

# AN OVERVIEW OF THE BIBLE

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# Where we're going today

- Our experience of the Bible so far
- Overview of the six acts of the biblical drama
- Creation and fall
- The story of the Old Testament (in more detail)
- The story of the New Testament
- Redemption completed

# Our experience of the Bible

# Our experience of the Bible

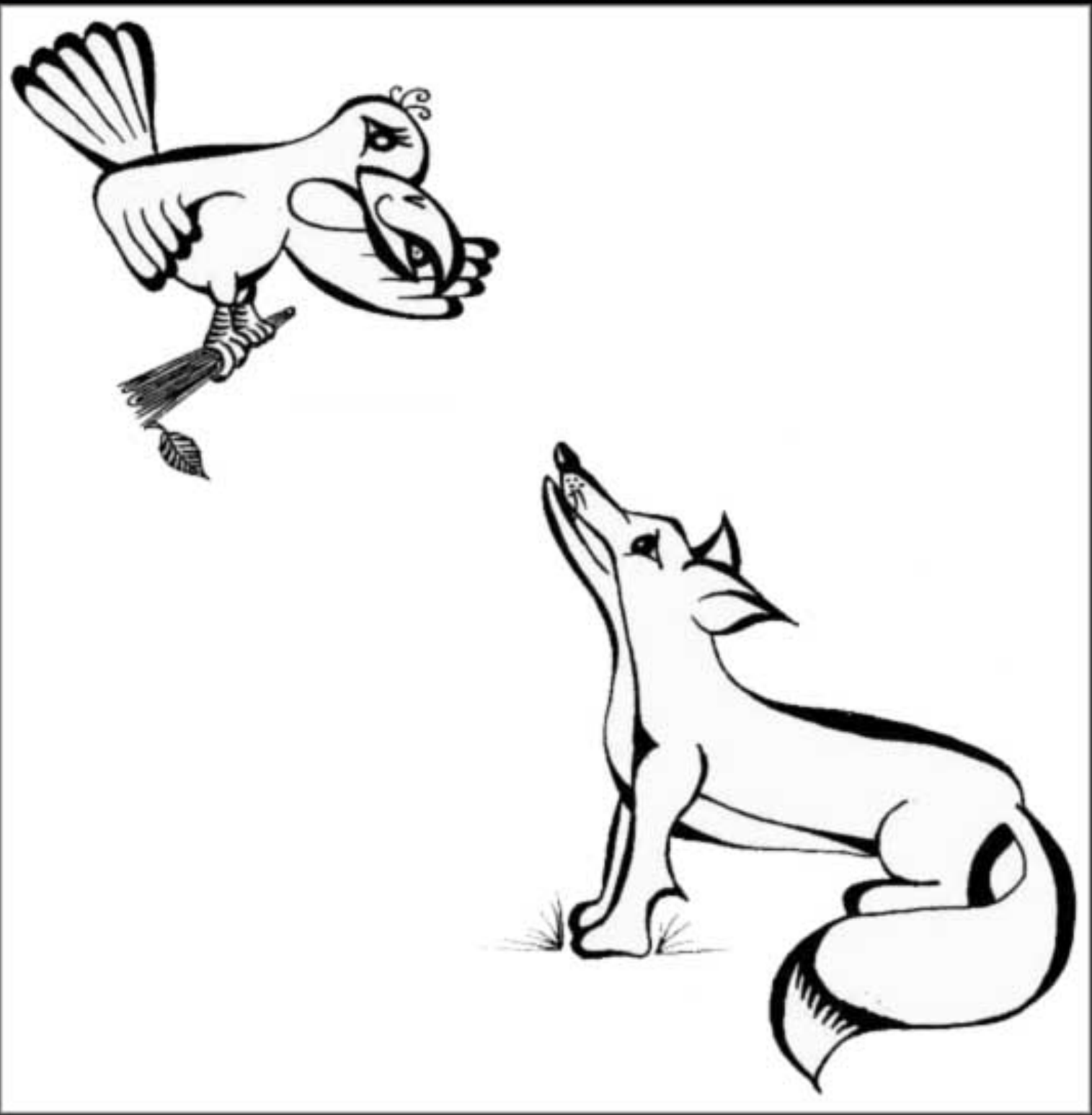
- what are the main ways in which I have experienced the Bible?
  - individually
  - as part of a community
- what have I gained from those experiences?
  - is what I gained different in individual and corporate encounters with the Bible? How?
- what questions do I have about studying the Bible?

# Our experience of the Bible

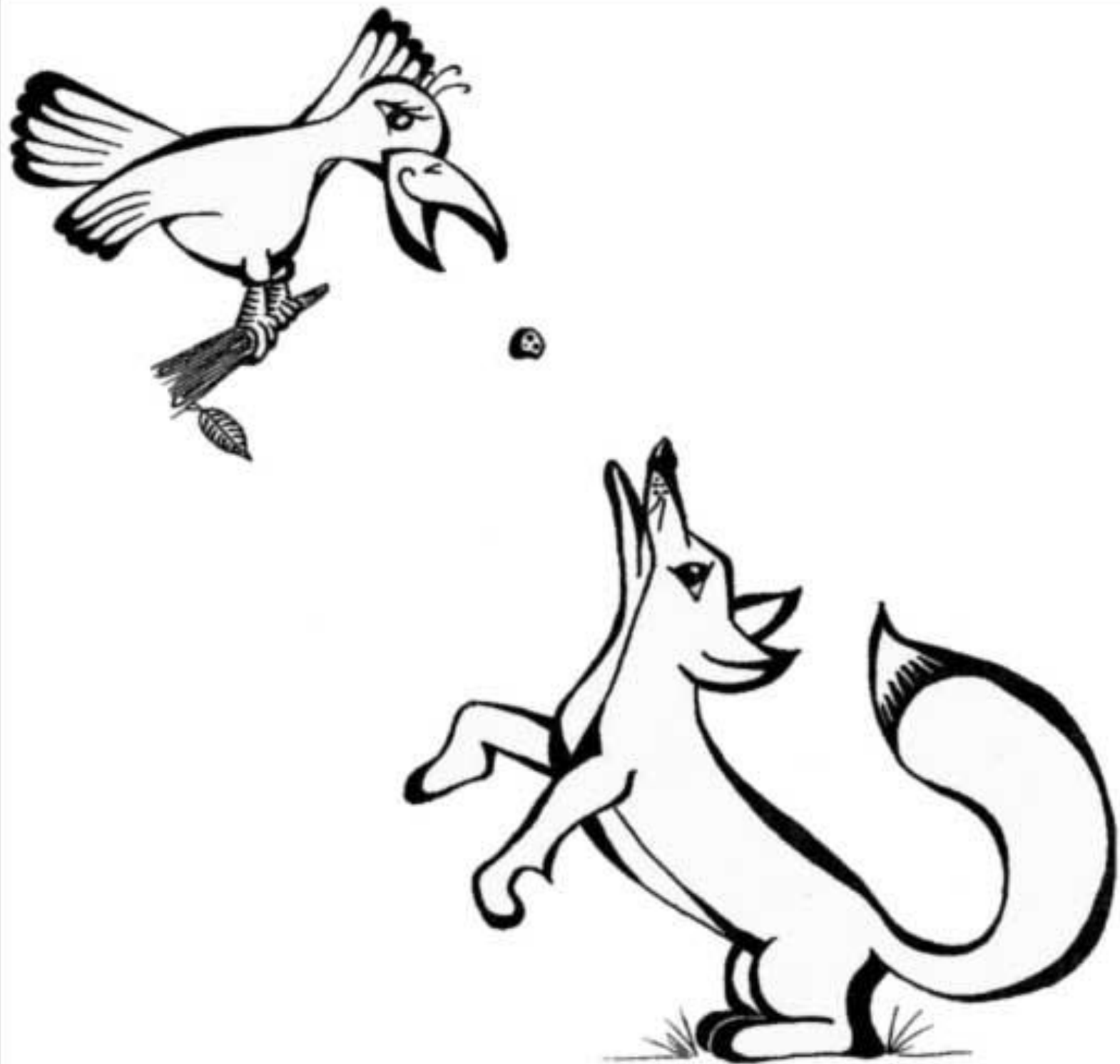
- share something from your group
  - which surprised you *or*
  - which contrasted with your own experience *or*
  - which encouraged you personally
- ...and say why that was so

# The six acts of the biblical drama

Our whole  
lives are  
shaped by  
some story







# The shape of a story

X X X X X X X X X X X X X

Beginning

Theme

End

# The shape of a story

Tension and  
resolution

X X X X X X X X X X X X

Beginning

Theme

End

# Grand story

- **comprehensive**: an account of the **whole** creation
- **normative**: claims to be **true**

‘...a story...is...the best way of talking about **the way the world actually is.**’

N.T.Wright

# The biblical story

Broken relationship of  
God and humanity—  
and its resolution

X X X X X X X X X X X X X

Creation

New creation

# The humanist story

Meaning of history:

Progress by science/technology

X X X X X X X X X X X X X

Big bang

Better world

‘I can only answer the question “What am I to do?” if I can answer the prior question “Of what story do I find myself a part?”’

