

Gresham Lectures 2017-18
Divinity Lecture 5

Are We Lost in the Cosmos?

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Place is space which has historical meanings, where some things have happened which are now remembered and which provide continuity and identity across generations. Place is space in which important words have been spoken which have established identity, defined vocation, and envisioned destiny.

Blaise Pascal

“When I consider the short duration of my life, swallowed up in the eternity before and after, the little space which I fill, and even can see, engulfed in the infinite immensity of spaces of which I am ignorant, and which know me not, I am frightened, and am astonished at being here rather than there; for there is no reason why here rather than there, why now rather than then. Who has put me here? By whose order and direction have this place and time been allotted to me.”

Omar Khayyám

And that inverted Bowl they call the Sky,
Whereunder crawling coop'd we live and die,
Lift not your hands to *It* for help – for It
As impotently moves as you or I.

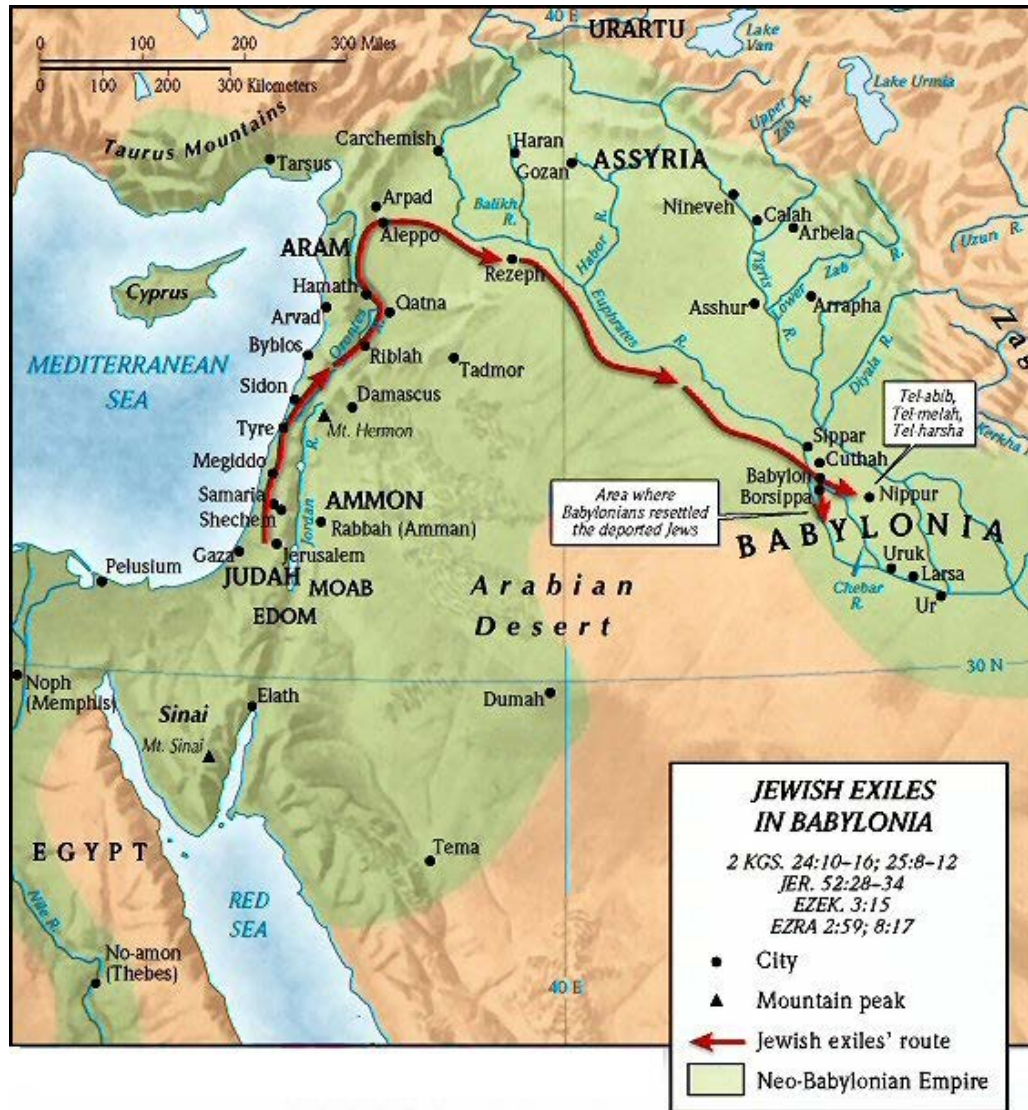
Michael Mayne

My subject is wonder, and my starting point is so obvious it often escapes us. It is me, sitting at a table looking out on the world. It is the fact that I exist, that there is anything at all. It is the *givenness* that astonishes: the fact that the mountains, the larch tree, the gentian, the jay, *exist*, and that someone called *me* is here to observe them.

