

# A Brief History of the Kings of Israel and Judah

by

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## *INTRODUCTION*

The purpose of this paper is two-fold: first, to give in the main text a flowing narrative of the history of Israel and Judah from the division of the kingdom to the fall of Jerusalem and, second, to discuss in the footnotes various technical, exegetical, chronological, and archeological problems associated with this period of history. There are also six appendices on subjects too long and involved for footnotes.

## *ABBREVIATION USED IN THE FOOTNOTES*

*ANEP*: Pritchard, James B. *The Ancient Near East in Pictures*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969.

*ANET*: Pritchard, James B. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969.

*Chronology*: Thiele, Edwin R. *A Chronology of the Hebrew Kings*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1977.

*ISBE*: *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. Revised. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988. Four volumes.

*MNHK*: Thiele, Edwin R. *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*. New revised edition. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1983. Reprinted by Kregel Publications, 1994.

*SIH*: Wood, *A Survey of Israel's History*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970.

## THE DIVISION OF THE KINGDOM

Following the death of Saul in 1010 B.C, David is anointed king in Hebron by the men of Judah. In response, Abner, commander of Saul's army, takes Saul's son Ishbosheth to Mahanaim and makes him king over all Israel.<sup>1</sup> Ishbosheth reigns over Israel for 2 years from Mahanaim, while David reigns over Judah for 7½ years from Hebron. Near the end of the 2 years of Ishbosheth's reign, however, Abner turns his allegiance to David. But Joab, the commander of David's army, murders Abner. This was out of personal revenge over the death of his brother, Asahel, whom Abner had slain.<sup>2</sup> When Ishbosheth hears of Abner's death, he and all Israel lose heart.

Two brothers named Rechab and Baanah, sons of Rimmon of the tribe of Benjamin, conspire against Ishbosheth. These men are captains in the army of Israel. They come to Mahanaim during the middle of the day while Ishbosheth is resting and assassinate him in his bedchamber. They bring his head to David in hopes of receiving a reward. But David condemns this act of treachery and has them put to death for the murder of a righteous man. David instructs that the hands and feet of both men be cut off and their bodies hung by the pool at Hebron. In so doing David not only acts in accordance with the law, but also proves to the people that he had neither commanded nor approved of such a crime.

David now reigns over all Israel and Judah and moves his capital to Jerusalem. He rules from Jerusalem for 33 years, making his total reign 40½ years.<sup>3</sup>

When David's death becomes imminent, Adonijah<sup>4</sup> proclaims himself king. He is one of David's sons whose mother's name is Haggith. Adonijah does this without any authority from David and without his knowledge. Since David had previously promised Bathsheba that their son Solomon would succeed him on the throne, and since Solomon was also God's choice, Nathan the prophet alerts Bathsheba. They both come before David and tell him what Adonijah has done. David then reaffirms his earlier promise made to Bathsheba and orders that Solomon be anointed king over Israel and Judah.

David dies in 970 B.C. His son Solomon also reigns for 40 years until 930 B.C.

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Sam. 2:9. "All Israel" means the northern tribes, all the tribes except Judah (v. 10). Evidence of division among the tribes is already apparent in 1 Sam. 11:8. The ultimate political separation into two kingdoms occurred after Solomon's death (1 Kgs. 12:16-17).

<sup>2</sup> See 2 Sam. 2:12-23; 3:26-30. There was a battle between Ishbosheth's forces under Abner and David's forces under Joab. Abner is defeated, but Asahel, Joab's brother, does not let Abner retreat but chases him until Abner is forced to turn and kill him. When Abner later tries to support David as king, Joab deceitfully lures an unsuspecting Abner aside and kills him. "This wanton act by David's leader was committed in retaliation for the death of Asahel; though one wonders how much Joab's fear of a rival for his position may also have contributed. David, desiring to court favor with the northern tribes, now did all he could to dissociate himself from the deed, showing true sorrow that it had happened (II Sam. 3:28-39)" (Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 263).

<sup>3</sup> 2 Sam. 5:5.

<sup>4</sup> David had evidently spoiled this son: "His father [David] had never crossed him at any time by asking, 'Why have you done so?'" (1 Kgs. 1:6).

Solomon begins to build the temple in 966, 480 years after the exodus. Israel enjoys peace during Solomon's reign, as David had secured this peace for the kingdom by his many wars.