Alasdair MacIntyre

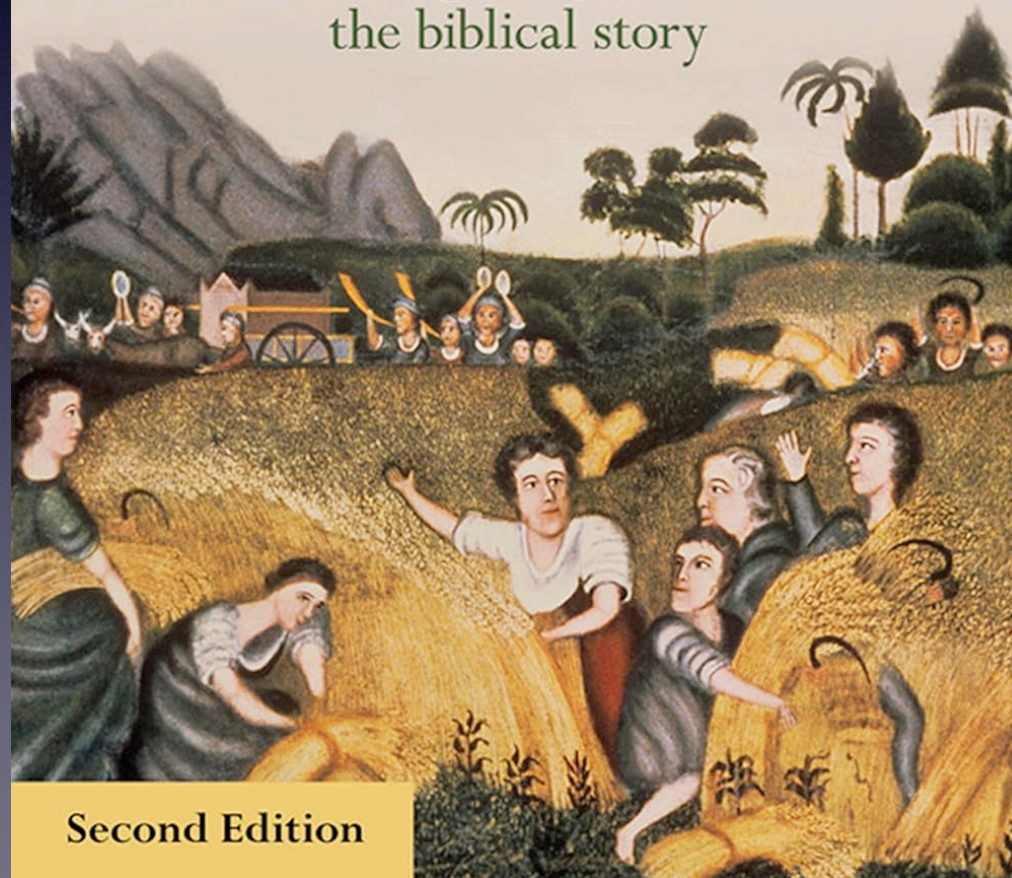
‘The way we understand human life depends on what conception we have of the human story. What is the real story of which my life story is a part?’

Lesslie Newbigin

CRAIG BARTHOLOMEW  
AND MICHAEL GOHEEN

# THE DRAMA OF SCRIPTURE

Finding our place in  
the biblical story



Second Edition



# The biblical drama

**Act One** God creates his kingdom

**Act Two** Rebellion in God's kingdom

**Act Three** Promise of restoration of God's kingdom:  
Israel's mission

**Act Four** Kingdom restored: Jesus' mission

**Act Five** Kingdom tasted and displayed:  
the church's mission

Scene 1 The church begins its mission to the nations

Scene 2 Our place in the story: the church continues  
its mission to the nations

**Act Six** Consummation of God's kingdom

# The biblical story...

...reveals God's purpose

...invites us to participate in God's purpose

...is one story

...unfolds progressively

...is rich, diverse, and textured

# Two key entry points to the Bible's story

- covenant
- kingdom

**‘But I will establish my covenant with you,** and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons’ wives with you.’ Genesis 6:18

**‘I establish my covenant with you,** that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.” God said, **“This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations:** I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be **a sign of the covenant** between me and the earth.’ Genesis 9:11-13

**the land** Gen 15:18 ‘On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates”’

**descendants** Gen 17:2, 4 ‘And I will make my covenant between me and you and will make you exceedingly numerous.’...“As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations.’

**circumcision as the covenant mark** Gen 17:9-11 ‘God said to Abraham, “As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you.”’

# Two key entry points to the Bible's story

- covenant—Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, etc.
- kingdom—God's reign

# The biblical drama

**Act One** God creates his kingdom: **Creation**

**Act Two** Rebellion in the kingdom: **Fall**

**Act Three** The king chooses Israel:  
**Redemption initiated**

Scene 1 A people for the king

Scene 2 A land for God's people

**Interlude** A kingdom story waiting for an ending:  
**the inter-testamental period**

# The biblical drama

**Act Four** The coming of the king:

Redemption accomplished

**Act Five** Spreading the news of the king:

the mission of the church

Scene 1 From Jerusalem to Rome

Scene 2 And into all the world

**Act Six** The return of the king:

Redemption completed



# Creation and fall

# The creation stories and theology

## Genesis 1–2

- What are the key features of God's nature and character in Genesis 1–2?
- What picture do Genesis 1–2 paint of the relationship between God and the world?

## Psalm 8 and Colossians 1:15-20

- What do these passages say about the relationships between...
  - ...humans and God?
  - ...humans and other humans?
  - ...humans and other forms of life on earth?

# The structure of Genesis 1:1–2:3

The earth was		
shapeless	and	empty
Day 1 Separation of light and darkness		Day 4 Creation of lights to rule day and night
Day 2 Separation of the waters to form sky and sea		Day 5 Creation of birds and fish to fill sky and sea
Day 3 Separation of sea and dry land and creation of plants		Day 6 Creation of animals and humans to fill land and eat plants
Day 7 The heavens and earth are finished and God rests		

‘Just as powerful earthly kings, to indicate their claim to dominion, erect an image of themselves in the provinces of their empire where they do not personally appear, so man is placed upon earth in God’s image as God’s sovereign emblem. He is really only God’s representative, summoned to maintain and enforce God’s claim to dominion over the earth.’

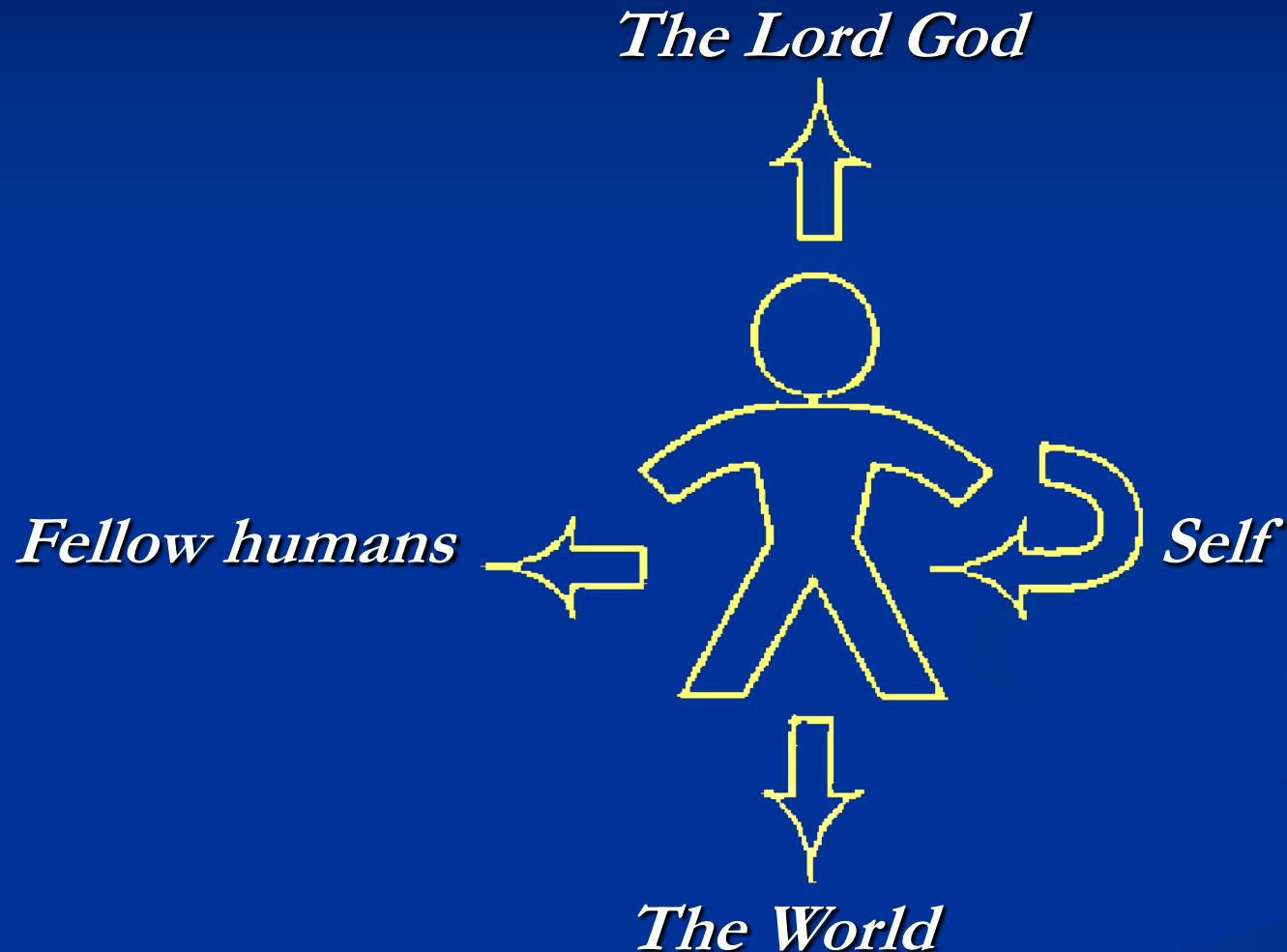
Gerhard von Rad (Bartholomew & Goheen, 33)

‘Just as powerful earthly kings, to indicate their claim to dominion, erect an image of themselves in the provinces of their empire where they do not personally appear, so **man** is placed upon earth in God’s image as God’s sovereign emblem. **He** is really only God’s representative, summoned to maintain and enforce God’s claim to dominion over the earth.’

