

Sing Unto the Lord *a New Song*

Psalms 137:1-4
33:3a
98:1



Marketplace
at
Ruggles Camp and Retreat Center

And the ransomed of the LORD

shall return,

and come to Zion with

singing:

everlasting joy shall be

upon their heads;

they shall obtain joy and gladness,

and sorrow and sighing

shall flee away.

Isaiah 51-11



Psalms 33:3
137:1-4
98:1

By the rivers of Babylon,
There we sat down and wept,
When we remembered Zion
Upon the willows in the midst of it
We hung our harps
For there our captors demanded of us songs
And our tormentors mirth, saying
Sing Us One of the songs of Zion
**HOW CAN WE SING THE LORD'S
SONG IN A FOREIGN LAND?**

Psalms 137:1-4

The Israelites felt the pain and sorrow of the Exile! With the temple miles away in destruction and ruins, the devout Jews turned more and more to God's Word to keep their faith alive. **SING UNTO THE LORD A NEW SONG**, our theme for this year, emerges from the very heart of the exiled Israelites as they struggled to find God in the many changes in their lifestyle and temple sacrifice. In the Psalms written during the exile, they shared not only their feelings of oppression, sadness and pain, but in Psalms 33:1-5, they shared joy, praise, and thanks as they recall the character of God in words such as: lovingkindness, upright, righteous, and just.

"Sing for joy in the LORD, O you righteous ones;
Praise is becoming to the upright.
Give thanks to the LORD for the lyre;
Sing praises to Him with a harp of ten strings.
SING TO HIM A NEW SONG;
Play skillfully with a shout of joy.
For the word of the LORD is upright;
And all His work is done in faithfulness.
He loves righteousness and justice;
The earth is full of the lovingkindness of the LORD.
O SING TO THE LORD A NEW SONG
For He has done wonderful things."

Psalms 98:1

OVERVIEW

Year A



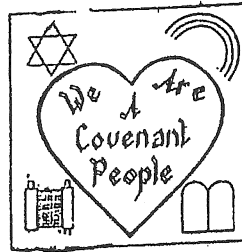
THE BEGINNING

Creation

Creation and the Fall of Man

Noah and the Flood

Year B



GOD'S COVENANT PEOPLE

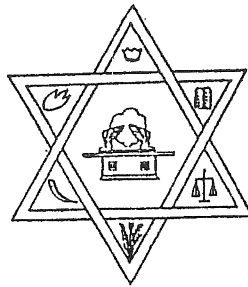
Abraham

Jacob

Jacob's 12 Sons = 12 tribes

Moses - Exodus

Year C



GROWING IN FAITHFULNESS

Joshua - Into Promised Land

Ruth - Heritage of David

David - A Man After God's Own Heart

Year D



SING UNTO THE LORD A NEW SONG

Daniel - Faithful in Captivity

Esther - Interceded for Her People

Ezra, Nehemiah - Returning to Rebuild

*This completes the Old Testament study.
Next year we begin with the promised Messiah.

4000 B.C.

2800

1445

1405

971

931

413

TIMELINE

1011 - 971 B.C. David
971 - 931 Solomon

931

Divided Kingdom

REHOBOAM
Southern Kingdom - Judah

Prophets

Isaiah (739-681)
Micah (733-701)
Nahum (650-620)
Zephaniah (636-623)
Habakkuk (621-609)
Jeremiah (627-574)
Daniel (605-536)
Ezekiel (593-559)

JEROBOAM
Northern Kingdom - Israel

Prophets

Elijah (876-852)
Elisha (852-796)
Joshua (784-772)
Amos (767-755)
Hosea (755-714)

722

Kingdom taken by Assyrians

605

Nebuchadnezzar attacks Jerusalem

597

DANIEL and friends taken captive

Second siege by Nebuchadnezzar

Ezekiel and 10,000 taken captive

586

Southern Kingdom falls

Judah taken captive by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon

Jerusalem and temple destroyed



70 Years of Jewish Captivity

538

Fall of Babylon

Decree of Cyrus (Medes/ Persian Rule) to return and rebuild Temple

536

Zerubbabel returns, begins temple

Return of remnant

534

Temple work stopped (Ezra 1-6)

