

Spiritual Lessons from the Exile

During the seventy years of Babylonian imperial rule (see [Gu - Seventy Years of Imperial Babylonian Rule](#)), the Israelites learned **five valuable spiritual lessons**.

1. Worship as a spiritual concept. Their Temple had been destroyed and they were in exile in Babylon. After a time they realized they were going to have to worship without the Temple. In the TaNaKh and throughout the monarchy, worship and the Temple went hand in hand. They were inseparable in the mind of the average Jew. If you wanted to worship **ADONAI**, you went to the Temple. Everyone agreed with that. During the period of the exile, however, the Israelites gradually began to understand the fact that *worship was indeed a spiritual matter to be done from the heart*. But the exile did not last long enough for that concept to take root in their hearts and minds. Once Zerubbabel's Temple was built they reverted back to the same belief (see my commentary on [The Life of Christ Ca - Jesus Talks With a Samaritan Woman](#)).

2. Scripture was their unifying factor. Their city was gone; their Temple was gone. All their familiar surroundings were gone. What unified them? It had been Yerushalayim; it had been the Temple, the bronze altar and the sacrificial system. However, during the exile the **Jews** discovered that *their single unifying factor was the TaNaKh*. Consequently, they became "the people of the book" during the Babylonian captivity. They began to gather their sacred writings during the exile.

3. Idolatry was no longer an option. The main reason the southern kingdom of Judah was destroyed was because the people had fallen into idolatry. Certainly that is why the northern kingdom of Isra'el was destroyed ([2 Kgs 17:1-23](#)). Those who lived in Judah were idolaters to the very end. When **Jeremiah's two baskets of figs** (see [Ei - Two Baskets of Figs](#)) got to Babylon after **the second deportation of exiles**, the people saw the reality of idolatry. And for most of them, it made them sick to their stomachs. So they turned away from idolatry both during and after the seventy years of exile. It was no longer a serious option. The people learned that *the God the Jews serve is the God of other nations*. They learned **ADONAI** could be worshiped outside of the Promise Land. **He** can be worshiped anywhere; they don't have to worship the gods of the Goyim, but can worship **Him** instead.

4. Isra'el had a missionary zeal. This lesson was learned from the previous one. Since **God** was the **God** of all nations, He has a claim upon those nations. It was, therefore, *their mandate to share Messiah with other nations*. It was about time! Back in Aram's day, **God** taught that **all the peoples of the earth would be blessed through him** and his descendants (**Genesis 12:3b**). It took a while for them to realize just how that was to be done. But during the Babylonian captivity, the first stirrings of missionary zeal are seen in the hearts of the Jewish people. During the exile, you had the beginning of the "God-fearers" movement where **the Jews** would invite Gentiles to come to the synagogue.

5. They realized their need for a Meshiach. The word **Meshiach** simply means *anointed one*. The monarchy was finished as far as anyone knew. So all the hopes and dreams that had been pinned on David and his descendants became more spiritualized, and they were looking for an **Anointed One** who would come and lead them in a glorious future. In fact, during the exile, the concept of **the Messiah** was pushed into an arena beyond human history, to the messianic Kingdom. In any case, **the Messiah** was looked for during the years of exile.