**Note Genesis 1:27-28!**

Gerhard von Rad (Bartholomew & Goheen, 33)

# A Biblical Understanding of Humanity



From Bartholomew  
& Goheen, 36

- work
- politics
- care of the environment, and so on

# Sin and its effects

## Genesis 3

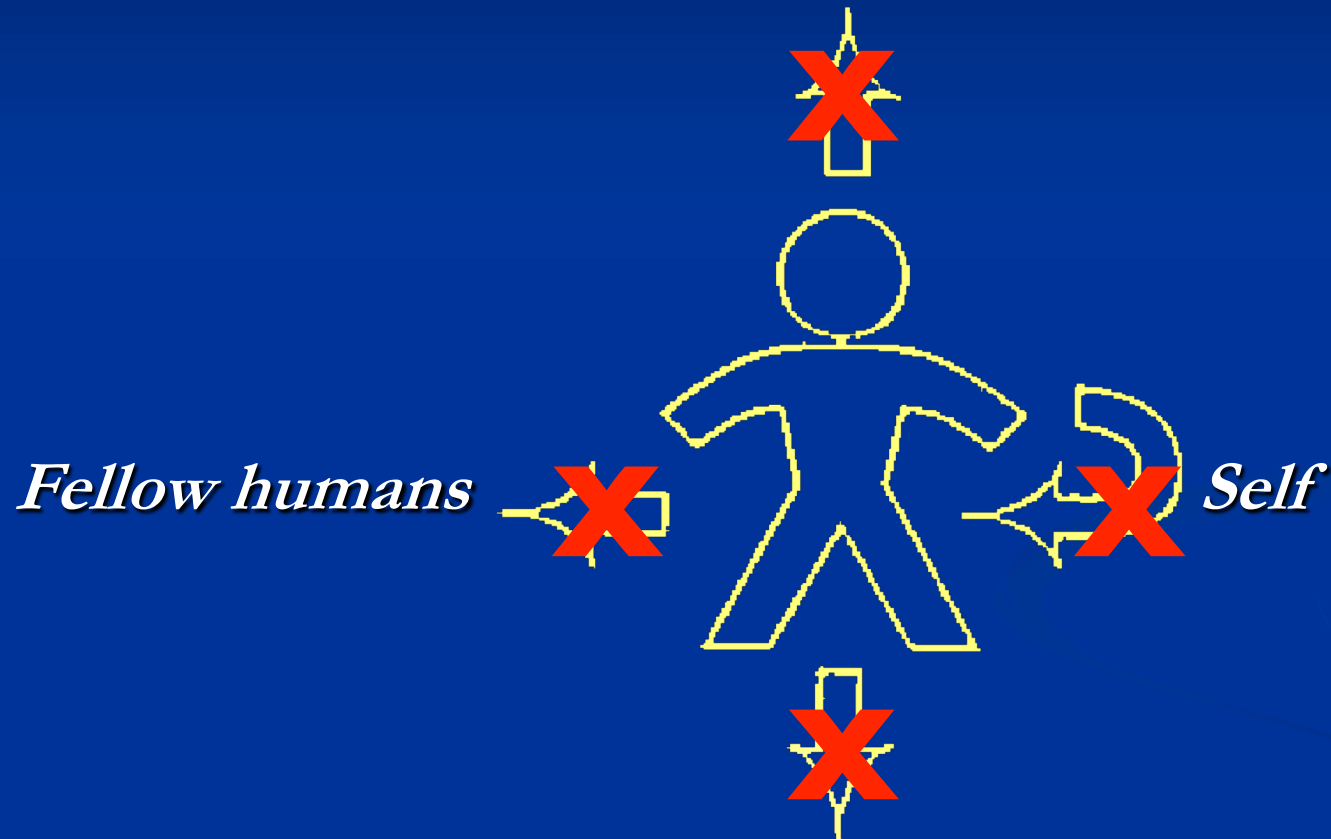
- What has gone wrong with God's created world?
- Do these texts offer any hope for things to change? If so, what?

## Mark 7:14–23 and Romans 1:18-32

- What are the symptoms of what's wrong in the relationships of...
  - ...humans with God?
  - ...humans and themselves?
  - ...humans with other humans?
  - ...humans with other forms of life on earth?