520

Temple work resumed

516

Temple work finished

486

Feast of Xerxes; Queen Vashti deposed (483) **ESTHER**

473

Feast of Purim

458

EZRA returns

445

NEHEMIAH returns to Jerusalem and rebuilds walls in 52 days

415

Book of Nehemiah, 445-415

BACKGROUND

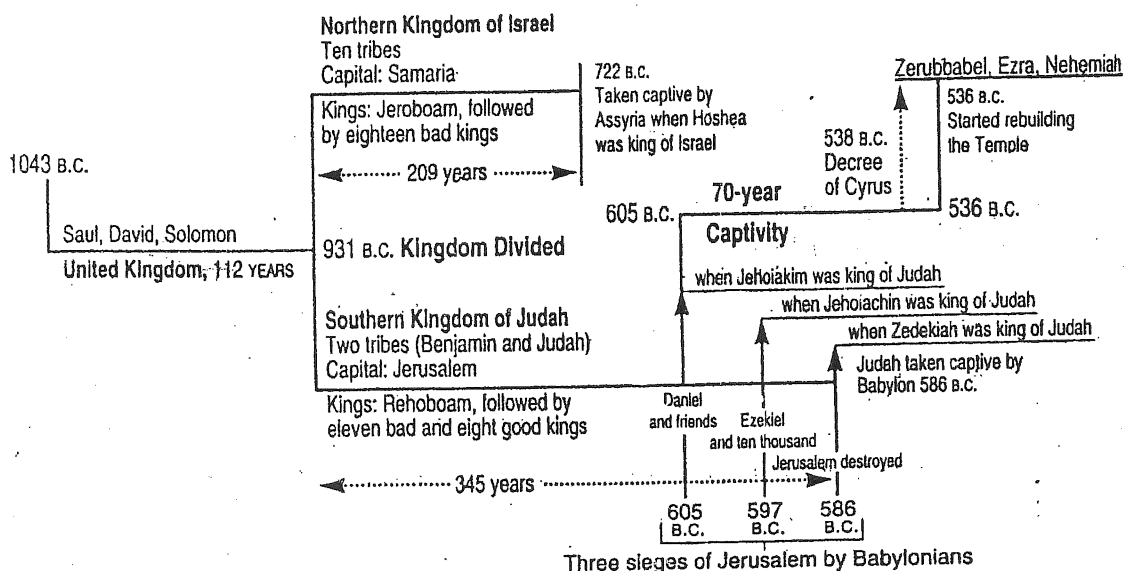
Last year we ended with the life of David, the king. He was "a man after God's own heart." Solomon, David's son, became king after David, and although known for his wisdom, his many heathen wives turned his heart away from the One true God to other gods. His heart was not wholly devoted to the Lord: Solomon "did what was evil in the sight of the Lord" (I Kings 11:4,6).

I Chronicles 1-28 gives us a genealogy from Adam through David.

II Chronicles 1-10 begins with Solomon's forty-year reign and continues with that of his son's, Rehoboam, who succeeded him. (See **TIMELINE** on the following pages.)

Jeroboam, formerly the foreman of labor in Ephraim, had previously fled from Solomon to Egypt. When he returned by popular demand, he headed a deligation which appealed to Rehoboam, the king, to lighten the load of labor and taxation which had been imposed by Solomon (II Chronicles 10:3-4). Had Rehoboam listened to the old advisors, he would have heard the plight of the disgruntled Israelites. But his young peers only urged him to make the people's yoke heavier. Therefore, the old advisors dissassociated themselves from the house of David and declared their independence. This left only Judah and Benjamin under the rulership of Rehoboam.

I Kings 12-16 also tells us of **ISRAEL'S DIVISION AND CAPTIVITY.**



NORTHERN KINGDOM

Ten of the twelve tribes of Israel broke away from the rule of King Rehoboam and made Jeroboam their king. His kingdom included all the land northward from Bethel to Dan and all the tribes on the east of the river Jordan. Rehoboam as ruler over the tribe of Judah and part of Benjamin was called Judah and was less than one-third the size of Israel. The empire founded by David and held by Solomon was broken up. Four factors that contributed to the division were: tribal jealousies, Solomon's heavy-handed approach in governing, Jeroboam's political ambition, and Rehoboam's foolishness.

The Lord told Jeroboam that he would become king over the ten tribes and if he served the Lord, his kingdom would become great and his descendants would rule for a long time. But Jeroboam was not faithful to the Lord God of Israel. He led the people in worshipping idols. This was the beginning of a series of bad kings that would eventually lead to the fall of the Northern Kingdom to the Syrians.

When the kingdom divided, the temple was in Judah's territory at Jerusalem. Jeroboam feared that if his people (the Northern Kingdom) returned there to worship, they would be influenced to shift their allegiance back to Solomon's son, Rehoboam. So Jeroboam placed golden calves at Dan and Bethel, the southern and northern extremes of his territory, and enticed the people of the Northern Kingdom to worship these false gods.

The Northern Kingdom came into existence in 931 B.C. (see chart). In spite of the courageous ministries of a number of prophets, especially Elijah and Elisha, and including in later years, Jonah, Amos, and Hosea, the nation turned away from the Lord and worshipped false gods.

In 725 B.C. Assyria's new king besieged Samaria, the capital of the Northern Kingdom, and after three years the Israelites could stand the Assyrian siege no longer and Samaria fell in 722 B.C. The people were carried away as captives. The Assyrian leaders carried out a cruel policy of exile by removing many of the leading people of Samaria to foreign lands. In their place, they brought people from other conquered lands to Samaria. (The descendants of these people(s) were the Samaritans in the New Testament era.)

Assyria's policy of exile carried out a political strategy. A nation without military leaders, political leaders, and people with skills to develop weapons could not revolt against their conquerors. They imported foreigners to ensure that the land would remain productive enough to produce taxes. II Kings 17:7-8, 12-18 presents the reason for the fall of the Northern Kingdom.

SOUTHERN KINGDOM

During the days of Solomon, the worship of heathen idols had begun to spread. This situation grew worse under Rehoboam, Solomon's son, and the same things happened in Judah that had happened in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. When the people forgot God's laws they began to do all kinds of wicked things. Their punishment would soon follow. Their history is very much like the history of Israel. However, there are some very important differences: all of the nineteen kings of Israel were wicked, but the rulers of Judah were not; eight of the twenty did their best to lead the people to do what was right; and the kings of Israel came from many different families while the kings of Judah all descended from David's family.

