The book *The Bible and Archaeology* says that excavations and surveys in Lachish confirm the following: “The final destruction was violent, and so fierce was the fire which destroyed the city [Lachish] that the limestone of the buildings turned to lime.”

**Prophecy 2:** *“In accord with the fulfilling of seventy years at Babylon I [Jehovah] shall turn my attention to you people [the Jewish exiles], and I will establish toward you my good word in bringing you back to this place [the land of Judah].”—Jeremiah 29:10.*

**The Cyrus Cylinder records  
Cyrus’ policy of returning  
captives to their homelands**



582

Nebuchadnezzar’s  
rule ends

Jews held captive in Babylon for 70 years

539

Babylon falls to  
the Medes and  
the Persians

537

Jewish captives  
allowed to return  
to Jerusalem

**Fulfillment:** After 70 years of exile, from 607 to 537 B.C.E., King Cyrus of Persia released the Jewish captives and allowed them to return to their homeland to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem.—Ezra 1:2-4.

**What history reveals:**

● Did the Israelites remain captive in Babylon for 70 years as the Bible foretold? Note the comments of a leading Israeli archaeologist, Ephraim Stern. “From 604 B.C.E. to 538 B.C.E.—there is a complete gap in evidence suggesting occupation. In all that time, not a single town destroyed by the Babylonians was resettled.” The so-called gap in which there was no occupation or resettling of conquered territory corresponds closely to Israel’s exile in Babylon from 607 to 537 B.C.E.—2 Chronicles 36:20, 21.

● Ancient nations throughout Mesopotamia wrote on tablets made of soft clay. One hardened clay tablet, known as the Cyrus Cylinder, dates back to about 539 B.C.E., the same year that King Cyrus of Persia overthrew the Babylonian Empire. One inscription reads: “I am Cyrus, . . . king of Babylon.” The same inscription goes on to report: “I returned to [certain previously named] sacred cities on the other side of the Tigris, the sanctuaries of which have been ruins for a long time, the images which (used) to live therein . . . I (also) gathered all their (former) inhabitants and returned (to them) their habitations.”

This secular source harmonizes with the Bible prophecy that states that the Jewish exiles would be repatriated to their homeland—a prophecy recorded about 200 years in advance.

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**Prophecy 3:** “*Babylon, the decoration of kingdoms, the beauty of the pride of the Chaldeans, must become as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. She will never be inhabited.*”—Isaiah 13:19, 20.

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**Fulfillment:** In a shocking turn of events, the mighty world power of Babylon fell before a combined army of Medes and Persians in 539 B.C.E.\* The city never fully recovered. Rather, it slowly declined and eventually became a desolate waste “without an inhabitant.”—Jeremiah 51:37.

**What history reveals:**

● Babylon’s disappearance was so complete that scholar Tom Boiy speaks about “Western historians and travellers from the sixteenth until eighteenth century” who were familiar with the city’s symbolic value but had problems identifying “the exact location.”

● In 1919, H. R. Hall, the keeper of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities at the British Museum, described Babylon in this way: “It is a chaos of tumbled walls . . . overwhelmed with sand.”

What can we conclude from our examination of the fulfillment of these prophecies? It should be clear that time and again the Bible has proved to be a book of accurate prophecy. The prophetic messages regarding Judah and Babylon were fulfilled exactly as foretold!

Jerusalem suffered destruction because the people did not heed the divine warnings to reject ungodly conduct. After the foretold 70 years of captivity in Babylon, the Israelites were allowed to return home to Jerusalem. The ancient city of Babylon was destroyed in the manner that was described, and it remains uninhabited down to this day. But these are only a few of the many prophecies found in the Bible.

Our next issue will discuss how events in the first century C.E. were foretold long in advance. Those fulfilled prophecies also build our confidence in the accuracy of the Bible.

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\* That Media would play a leading role in the conquest of Babylon was also foretold by Isaiah some 200 years in advance.—See Isaiah 13:17-19; 21:2.