# A Biblical Understanding of Humanity

*The Lord God*

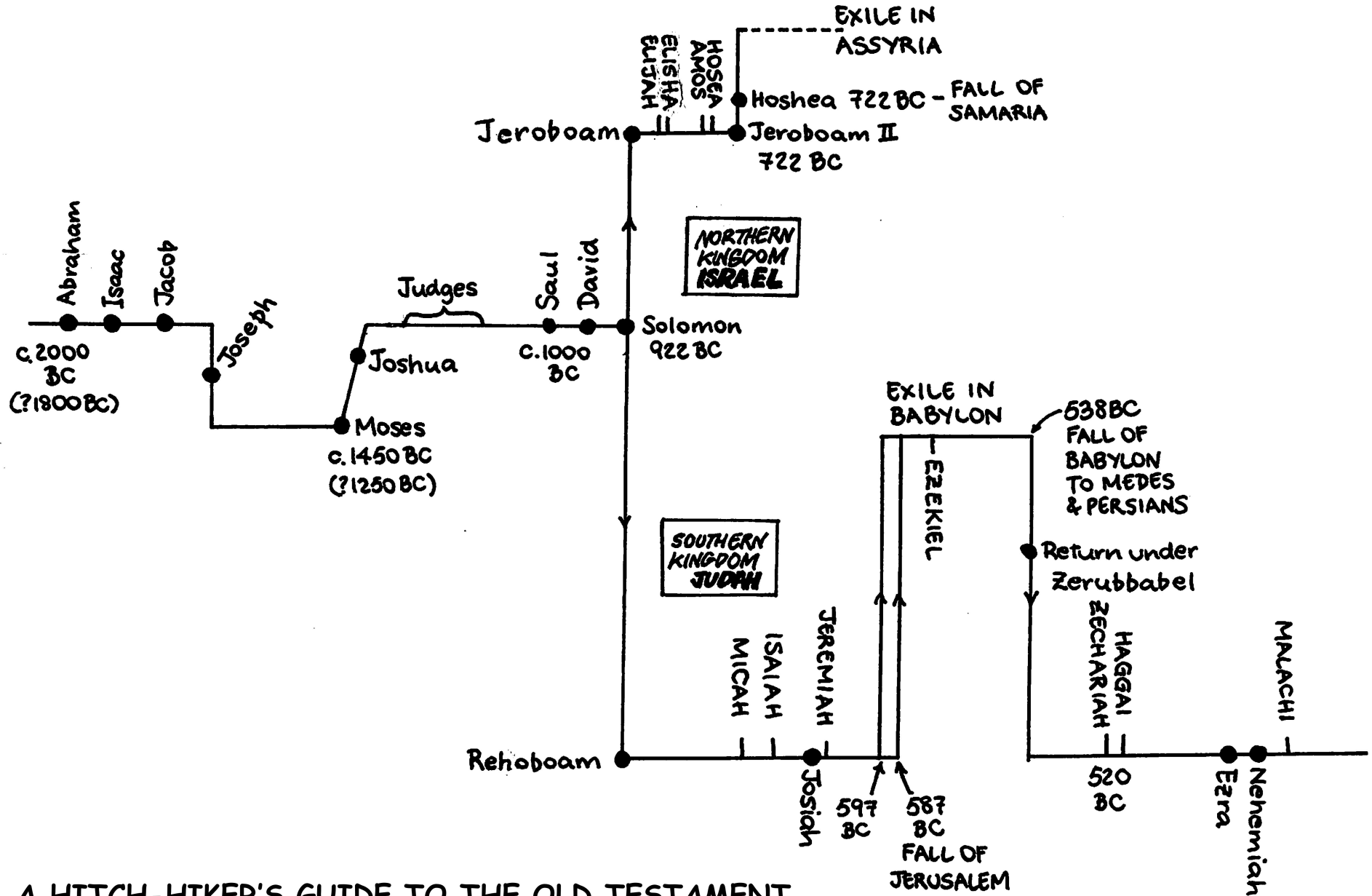


*The World*

- work
- politics
- care of the environment, and so on

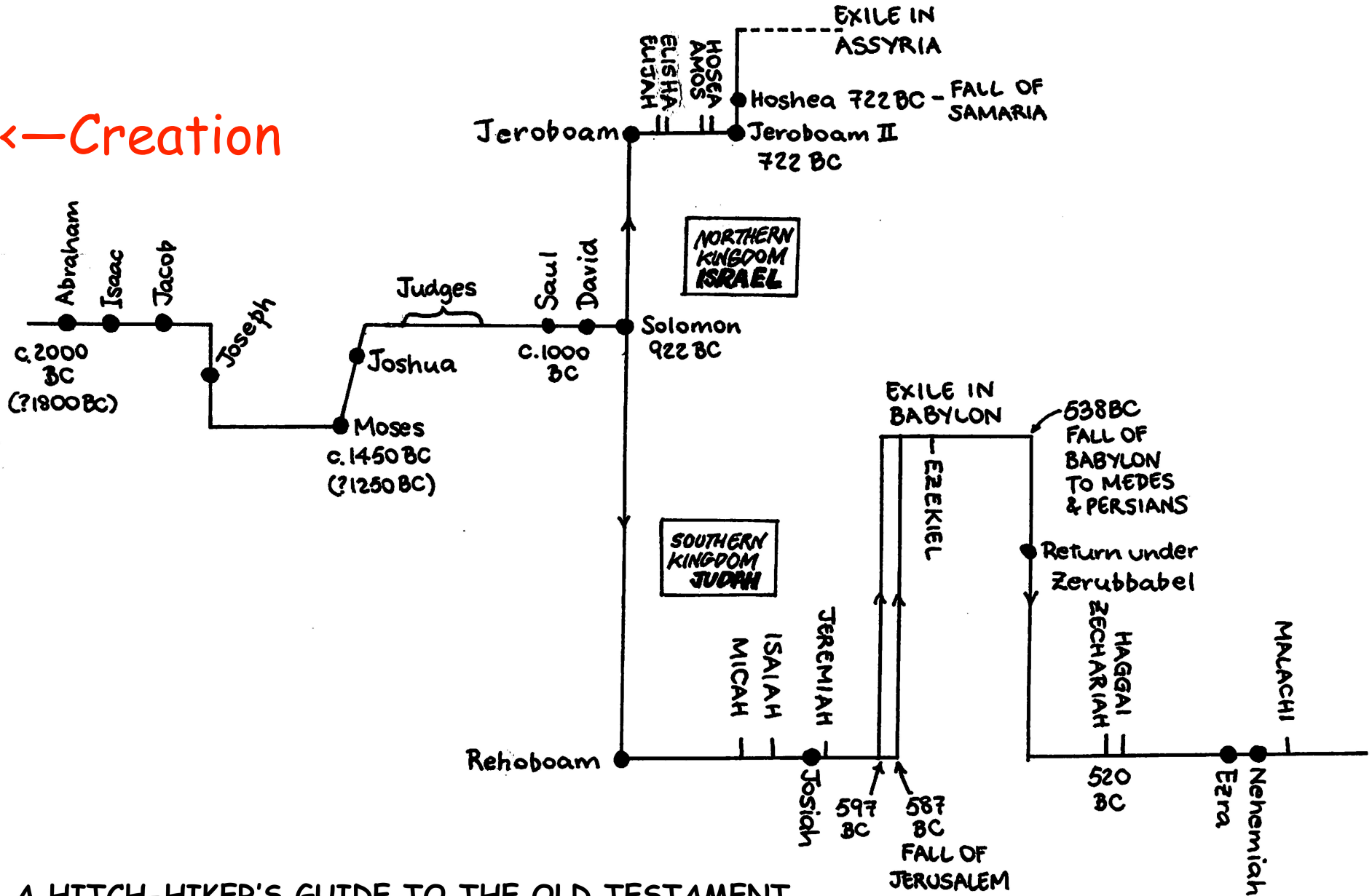


# The story of the Old Testament



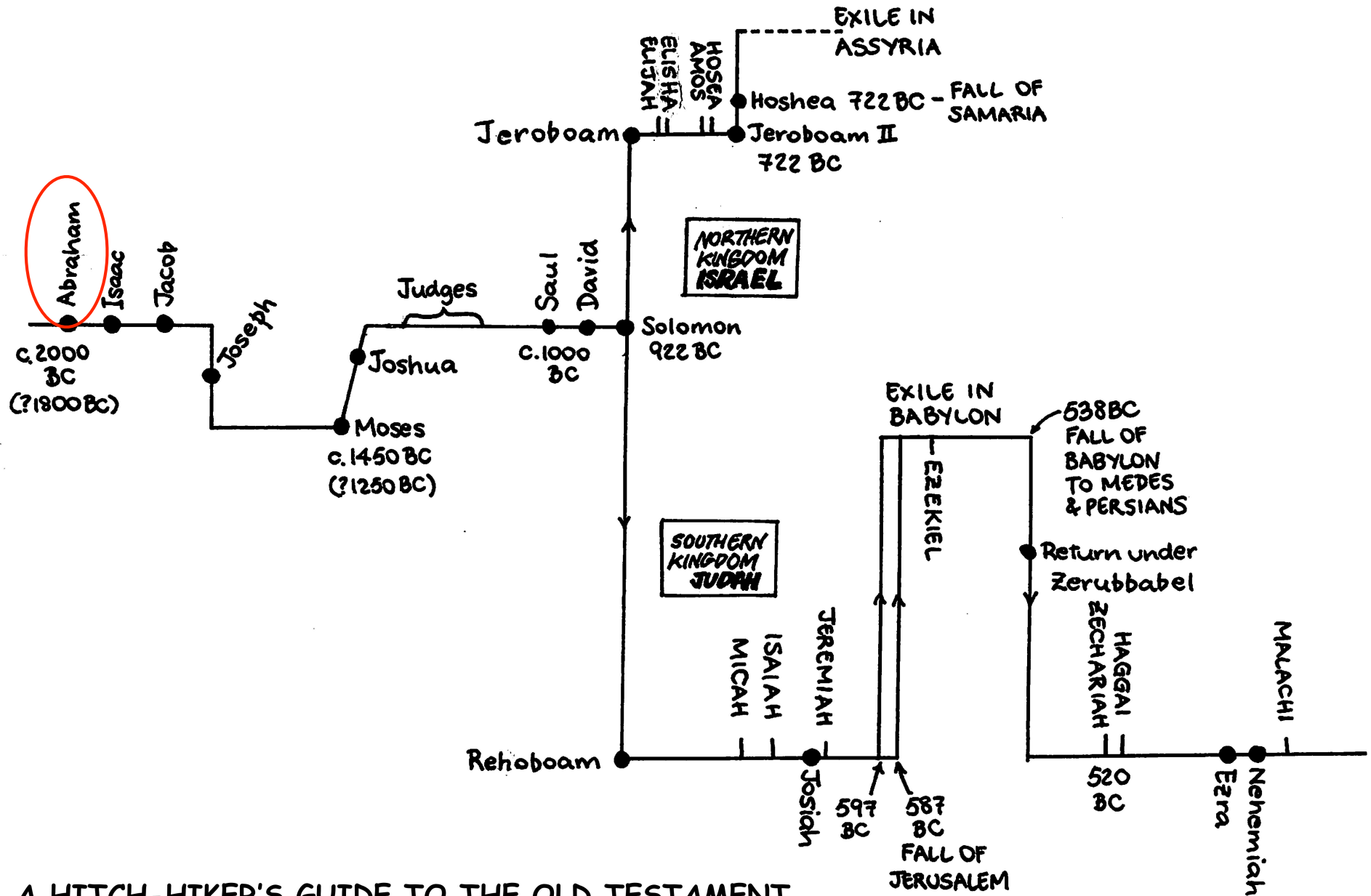
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 Steve Walton 2019

← Creation



# Creation: Genesis 1–2

- **God's people:** Adam and Eve Gen 1:27; 2:18-24
- **God's place:** the garden of Eden Gen 2:8-9, 15-16
- **God's rule:** do not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil Gen 2:17

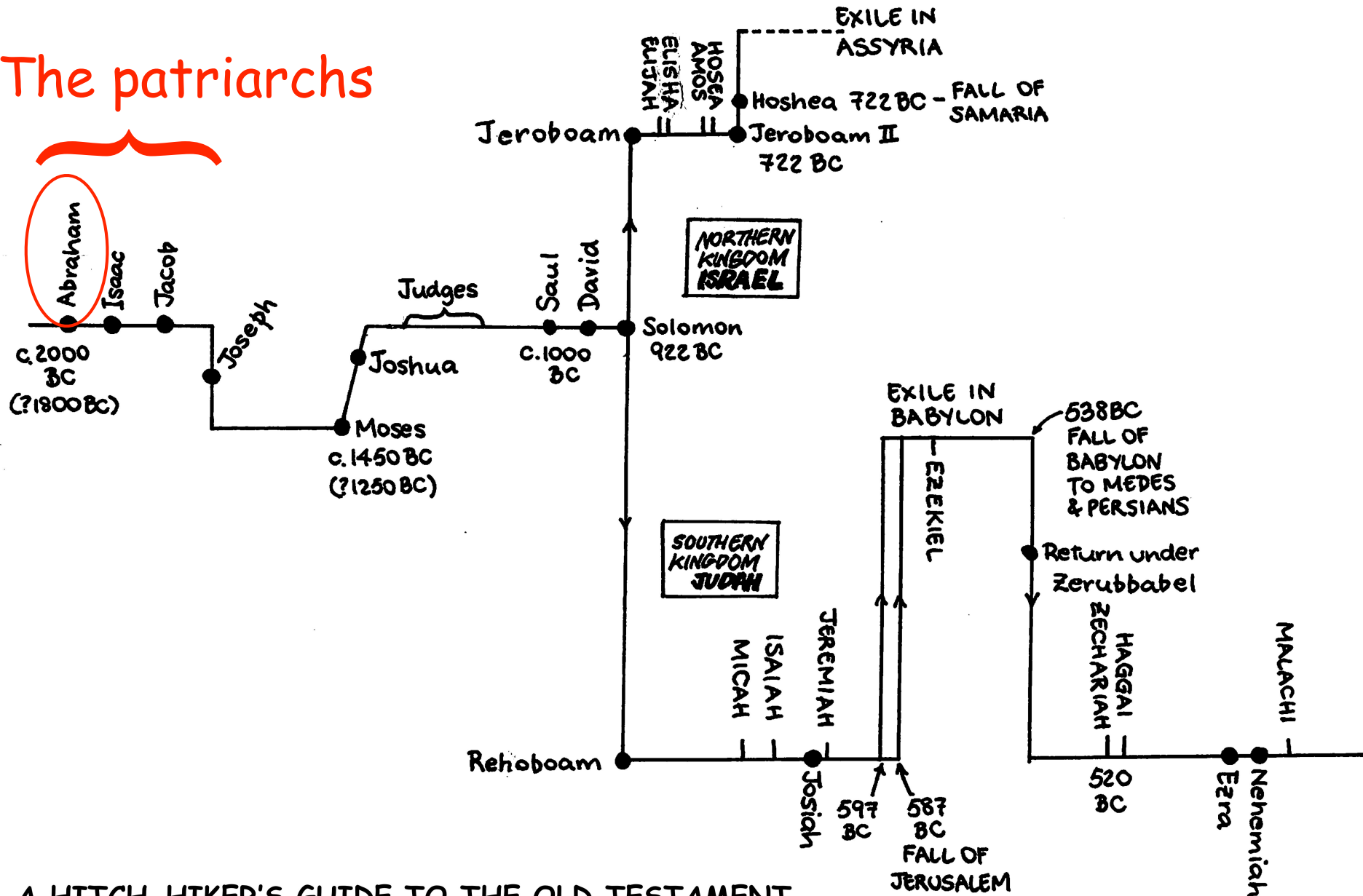


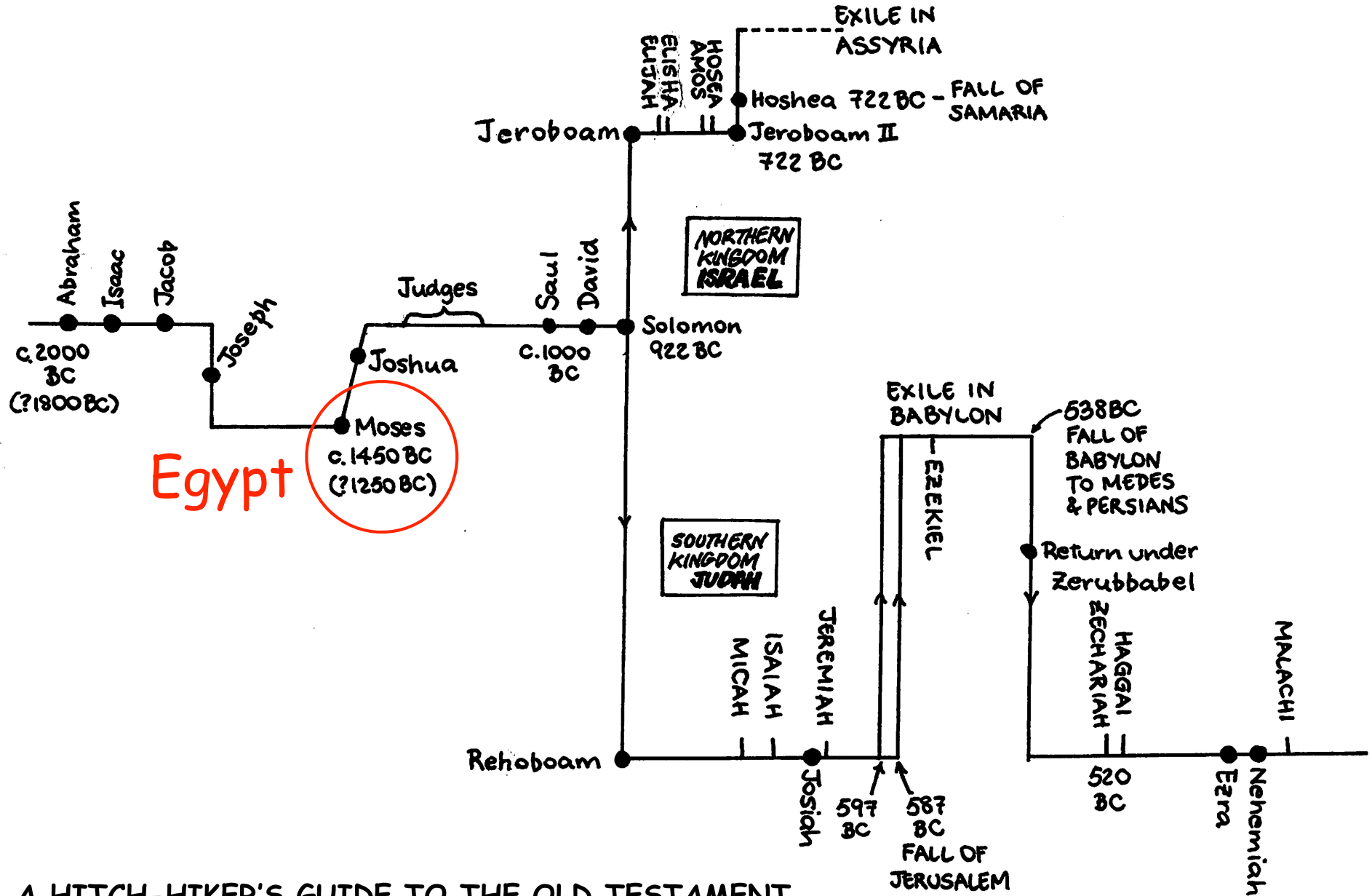
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# God's promises to Abra(ha)m