God sent prophets to Judah, just as He sent them to Israel. Read Isaiah 1:4 and Micah 6:16. Some of the prophets God sent were: Obadiah, Joel, Isaiah, Micah, Naham, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Habakkuk, Daniel, and Ezekiel. They warned the people of the punishment to come if they continued to be disobedient. The punishment for Judah was to be the same as that for Israel: captivity. The nation of Judah lasted nearly a century and a half longer than Israel. The Chaldeans, another name for the Babylonians, invaded the Southern Kingdom of Judah three times under the leadership of King Nebuchadnezzar. In 605 B.C., DANIEL and many nobles were taken captive. (We will learn more about DANIEL in our first day of study.) Then in 597 B.C., Ezekiel was taken captive. The third and final siege occurred in 586 B.C. when Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed and the treasures of the Temple were carried away. (II Kings 24-25)

And all the articles of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king and of his officers, he brought them all to Babylon. Then they burned the house of God, and broke down the wall of Jerusalem and burned all its fortified buildings with fire, and destroyed all its valuable articles.

II Chronicles 36:18-19

*By the rivers of Babylon,
There we sat down and wept,
When we remembered Zion
Upon the willows in the midst of it
We hung our harps
For there our captors demanded of us songs
And our tormentors mirth, saying
Sing Us One of the songs of Zion
HOW CAN WE SING THE LORD'S SONG
IN A FOREIGN LAND?*

Psalms 137:1-4



This brings us to the state of CAPTIVITY of God's chosen people. BUT THERE WERE SOME WHO TRUSTED HIM AND HIS PROMISE THAT THEY WOULD RETURN TO THEIR HOMELAND. Let us look at the life of Daniel, one of the four Hebrew boys taken from the leading families of Judah, and whose Hebrew name was Belteshazzar.

Daniel at a Glance

FOCUS	HISTORY OF DANIEL	PROPHETIC PLAN FOR THE GENTILES				PROPHETIC PLAN OF ISRAEL		
REFERENCE	1:1 ——— 2:1 ——— 5:1 ——— 6:1 ——— 7:1 ——— 8:1 ——— 9:1 ——— 10:1 — 12:13							
DIVISION	PERSONAL LIFE OF DANIEL	VISIONS OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR	VISION OF BELSHAZZAR	DECREE OF DARIUS	FOUR BEASTS	VISION OF RAM AND MALE-GOAT	VISION OF SEVENTY WEEKS	VISION OF ISRAEL'S FUTURE
TOPIC	DANIEL'S BACKGROUND	DANIEL INTERPRETS OTHERS' DREAMS				ANGEL INTERPRETS DANIEL'S DREAMS		
	HEBREW	ARAMAIC				HEBREW		
LOCATION	BABYLON OR PERSIA							
TIME	c. 605-536 B.C.							

Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps and Charts © 1993 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

By Flowing Waters of Babylon

PSALM 137:1-6

Paraphrased by MICHAEL PERRY

MICHAEL PERRY
Arr. Christian Stover

*Em B7

1. By flow - ing wa - ters of Ba - by - lon
2. They who op - press us and mock our grief
3. If we for - get you, Je - ru - sa - lem,

Em B7 Em

We hung our harps on the wil - lows;
Tell us to sing and be mer - ry;
May we keep si - lence for - ev - er!

How shall we sing our Je -
How can we wor - ship when
Still we re - mem - ber our

Am C Em Bm7 Em

hov - ah's song In a for - eign land far a - way?
spir - its fail In an a - lien land far a - way?
dis - tant home In an - oth - er land far a - way.

*Chord markings are for guitar, not autoharp. For use with autoharp the song must be sung in a lower key (D minor):
Em becomes Dm, B7 becomes A7, Am becomes Gm, C becomes Bb, and Bm7 becomes Am.

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By the Babylonian Rivers

EWALD J. BASH, 1964
Based on Psalm 137: 1-4

Latvian folk melody
Harmonized by JOHN YLVISAKER

1. By the Bab - y - lon - nian riv - ers we sat down in grief and wept;
2. There our cap - tors in de - ri - sion did re - quire of us a song;
3. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange and bit - ter land;
4. Let the Cross be ben - e - dic - tion for those bound in ty - ran - ny;

Hanged our harps up - on a wil - low, mourned for Zi - on when we slept.
So we sat with star - ing vi - sion, and the days were hard and long.
Can our voic - es veil the sor - row? Lord God, hold your ho - ly band.
By the power of re - sur - rec - tion loose them from cap - tiv - i - ty.

Reprinted from *Songs for Today*, copyright 1964, The American Lutheran Church, by Augsburg Publishing House.

DANIEL

Memory Verse: "...Daniel...continued kneeling on his knees, three times a day, praying and giving thanks before His God, as he had been doing previously."
Daniel 6:10

Read FIRST six chapters of David.

When Jerusalem was overthrown by the Babylonians, several young boys from prominent families were taken into exile to serve Nebuchadnezzar the king. Among them were Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds.

Daniel 1:17

After the boy's three years of training, the king was very impressed with them and he entered them into his service. Their skills were far better than that of the other magicians and enchanters of the kingdom. Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that he wanted to have interpreted, but the king also wanted the dream recounted by whosoever could manage the task -- *before* interpreting it. None of the kingdom astrologers could recount the king's dream to him, and for this they would surely be killed. However, God revealed the entire dream to Daniel, who then offered to interpret for the king. Daniel went to the king and gave him the dream and the interpretation, giving all the credit to God. Nebuchadnezzar was very impressed with the power of Daniel's God.

Then the king placed David in a high position and lavished many gifts on him. He made him ruler over the entire province of Babylon and placed him in charge of all its wise men. Moreover, at Daniel's request, the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego administrators over the province of Babylon, while Daniel himself remained at the royal court.

Daniel 2:48-49

The king built a statue of himself ninety feet high and commanded that everyone bow to it. However, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused, and were thrown into a fiery furnace...so hot that it burned the men holding them.

Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisors, "Weren't there three men that were tied up and thrown into the fire?"
They replied, "Certainly, O king."

He said, "Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods."

Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out!"

So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out of the fire, and the satraps, prefects, governors, and royal advisors crowded around them. They witnessed that the fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair on their heads singed; their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them.



Then Nebuchadnezzar said, "Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent His angel and rescued his servants. They trusted in Him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. Therefore I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble, for no other god can save in this way."

Daniel 3:24-29

MENE, MENE,
TEKEL,
UPHARSIN

Daniel continued to interpret dreams for the king. One night at a big party, King Belshazzar decided to serve wine in the gold and silver goblets that were stolen from the temple in Jerusalem. A hand appeared and started writing on the wall. Certainly, this frightened the king; he called all the wise men of the kingdom to see if they could decipher it, but none could. They then called upon Daniel because they knew he had the spirit of God. Daniel gave the king bad news: the writing on the wall said that the king would not live much longer. True to the word, the king was killed later that very night.

The new king was Darius, and he originally had plans to promote Daniel. However, there were men that plotted against Daniel; they had the king issue an edict that anyone who prayed to any God other than the King would be sent to the lions' den. The evil men carefully watched Daniel until they caught him praying to God as he did three times daily. The king had no choice but to obey his edict.

So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions' den. The king said to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!"

A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the rings of his nobles, so that Daniel's plight could not be changed. Then the king returned to his palace and spent the night without eating and without any entertainment being brought to him. And he could not sleep.

At the first light of dawn, the king hurried to the lions' den. When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?"

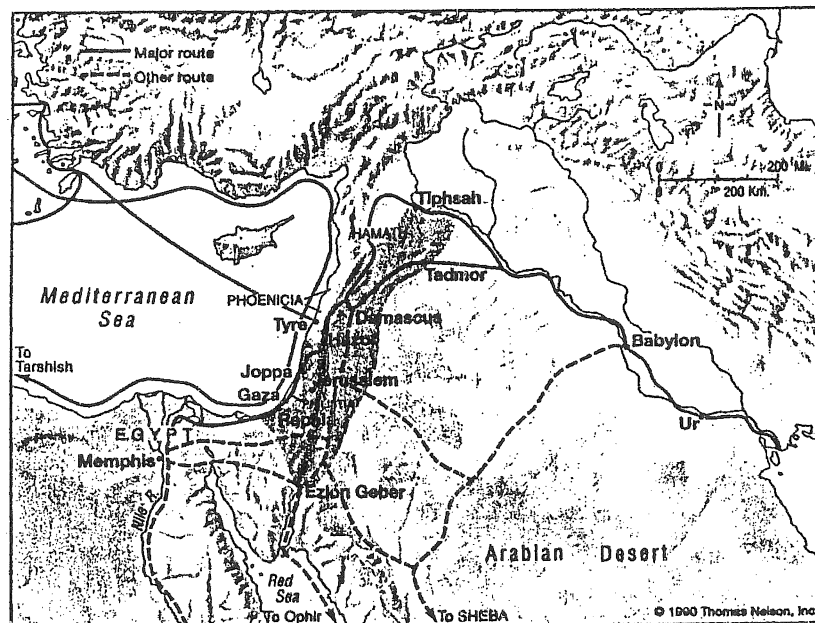
Daniel answered, "O king, live forever! My God sent His angel, and He shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me because I was found innocent in His sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, O king."

The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him because he had trusted in God.

At the king's command, the men who had falsely accused Daniel were brought in and thrown into the lions' den...

Daniel 6:16-24

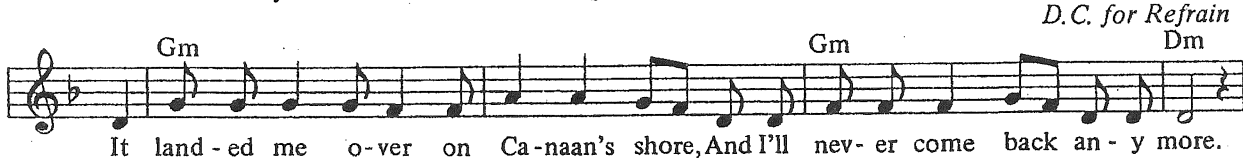
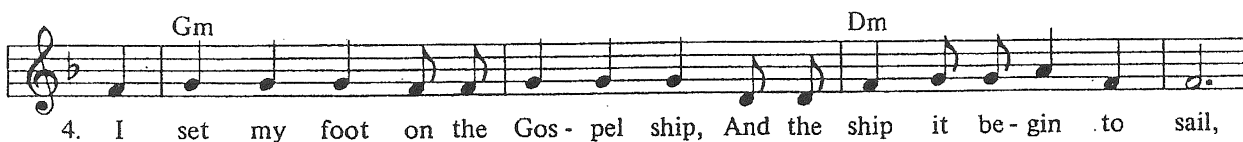
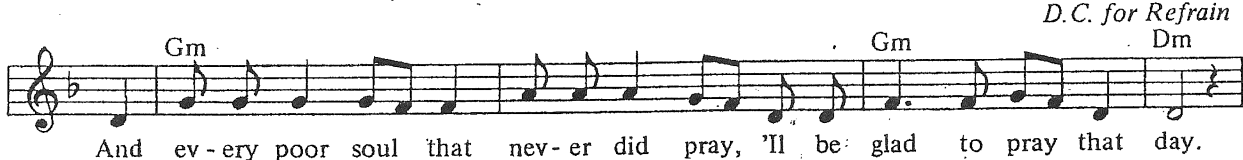
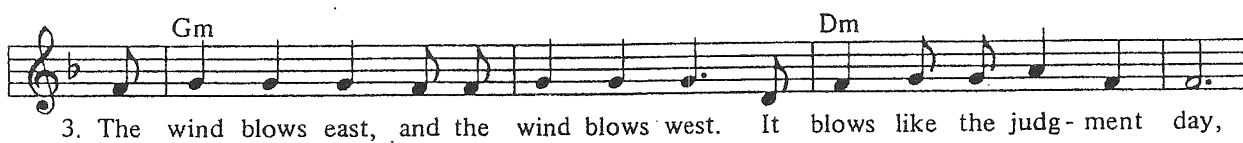
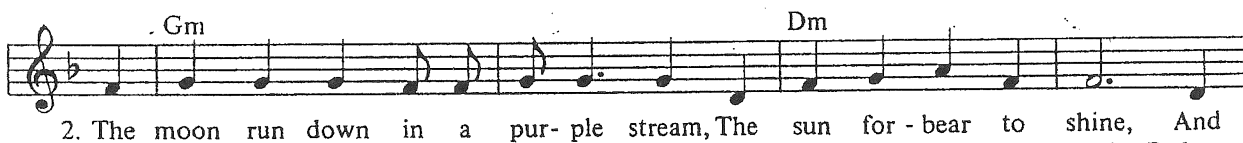
Darius issued a decree that everyone in his kingdom must fear and revere the God of Daniel. The rest of the book of Daniel deals with prophecy.



