

God's Promise and the Return of the Exiles



538 - 516 BC

The prophet Jeremiah wrote a letter from Jerusalem to the exiles living in Babylon.

The letter said,

"This is what the LORD says; 'When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my promise to bring you back into your own land. For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. I will be found by you.'"



Seventy years after Jeremiah's prophecy, the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus, king of Persia, to make a proclamation.

King Cyrus said, "The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Anyone of God's people may go up to Jerusalem and build the temple of the LORD."

The families of Judah and Benjamin, along with the priests and Levites, prepared to go up and build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem.

King Cyrus also brought out the valuable items belonging to the temple which Nebuchadnezzar had carried from Jerusalem to Babylon.



Taking the articles, along with the gifts of gold, silver and livestock, the Israelites left and settled in towns around Jerusalem.

The priests began to build the altar of the God of Israel.

And as the builders laid the foundation of the temple, the younger priests came forward with trumpets to praise the LORD. But many of the older priests and Levites wept aloud when they saw that the foundation did not match the former temple's glory.

In the days that followed the people around them discouraged the people of Judah and work on the temple stalled.

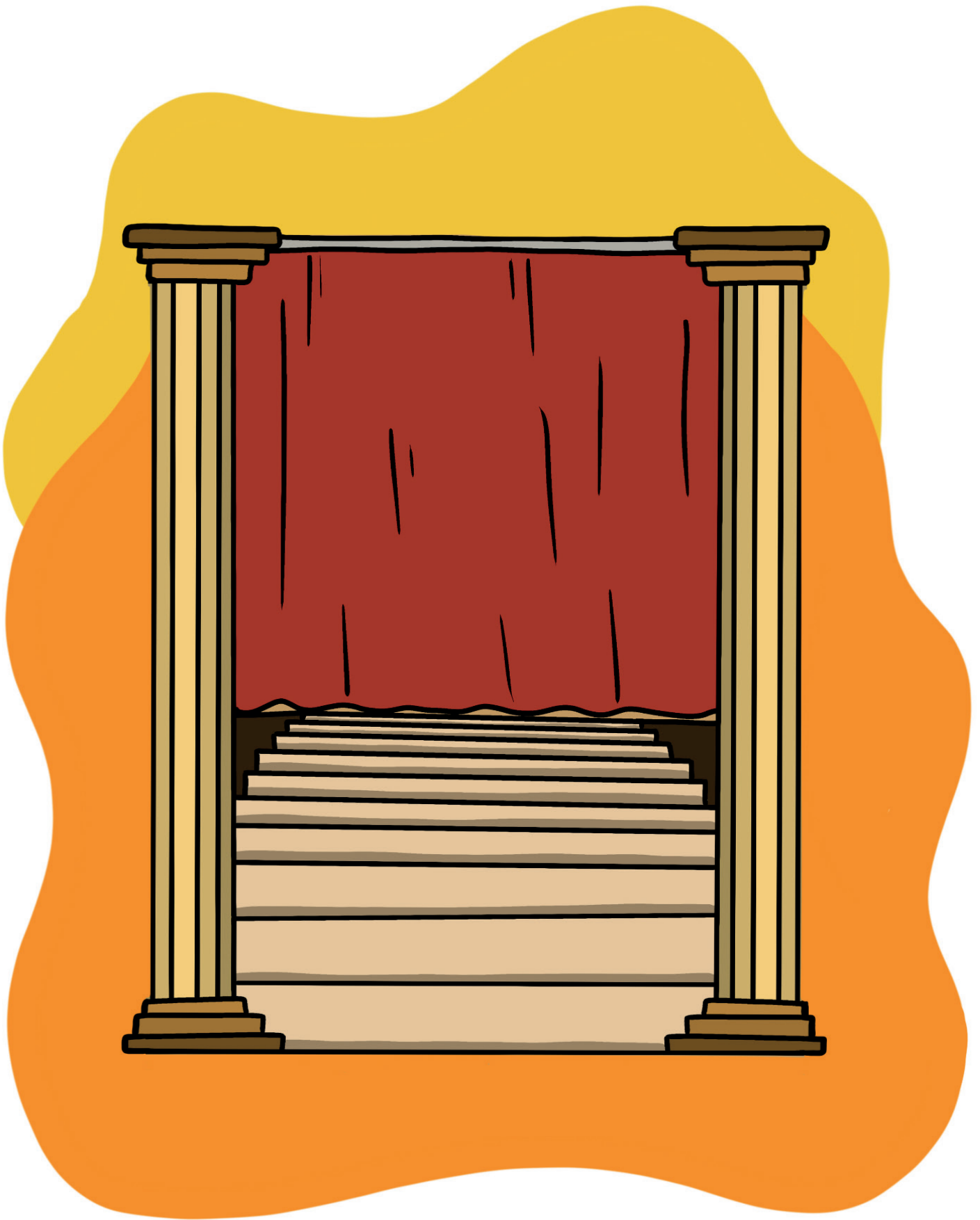


The LORD then sent a word to the people through the prophet Haggai, "Is it time for you to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?"

And the LORD stirred up the spirit of the people to begin work on the house of the LORD their God.

Two years later the temple was finished.

While not as grand as Solomon's temple, the people celebrated the dedication of the house of God with joy.



Of the new temple, the prophet Haggai said,

“This is what the LORD Almighty says, ‘In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. The treasured of all nations will come in and I will fill this house with glory. The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house. And in this place, I will grant peace,’ declares the LORD.”

Jeremiah 29, Ezra 1 - 6 and Haggai

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