- God's people: descendants Gen 15:1-6
- God's place: the land Gen 12:1; 13:14-17
- God's rule: relationship with God Gen 15:6

# The patriarchs





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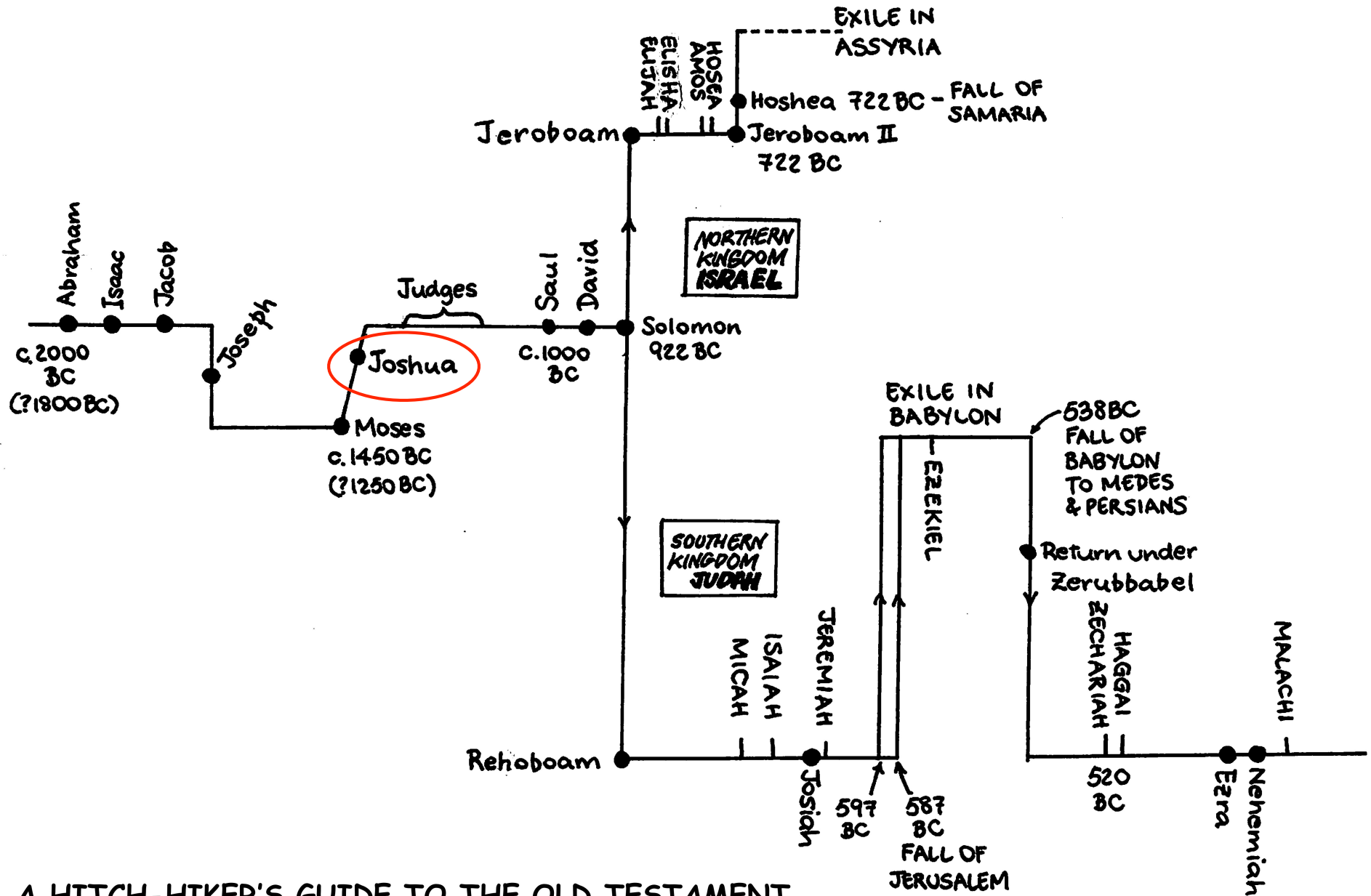


# The people under Moses' leadership

- **God's people:** slaves in Egypt Exod 1:8-14
- **God's place:** the promised land Exod 3:16-17
- **God's rule:** the gift of the Sinai covenant (the law)  
Exod 20
  - not plan A and plan B
  - the exodus is about freedom from bondage
  - “Then God spoke all these words: ‘I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery...’” Exod 20:1-2

‘In both the Old and New Testaments the principle operates that the people of God should exhibit a holiness which is consistent with their calling. The deliberate flouting of this principle is clear demonstration that we are not members of God’s people.’

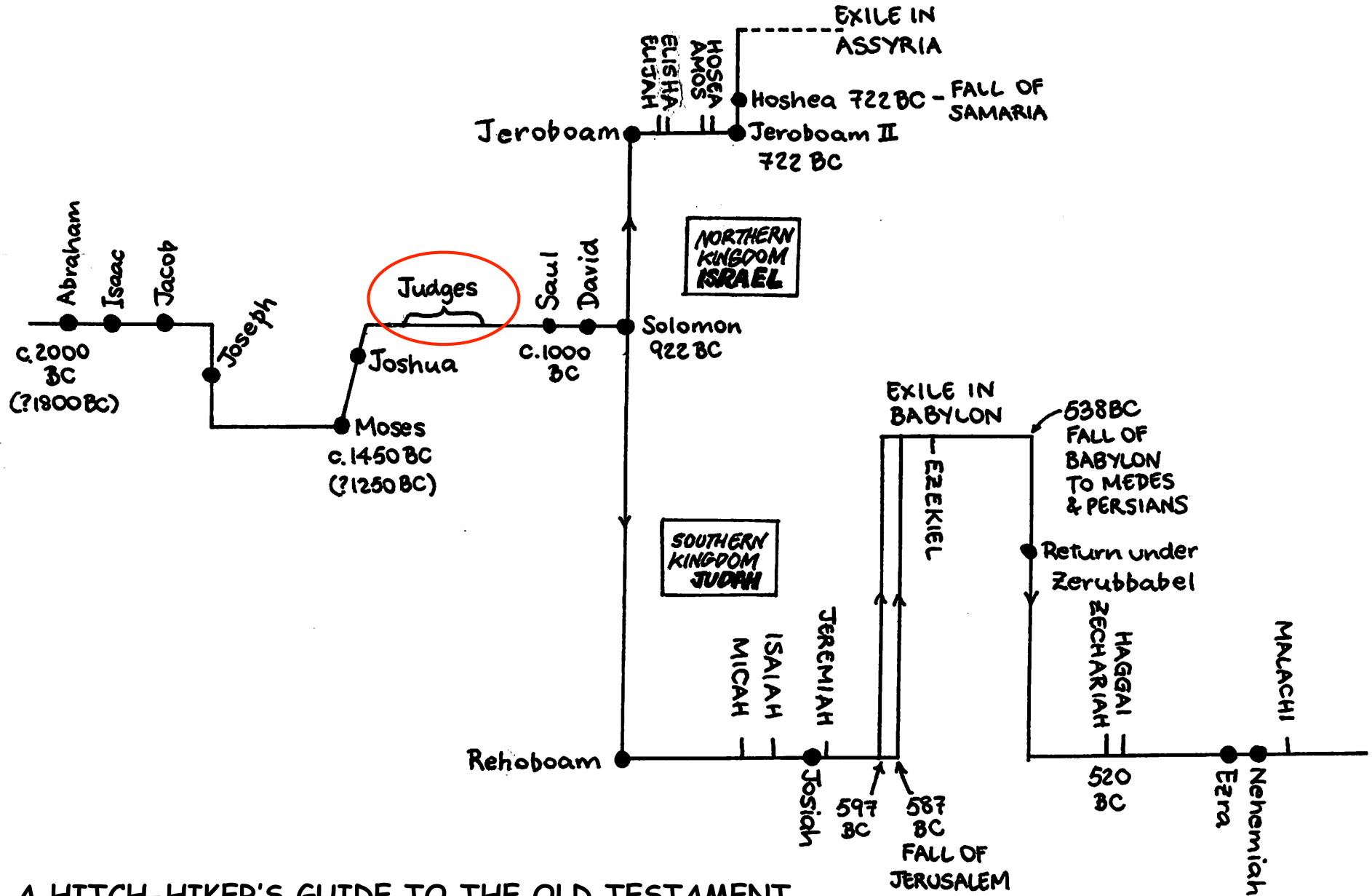
Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel and Kingdom*  
(Exeter: Paternoster, 1981), 66



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# The conquest of the promised land

- **God's people:** the nation freed from slavery Josh 1:2
- **God's place:** Canaan, the promised land Josh 1:2-4
- **God's rule:** the Sinai covenant Josh 1:7-8



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# Cyclical history in Judges

- unfaithfulness to God 2:11-12a
  - ‘Then the Israelites did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and worshiped the Baals; and they abandoned the LORD, the God of their ancestors, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; they followed other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were all around them, and bowed down to them”

# Cyclical history in Judges

- unfaithfulness to God 2:11-12a
- God hands the people over to their enemies 2:12b-15
  - ‘and they provoked the LORD to anger. They abandoned the LORD, and worshiped Baal and the Astartes. So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he gave them over to plunderers who plundered them, and he sold them into the power of their enemies all around, so that they could no longer withstand their enemies. Whenever they marched out, the hand of the LORD was against them to bring misfortune, as the LORD had warned them and sworn to them; and they were in great distress.’