Didn't My Lord Deliver Daniel?

Traditional

Traditional Spiritual

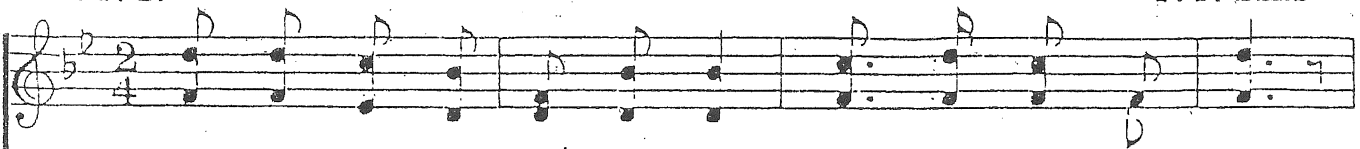


In Songs of Zion, No. 106.

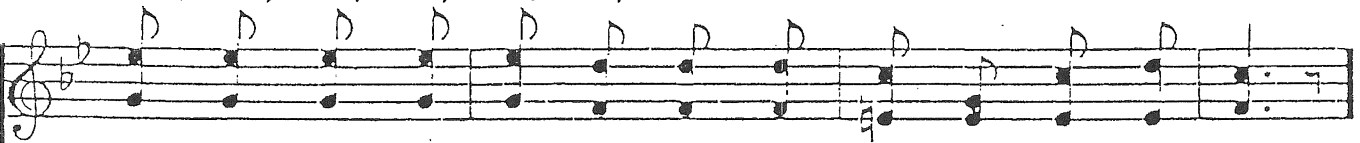
Dare to Be a Daniel

P. P. B.

P. P. BLISS



1. Stand-ing by a pur- pose true, Heed - ing God's com - mand,
2. Man - y might-y men are lost, Dar - ing not to stand,
3. Man - y gi - ants, great and tall. Stalk - ing through the land,
4. Hold the Gos - pel ban - ner high! On to vic - tory grand!



Hon - or them, the faith - ful few! All hail to Dan - iel's Band!
Who for God had been a host, By join - ing Dan - iel's Band!
Head-long to the earth would fall, If met by Dan - iel's Band!
Sa - tan and his host de - fy, And shout for Dan - iel's Band!



CHORUS



Dare to be a Dan - iel, Dare to stand a - lone,

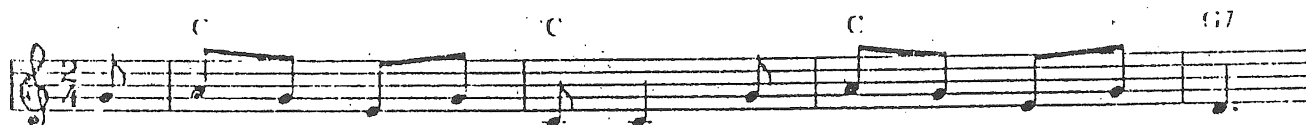


Dare to have a pur - pose firm! Dare to make it known!



Daniel

Tune: "I WISH I HAD A NICKEL..."



1. There was a man named Dan - iel. He prayed to God each day.
2. "Now we don't want this Dan - iel," The king's ad - vis - ers say.
3. When Dan - iel heard the new law, His heart filled with dis - may.
4. They threw him to the li - ons. "He'll nev - er get a - way.
5. But God said, "Don't fear Dan - iel, Your God will find a way.



He said, "O God, I need your help; To serve in ev - 'ry way."
 "We'll make a law he's sure to break; We'll say he must not pray."
 "I'll al - ways serve my God," he said; "I'll still pray ev - 'ry day."
 We'll hear no more of him," they said. "He won't praise God or pray."
 The lions shall do no harm to you, For by your side I'll stay."



Nev - er give up, Dan - iel! Dan - iel! Nev - er give up; Dan - iel, Dan - iel!



Nev - er give up, Dan - iel, Dan - iel! Those lions will go a - way.

