

## *Exile and Return*

*Many Judeans went into exile in Babylon. A second generation was born. Then the Persians conquered Babylon and, for economic reasons of their own, permitted the return of the exiles to Jerusalem. Some texts of the period deal with the early years in Babylon; others respond to the Return with hopes for renewal of God's promise to David. Here are some readings from that period.*

(58) The Torah Psalter. Devotion to the Law took the form of meditation on a group of Psalms, a group defined by the framing Psalms 1 and 119.

(59) Yehudim. The former Judah (Hb Yehudah) is now known in Aramaic as Yehud, and its people as Yehudim, "Jews." Not all of them sought to return.

(60) Job. He challenges the justice of the Exile: no amount of human sin could justify such a punishment.

(61) Qoheleth. "The Preacher" takes Job a step further. Not only is God inscrutable, but the mere life of man is ultimately without meaning.

(62) The Second Temple. When was the rebuilding of the Temple begun, and when was it completed? Our best dates are in the Prophetic literature.

(63) The Samaritans. A rival to the Jerusalem Temple was established on Mount Gerizim, complete with a Samaritan translation of the Pentateuch.

(64) Elephantine. Yahweh worship had persisted at this Egyptian fortress, though it had recently come under attack from the local authorities.



*Some responses to the times involved narrowing, and an ethnic definition of the people. Some sought to rewrite all earlier history to better prepare the the resumption of the old Promise to David. And there were still other hopes. We will see examples of all in the next and final section.*