# Cyclical history in Judges

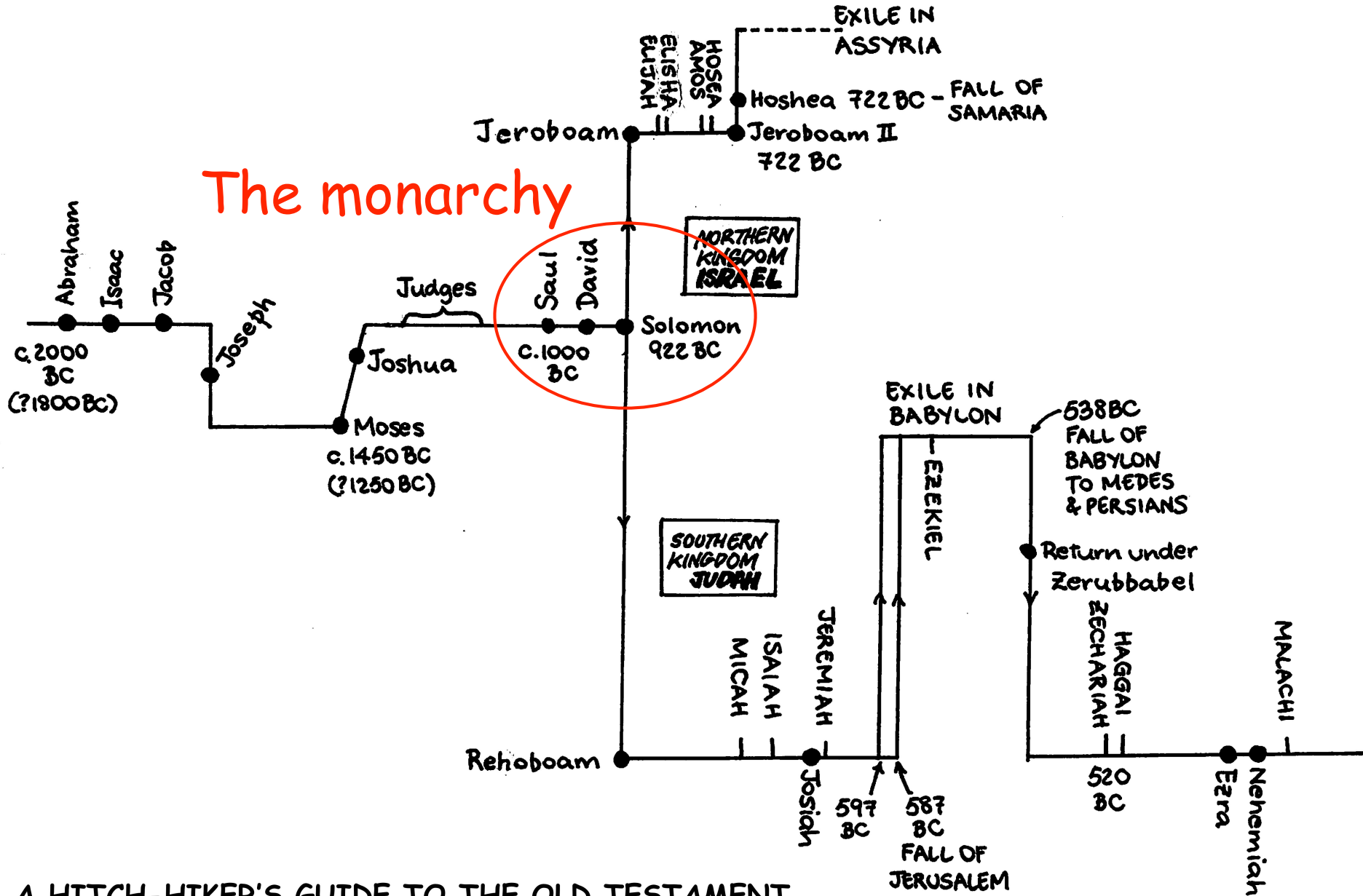
- unfaithfulness to God 2:11-12a
- God hands the people over to their enemies 2:12b-15
- God raises up deliverers (judges) 2:16
  - ‘Then the LORD raised up judges, who delivered them out of the power of those who plundered them.’



# Cyclical history in Judges

- unfaithfulness to God 2:11-12a
- God hands the people over to their enemies 2:12b-15
- God raises up deliverers (judges) 2:16
- after the judge dies, the people go back to their old ways 2:19-21
  - ‘But whenever the judge died, they would relapse and behave worse than their ancestors, following other gods, worshiping them and bowing down to them. They would not drop any of their practices or their stubborn ways. So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel; and he said, “Because this people have transgressed my covenant that I commanded their ancestors, and have not obeyed my voice, I will no longer drive out before them any of the nations that Joshua left when he died.”’

# The monarchy



# The monarchy

- The people ask for a king | Samuel 8:4-9
  - ‘Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, and said to him, “You are old and your sons do not follow in your ways; appoint for us, then, a king to govern us, like other nations.” But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, “Give us a king to govern us.” Samuel prayed to the LORD, and the LORD said to Samuel, “Listen to the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them. Just as they have done to me, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so also they are doing to you. Now then, listen to their voice; only—you shall solemnly warn them, and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them.”’

# The monarchy

- The people ask for a king | Samuel 8:4-9
- God gives them Saul | Samuel 9–31
- ultimately God rejects Saul | Chronicles 10:13-14
  - ‘So Saul died for his unfaithfulness; he was unfaithful to the LORD in that he did not keep the command of the LORD; moreover, he had consulted a medium, seeking guidance, and did not seek guidance from the LORD. Therefore the LORD put him to death and turned the kingdom over to David son of Jesse.’

# The monarchy

- The people ask for a king | Samuel 8:4-9
- God gives them Saul | Samuel 9–31
- ultimately God rejects Saul | Chronicles 10:13-14
- renewal of the covenant with David 2 Samuel 7:11b-16
  - ‘Moreover the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. When he commits iniquity, I will punish him with a rod such as mortals use, with blows inflicted by human beings. But I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.’

# The monarchy

- The people ask for a king | Samuel 8:4-9
- God gives them Saul | Samuel 9–31
- ultimately God rejects Saul | Chronicles 10:13-14
- renewal of the covenant with David 2 Samuel 7:11b-16
- David's son Solomon builds the temple—but he is not completely faithful to God
  - wives from other nations bring their gods: syncretism

# The monarchy

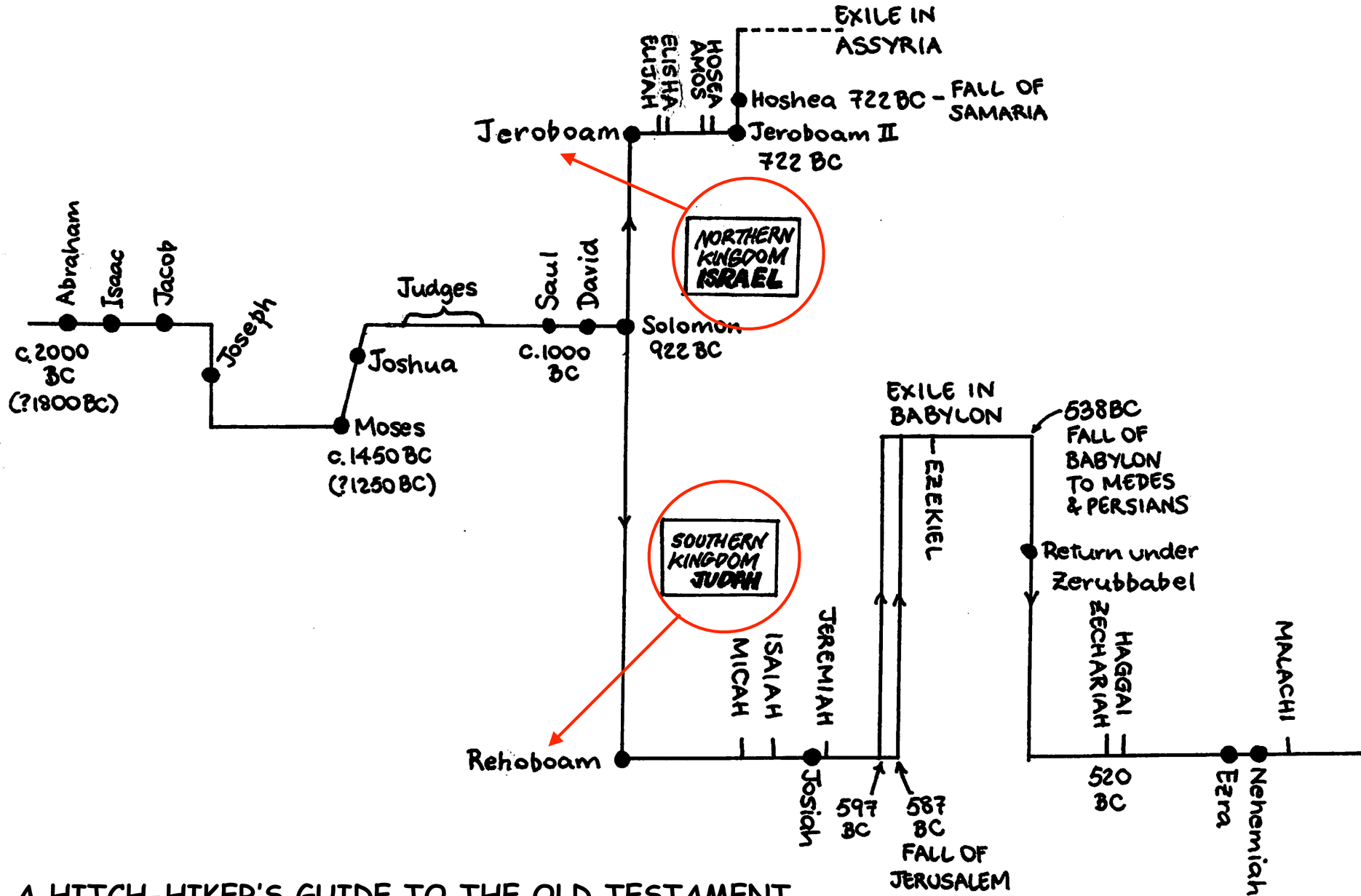
- The people ask for a king 1 Samuel 8:4-9
- God gives them Saul 1 Samuel 9–31
- ultimately God rejects Saul 1 Chronicles 10:13-14
- renewal of the covenant with David 2 Samuel 7:11b-16
- David's son Solomon builds the temple—but he is not completely faithful to God
- after Solomon's death: the kingdom is divided 1 Kings 11–12, especially 11:29-36