WORDS: Pat Floyd
 MUSIC: CINDY
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ESTHER

I am only one,
But still I am one.
I cannot do everything,
But still I can do something;
And because I cannot do everything
I will not refuse to do the something that I can do!
Edward Everett Hale

Memory Verse: "Who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?" Esther 4:13-14

This is what happened during the time of Xerxes, the Xerxes who ruled over 127 provinces stretching from India to Cush.
Esther 1:1

The approximate date of this book is 521 B.C., and it was during this time that King Xerxes threw a party after he had shown off his wealth for 180 days. The feast lasted seven days and there was much drinking. The king sent for his queen, Vashti, but she refused to come to the party to display her beauty. Fearing that women everywhere would follow suit, the king had Vashti dethroned and she was never again allowed in the king's presence.

Since there was no queen, the king's attendants began searching the land for the most beautiful women in hopes of finding a queen.

Now there was in the citadel of Susa a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin, named Mordecai, son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, who had been carried into exile from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, among those taken captive with Jehoiachin, king of Judah. Mordecai had a cousin named Hadassah, whom he had brought up because she had neither father nor mother. This girl, who was also known as Esther, was lovely in form and features, and Mordecai had taken her as his own daughter when her father and mother died.

Esther 2:5-7

Esther ended up at the palace, and under the head of the harem, began a year's long beauty regime. When she finally appeared before the king, he was so impressed, he immediately made her queen. She kept her Jewish heritage a secret from everyone. Meanwhile, her "father" Mordecai overheard a plot to kill the king

as he sat at the gate of the palace. He reported it and the two plotting the kill were hanged, and the event was recorded in the king's book of annals.

The king elevated one of his servants, Haman, to be second-in-command in the kingdom. Everyone bowed to him and honored him except Mordecai. Haman was furious. When he discovered that Mordecai was Jewish, he planned to kill every Jew in the entire country. Haman had the power to execute such a dreadful deed. When Mordecai heard of the plot, he sent word to Esther to see if she could do anything to protect her people. She replied that she was only allowed to see the king when he called her and it had been thirty days since she had been called.

When Esther's words were reported to Mordecai, he sent back this answer: "Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. AND WHO KNOWS BUT THAT YOU HAVE COME TO ROYAL POSITION FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS?"

Esther 4:12-14

This is the key verse of the book.

Esther finally went to the king and upon seeing her, he promised to give her anything she wanted. She decided to prepare a banquet for the king to assure that he would be in a receptive mood when he heard her request. Haman was also invited. She didn't ask for anything on the first night, but invited all the guests to return the following night for another banquet. That night King Xerxes couldn't sleep so he had one of his servants read the book of annals to him. When the king heard the story of how Mordecai had saved his life, he decided that Mordecai should be honored. The next day, he asked Haman what he thought should be done to honor someone very special to the king. Because Haman thought the king was referring to him, he gave the king ideas on how a man should be honored. The king considered Haman's suggestion a good one and sent Haman to honor Mordecai, the very man Haman wanted to kill.

The next night at the banquet that Esther gave for the king, with Haman present, Esther pleaded for her people, the Jews.

Then Queen Esther answered, "If I have found favor with you, O king, and if it pleases your majesty, grant me my life -- this is my petition. And spare my people -- this is my request. For I and my people have been sold for destruction and slaughter and annihilation. If we had merely been sold as male and female slaves, I would have kept quiet, because no such distress would justify disturbing the king."

King Xerxes asked Queen Esther, "Who is he? Where is the man who has dared to do such a thing?"

Esther said, "The adversary and enemy is this vile Haman."

Then Haman was terrified before the king and queen.

Esther 7:3-6

Haman was hanged from the very gallows he had constructed to hang Mordecai. As word spread of what Esther had done, there was great joy:

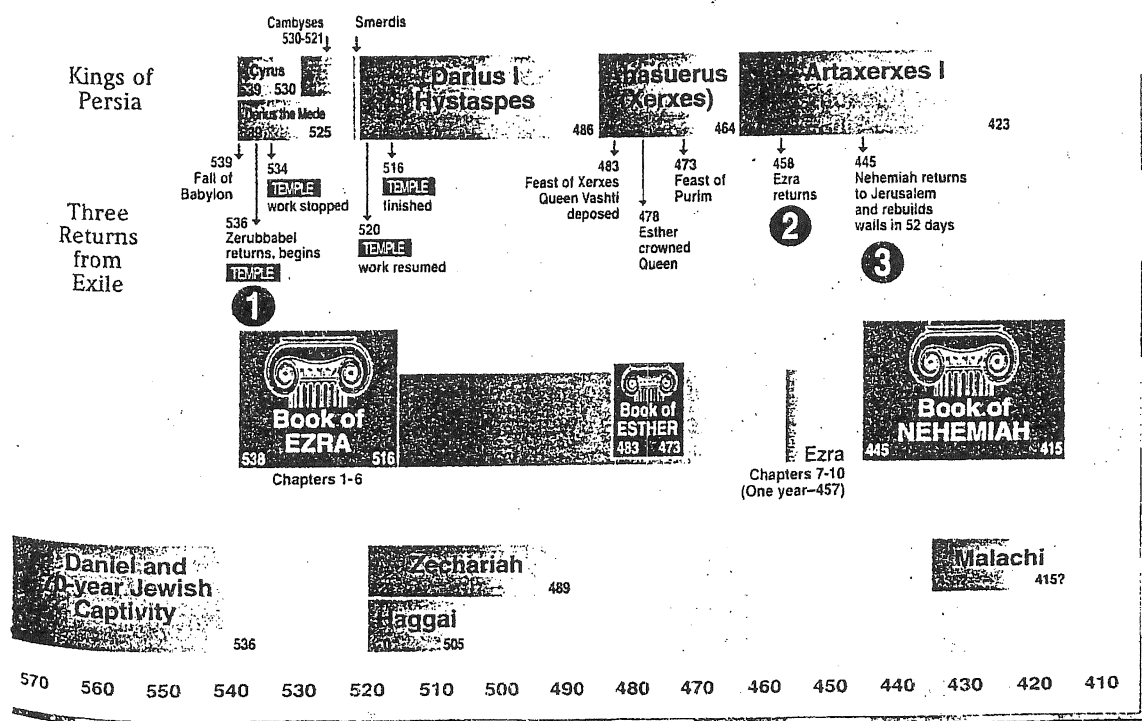
For the Jews it was a time of happiness and joy, gladness and honor. In every province and in every city, wherever the edict of the king went, there was joy and gladness among the Jews, with feasting and celebrating. And many people of other nationalities became Jews because of the Jews had seized them.