Cyprian of Carthage

We should consider that we have renounced the world, and are in the meantime living here as guests and strangers. ... Anyone who has been in foreign lands longs to return to his own native land . . . We regard paradise as our native land.

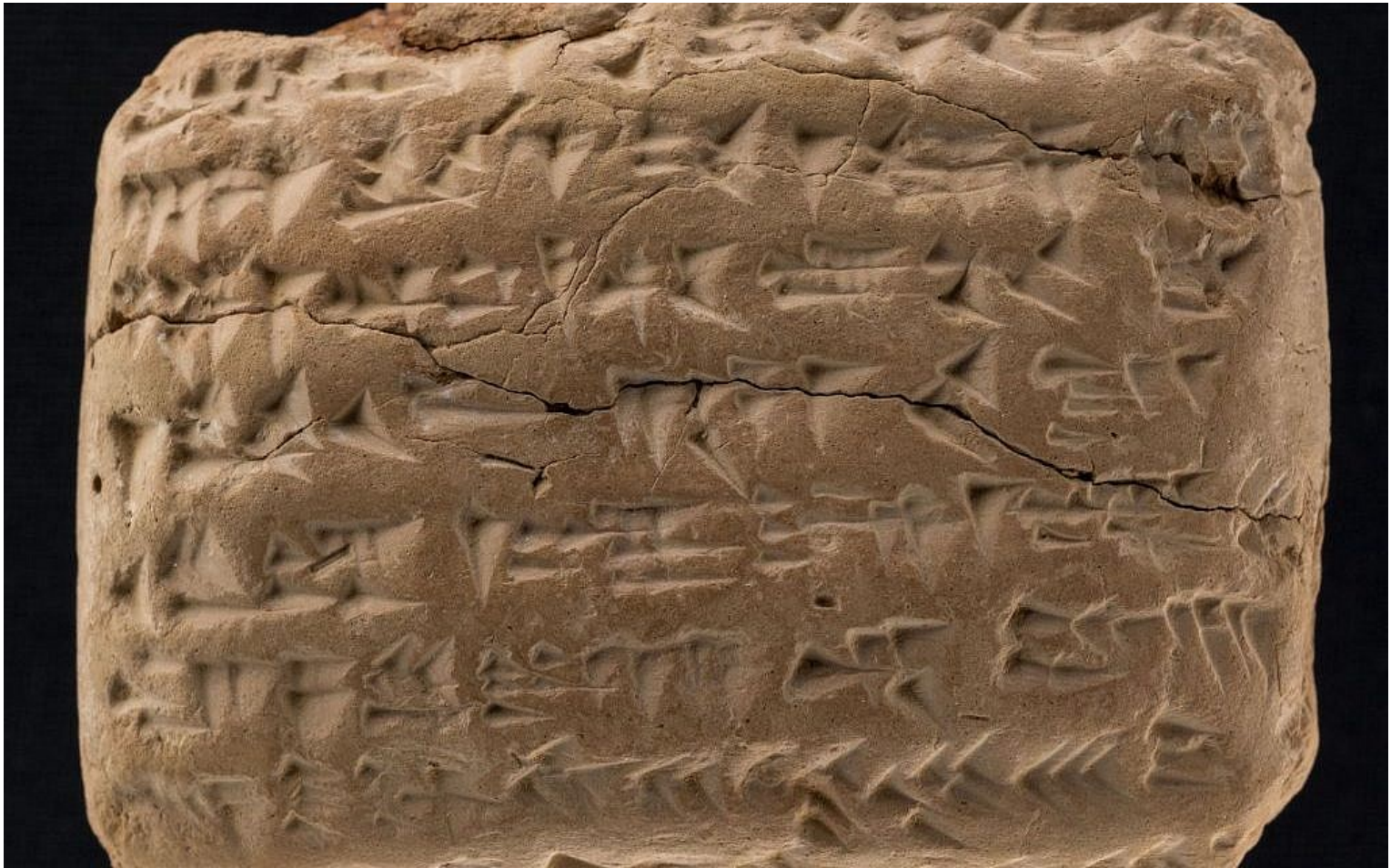
The Exile to Babylon



“By the Rivers of Babylon”



A Tablet from Babylon



Peter Abelard

Now, in the meantime, with hearts raised on
high,

we for that country must yearn and must sigh,
seeking Jerusalem, dear native land,
through our long exile on Babylon's strand.

The Theatre of Philippi



End