# Israel under the monarchy

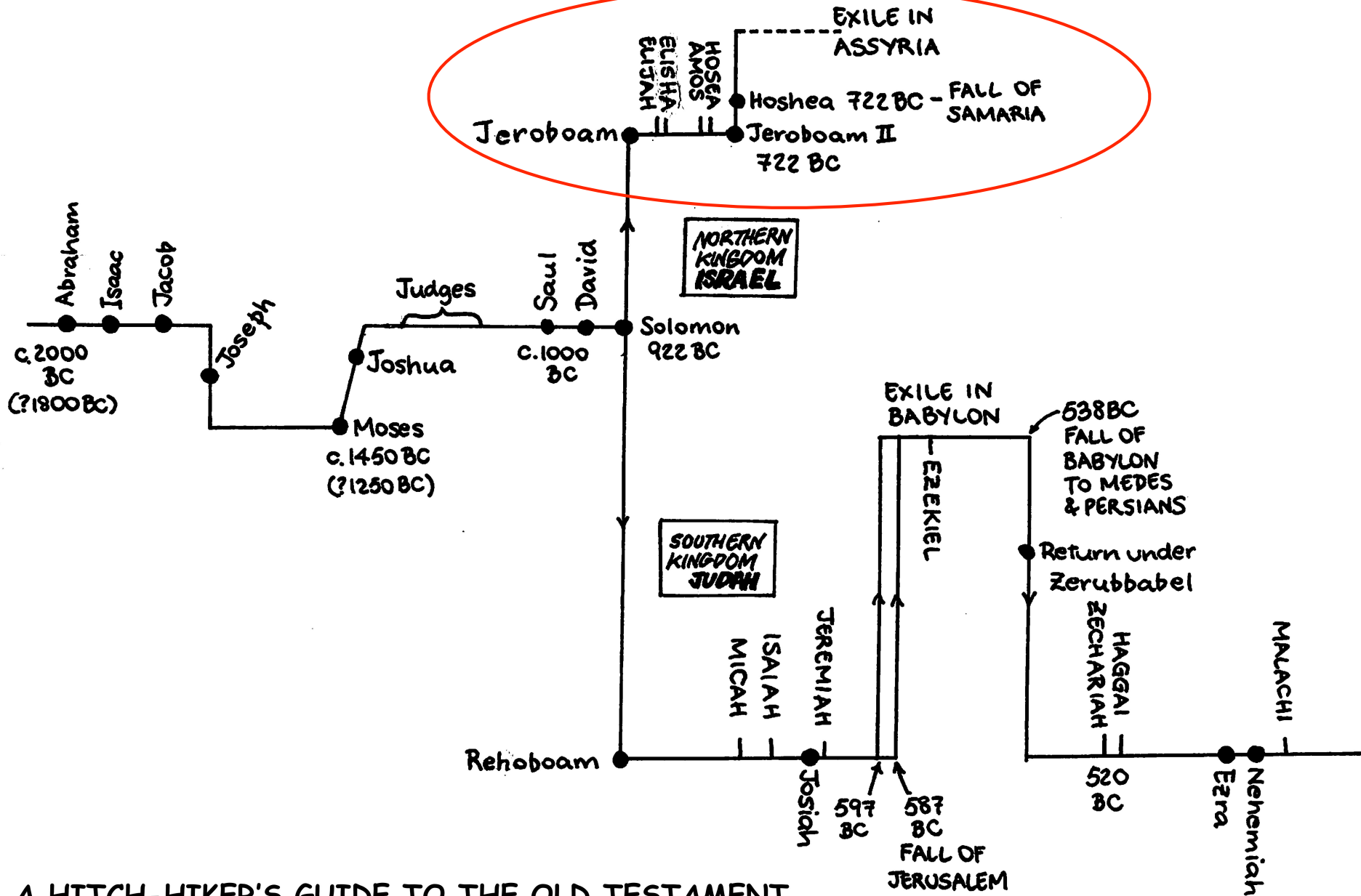
- **God's people:** the unified Israel (under Saul, David and Solomon)
- **God's place:** the land, focused in Jerusalem, focused in the temple (in Solomon's day)
- **God's rule:** the Sinai covenant