Esther 8:16-17

The Jewish people became more powerful and Mordecai became second in rank to the king.

Even though the word God does not appear in this book of Esther, it is very clear that God protected his people in a supernatural way. This shows how God used an orphaned, Jewish girl who was willing, for the sake of her people, to take action.

THE TIMES OF EZRA, NEHEMIAH, AND ESTHER



Purim

Jewish Holiday

Purim, the Feast of Lots, is considered the happiest festival of the Jewish annual cycle. It is celebrated in the spring on the fourteenth day of the twelfth month of Adar (February-March). This is a celebration of the deliverance of the Persian Jews over one of the most dastardly plots in history to exterminate the Jewish people. The book of Esther in the Old Testament tells the story of how the beautiful Jewish woman Esther (Hadassah) and her cousin Mordecai thwart the evil Prime Minister, Haman, who plots to kill the Jews.

The name *Feast of Lots* comes from the fact that the day was chosen for the Jews to die by way of lottery. The word *pur* is not a Hebrew word, but is Persian. All other festivals have Hebrew names.

Today, to commemorate the miraculous turn of events recorded in the book of Esther, Purim is celebrated with feasts, sending gifts of food to friends and the needy and with the reading of Esther, the story of Purim. To commemorate the day of prayer and fasting that the Jews held before their victory, Jews fast on the day before Purim from approximately three hours before sunrise until forty minutes after sunset. It is traditional to give to charity to commemorate the half-shekel given by each Jew in the time of the Holy Temple. Special prayers are said for evening, morning and afternoon, as well as in the grace after meals. The morning of Purim, there is a special reading from the Torah Scroll in the synagogue.

Time Line of Purim Events

Nisan 13	Haman ordered destruction of Jews (Esther 3:12) Jews learn of order, repent and fast (Esther 4:16)
Nisan 14	Day one of three-day fast.
Nisan 15	Day two of three-day fast.
Nisan 16	Day three of three-day fast.
	Esther went to King uninvited (Esther 5:1). Esther had a banquet with Haman and King (Esther 5:4)
Nisan 17	Esther has second banquet (Esther 5:8) Adar 13, is decided to be the day for the destruction of the Jews (Esther 3:13)
	Haman's plans are spoiled.

EZRA AND NEHEMIAH

Memory Verse: "...the joy of the Lord is your strength." Nehemiah 8:10

The two books of Ezra and Nehemiah appear as one in the Hebrew manuscripts. They both deal with the Jews return to Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the temple (Ezra), and the city walls and gates (Nehemiah). Read II Chronicles 36:23 and Ezra 1:1-8 for a background of the story.

We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and we are rebuilding the temple that was built many years ago, one that the great king of Israel, Solomon, built and finished. But because our fathers angered the God of heaven, He handed them over to Nebuchadnezzar the Chaldean, king of Babylon, who destroyed this temple and deported the people to Babylon.

However, in the first year of Cyrus king of Babylon, King Cyrus issued a decree to rebuild this house of God. He even removed from the temple of Babylon the gold and silver articles of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple in Jerusalem and brought to the temple in Babylon.

Then King Cyrus gave them to a man named Sheshbazzar, whom he had appointed governor, and he told him, "Take these articles and go and deposit them in the temple in Jerusalem. And rebuild the house of God on its site."

So this Sheshbazzar came and laid the foundations of the house of God in Jerusalem. From that day to the present, it has been under construction but is not yet finished.

Ezra 5:11-17

The Jews were allowed to return to Jerusalem to rebuild with the financial support of the king's treasury.

"Moreover, I hereby decree what you are to do for these elders of the Jews in the construction of this house of God: The expenses of these men are to be fully paid out of the royal treasury, from the revenues of Trans-Euphrates, so that the work will not stop."

Ezra 6:8

This alone was an amazing act of God and demonstrated His Mighty Power. The building was finally completed:

Then the people of Israel -- the priest, the Levites and the rest of the exiles -- celebrated the dedication of the house of God with joy.

Ezra 6:16

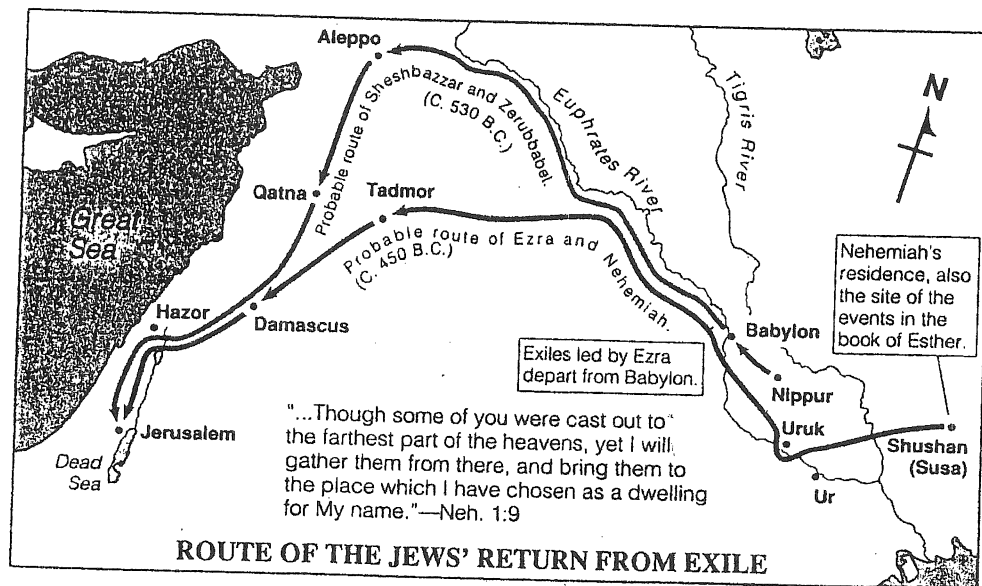
Ezra was informed that many of the Jews had intermarried with the foreigners living in the land.

After these things had been done, the leaders came to me and said, "The people of Israel, including the priests and the Levites, have not kept themselves separate from the neighboring peoples with their detestable practices, like those of the Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Ammonites, Moabites, Egyptians, and Amorites. They have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and their sons, and have mingled the holy race with the peoples around them. And the leaders and officials had led the way in this unfaithfulness."

When I heard this, I tore my tunic and cloak, pulled hair from my head and beard and sat down appalled.

Ezra 9:1-3

Ezra prayed and confessed for the people (9:6-15). The people made a covenant with God promising to return to His way and get rid of their foreign wives.



Nehemiah's Song

Refrain

Build a wall! Make it long and tall. Build a wall! Make it

safe for all! Build a wall! Don't for - get the gate. Build a

wall, build a wall, build a wall!

Fine

Verses

1. I had asked some friends who
2. When I heard those words I
3. So I fin - ly came to
4. As we did the work our

came my way, How Je - ru - sa - lem had met her fate. "There is
sat and wept, and I mourned for days. A fast I kept. And I
see the wall, I went out at night, sur - veyed it all. Then I
cour - age grew, and we fin - ished on day fif - ty - two! With the

trou - ble there: gates de - stroyed by fire, and the wall is tum - bling down.
prayed, "O Lord, be at - ten - tive to me." Then my boss said Go — and see."
called my friends, set a - bout — the task, and the wall was built — up fast.
help of God, all the work — was done. We were changed, we're God's! — We won!

WORDS: Based on Nehemiah 1:2-6:15.

MUSIC: Roberta Exline

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NEHEMIAH

Memory Verse: "...Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem..."

Nehemiah 2:17

Nehemiah was the cupbearer to the king while he was in exile. This was a position of honor and Nehemiah was in the presence of the king daily. When Nehemiah heard about the condition of the wall and gates in Jerusalem, he was greatly distressed and prayed to God to give him success when he made his request of the king.

"O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man. I am cupbearer to the king."

Nehemiah 1:11

Because Nehemiah was sad in the presence of the king for the first time, the king asked why:

I was very much afraid, but I said to the king, "May the king live forever! Why should my face not look sad when the city where my fathers are buried lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?"

The king said to me, "What is it that you want?"

Then I prayed to God in heaven, and I answered the king, "If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my fathers are buried so that I can rebuild it."

Nehemiah 2:2b-5

It pleased the king to send Nehemiah; he gave Nehemiah letters of safe-conduct and provided lumber for the reconstruction. Nehemiah knew where the good fortune originated:

"And because the gracious hand of God was upon me, the king granted my requests."

Nehemiah 2:8b

Once Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem, he went out by night and inspected the city. When he announced the plan to rebuild, however, he was mocked and ridiculed by the officials. Nehemiah responded:

"The God of heaven will give us success. We his servants will start rebuilding, but as for you, you have no share in Jerusalem or any claim or historic right to it."

Nehemiah 2:20

So the Jews began the task of rebuilding the walls and gates. They faced much opposition, even working in shifts, during which some worked while others protected them with weapons. Some even worked with one hand and carried a weapon in the other! Nehemiah always kept his eyes focused on the Lord and the task at hand. When in chapter 6 some of the men schemed to harm him, he ignored their threats:

So I sent messengers to them with this reply: "I am carrying on a great project and cannot go down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and go down to you?" Four times they sent the same message, and each time, I gave them the same answer.

Nehemiah 6:3-4

When the building finally was complete, Nehemiah assembled all the people and had Ezra read the word of the Lord out loud to everyone. The Levites were there explaining the law so everyone could understand what was being read. Hearing the words of the Lord made the people weep as they realized how far apart they had grown from God. But Nehemiah had great understanding in the power of God.

This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, **FOR THE JOY OF THE LORD IS YOUR STRENGTH.** The Levites calmed all the people, saying, "Be still, for this is a sacred day. Do not grieve." Then all the people went away to eat and drink, to send portions of food and to celebrate with great joy, because they now understood the words that had been made known to them.

Nehemiah 8:10b-12

The people then made a covenant with God that they would follow Him and obey His laws and the dedicated the walls with a great celebration.