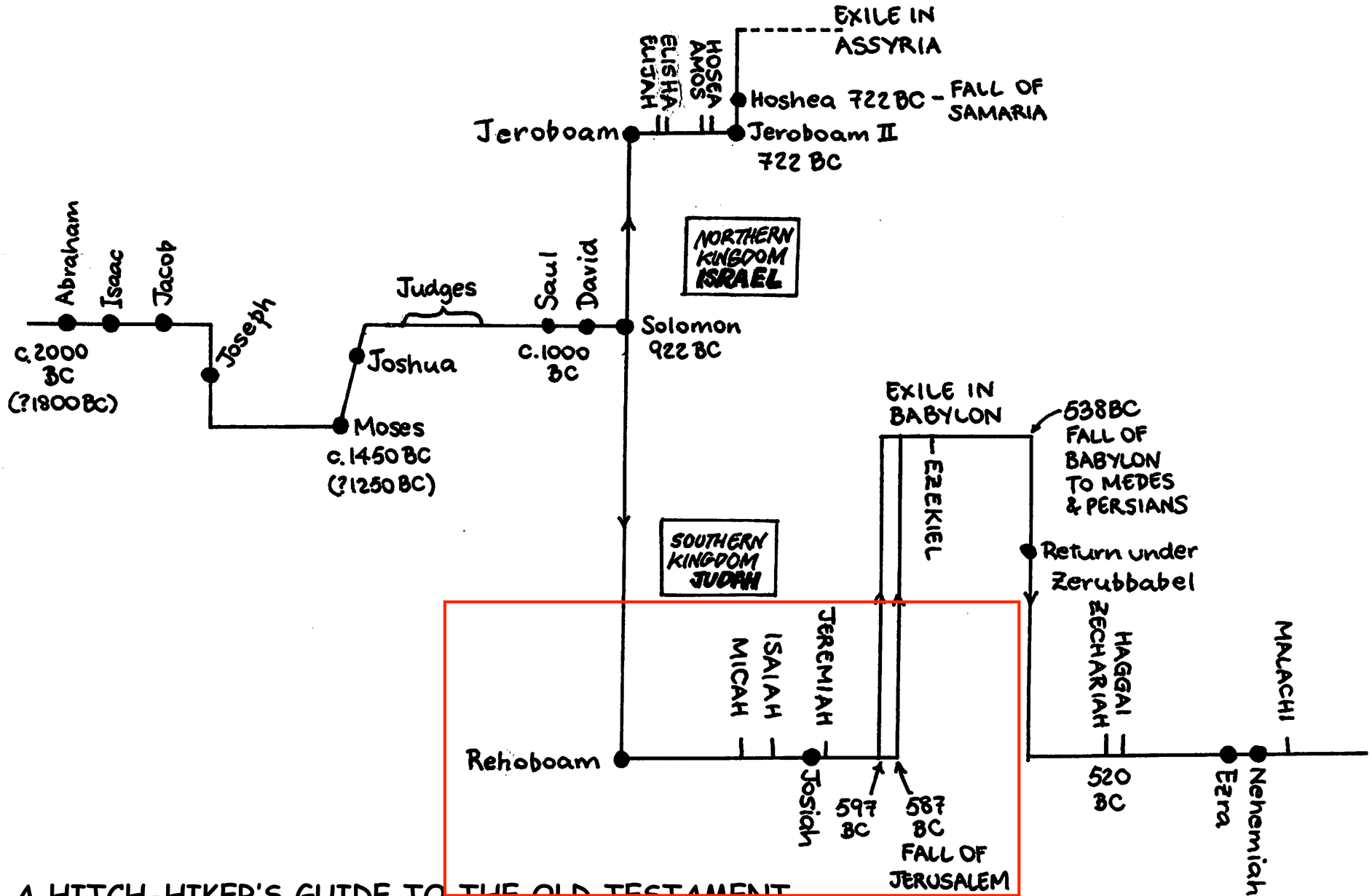


# Division of the kingdom



# Israel: the northern kingdom

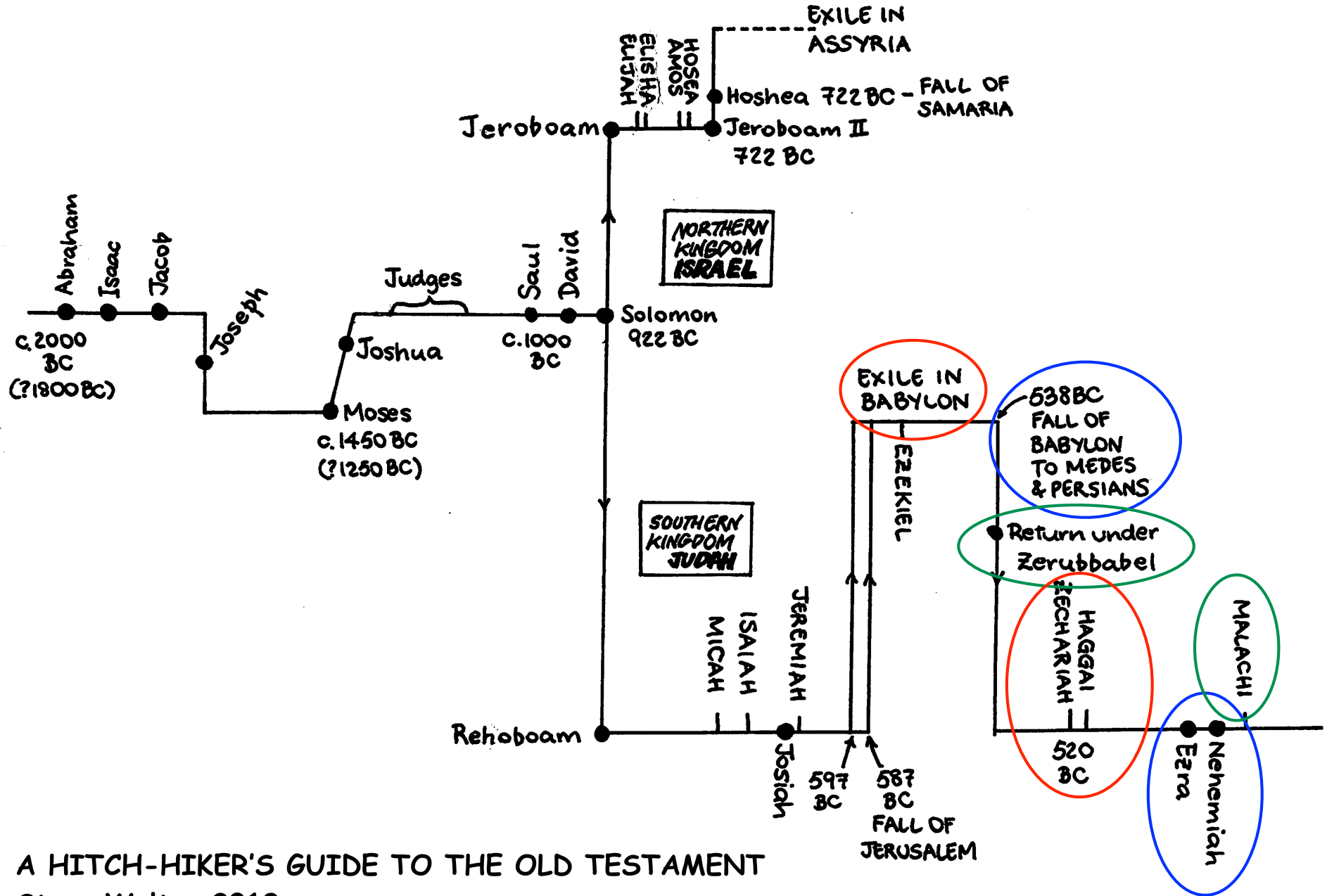




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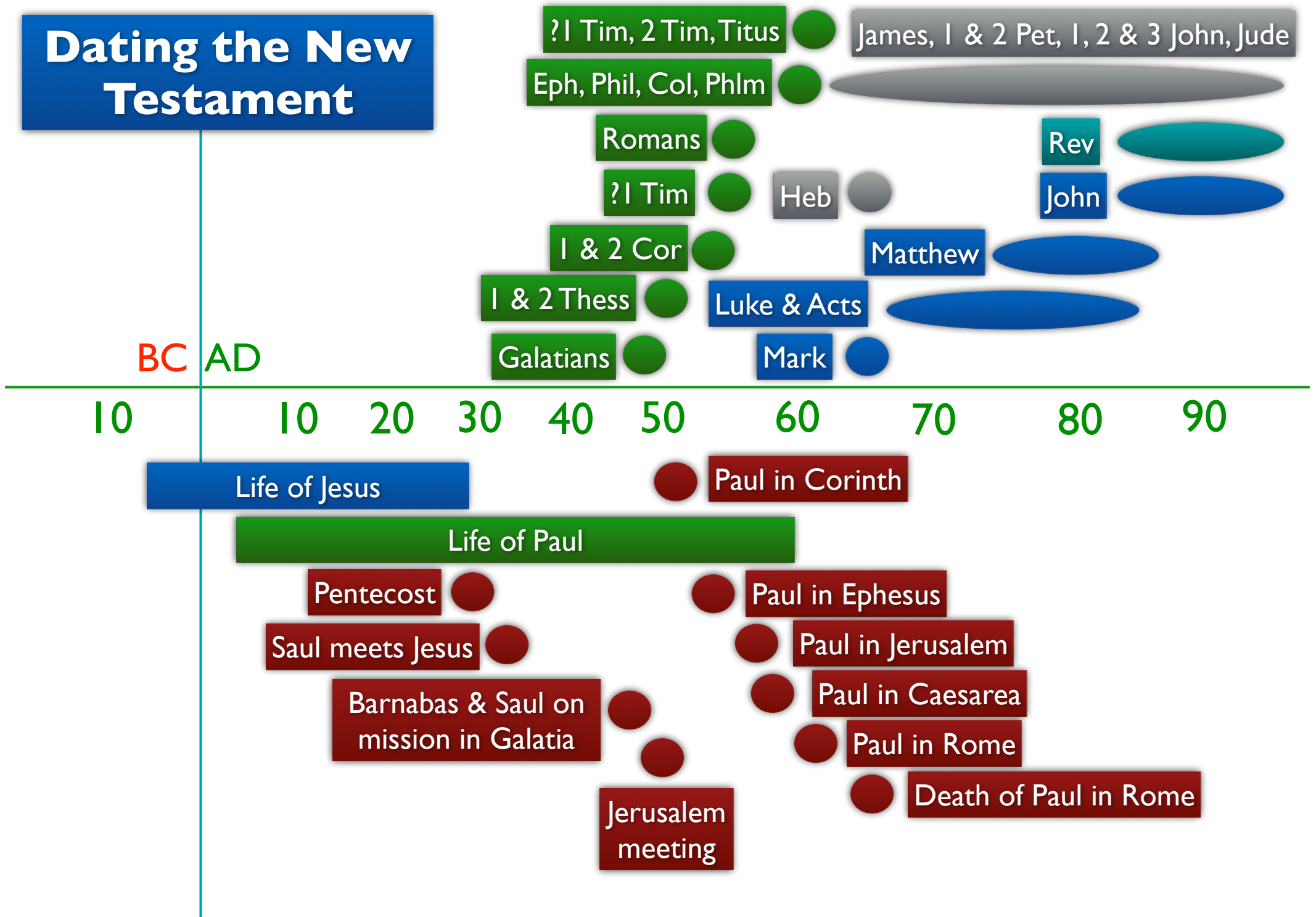
## Judah: the southern kingdom



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# The story of the New Testament

# Dating the New Testament



**Redemption completed**

# Redemption completed

## Revelation 21

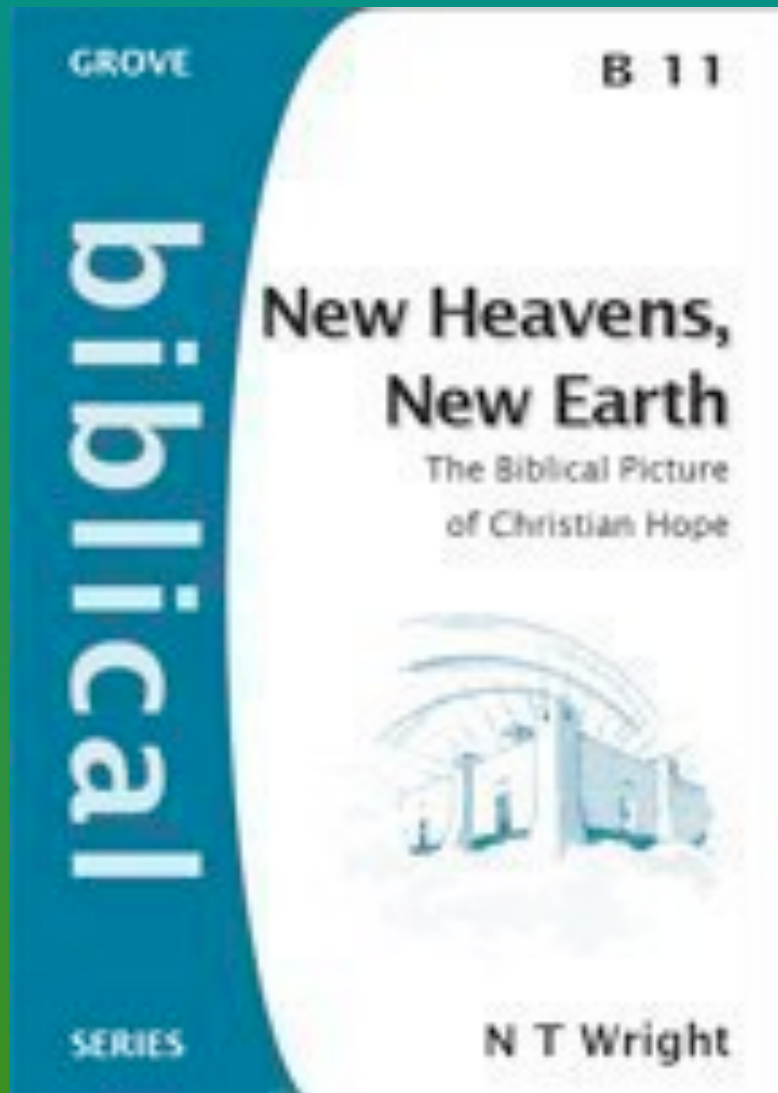
- Compare this chapter with the creation stories in Genesis 1–2. What features are repeated or echoed at the beginning and end of the Bible?
- In what ways does God's action at the end of all things here put right the damage done by the fall in the relationships between...
  - ...humans and God?
  - ...humans and themselves?
  - ...humans and other humans?
  - ...humans and other forms of life on earth?



# The nature of the world to come

‘Very often people have come to the New Testament with the presumption that “going to heaven when you die” is the implicit point of it all...They acquire that viewpoint from somewhere, but not from the New Testament.’

N .T. Wright



N. T. Wright  
*New Heavens, New Earth*  
Grove Biblical series 11  
Cambridge: Grove, 1999

[www.grovebooks.co.uk](http://www.grovebooks.co.uk)

# The nature of the world to come

- restoration of creational life—continuity...
- ...and discontinuity
  - ‘But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the **first fruits** of those who have died.’  
I Corinthians 15:20
  - ‘So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a physical body; it is raised a spiritual body.’  
I Corinthians 15:42-44

# The nature of the world to come

- biblical hope: cosmic restoration
  - the whole of human life
  - the whole of creation
  - ‘For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in [Jesus], and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.’ Colossians 1:19-20

# The nature of the world to come

14 For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died. 15 For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will by no means precede those who have died. 16 For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel's call and with the sound of God's trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them **to meet** the Lord in the air, and so we will be with the Lord forever.

1 Thessalonians 4:14-17

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