God grants Solomon wisdom, glory, and riches.<sup>5</sup> During the course of his lifetime, Solomon takes 700 wives and 300 concubines.<sup>6</sup> His goal in many of these marriages very likely was to establish diplomatic ties with the hundreds of city-states and kingdoms around Israel.<sup>7</sup> This political strategy was itself sinful<sup>8</sup>, but it led to an even greater sin. Each of these "political" wives, "as a representative of her father's kingdom, brought with her the religious paraphernalia and the priests of her god."<sup>9</sup> Shrines and altars to pagan gods, complete with priests and overseeing queens, literally dotted the hills surrounding Jerusalem.<sup>10</sup> According to the biblical account, Solomon himself took part in the worship of these pagan gods:

"For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians and after Milcom the detestable idol of the Ammonites. And Solomon did what was evil in the sight of Yahweh, and did not follow Yahweh fully, as David his father had done. Then Solomon built a high place<sup>11</sup> for Chemosh the detestable idol of Moab, on the mountain which is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the detestable idol of the sons of Ammon. Thus also he did for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> 1 Kgs. 3:5-13.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Kgs. 11:3.

<sup>7</sup> This strategy is explicitly stated concerning Pharaoh's daughter, Solomon's first foreign wife early in his reign (1 Kgs. 3:1).

<sup>8</sup> See 1 Kgs. 11:1-2. Subsequent history also indicates that God is generally not pleased when his kings run to pagan kings for help (cf. 2 Chron. 16:7; 28:16-22; Hos. 7:11-12; 8:8-10). However, perhaps the alliance with Egypt through the marriage of Pharaoh's daughter was not an example of this sin. Solomon was not calling on Egypt for help, and only marriage to Canaanite women and treaties with Canaanite nations were expressly forbidden in the law (cf. Exod. 23:31-33; 34:12-16; Deut. 7:2).

<sup>9</sup> John C. Whitcomb, *Solomon to the Exile* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1971), p. 18. This statement is true in general. However, C. F. Keil, "The Books of the Kings," *Commentary on the Old Testament*, pp. 38-39, argues that Pharaoh's daughter was an exception and that she became a worshipper of Yahweh. "Solomon adhered so faithfully to the Lord during the first years of his reign, that he would not have tolerated any idolatry in his neighborhood, and we cannot find any trace of Egyptian idolatry in Israel in the time of Solomon, and, lastly, the daughter of Pharaoh is expressly distinguished in ch. xi.1 from the foreign wives who tempted Solomon to idolatry in his old age."

<sup>10</sup> To get a mental image of what this must have been like, consider this description by Whitcomb: "Let us attempt to picture the situation that began to develop around Jerusalem during the last fifteen or twenty years of Solomon's reign. It must have been like Massachusetts Avenue in Washington, D.C., lined with the embassies and legations of many nations--little islands of foreign culture within the borders of the United States. A few years ago I visited this section of our capital city and walked into a fabulously beautiful Moslem mosque crowned with a white limestone minaret piercing the sky above. The costly structure was built with contributions from fifteen predominantly Moslem countries of Africa and Asia, so that there, on that 30,000 square-foot portion of American soil, the god of Allah is officially honored" (*Solomon to the Exile* [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1971], p. 18).

<sup>11</sup> An altar, a place of sacrifice.

<sup>12</sup> 1 Kgs. 11:5-8.

This was the great sin of Solomon for which God divided the kingdom. However, for the sake of David, this judgment would not fall during Solomon's days but during the reign of his son.

Before Solomon dies, he appoints Jeroboam, a young, ambitious, and highly competent Ephraimite, to oversee the forced-labor work crews from Ephraim that are in Jerusalem. However, Jeroboam plans a revolt against Solomon due to the heavy work loads and taxation that Ephraim is enduring. He returns to Ephraim to gather support. On the way, the prophet Ahijah meets Jeroboam and predicts that he will become king over the northern 10 tribes and only the house of Judah will remain under Davidic rule.<sup>13</sup> But Jeroboam does not put his faith in God to bring about the fulfillment. He proceeds to rebel against Solomon, a rebellion that fails utterly.<sup>14</sup> Solomon therefore seeks to put him to death, and rightly so, as Jeroboam's rebellion is a criminal act to take over the entire kingdom. Jeroboam flees to Egypt, then under the rule of Shishak, until the death of Solomon.

Upon Solomon's death in 930 the jealousy that had prevailed from time immemorial between Ephraim and Judah, the two most powerful tribes of the covenant nation, issues in the division of the kingdom. The secession of the ten tribes had been ordained by God as a punishment for Solomon's idolatry, and the sovereignty over them had been promised to Jeroboam. And even though the secession itself was occasioned by Rehoboam's imprudence, nevertheless it was essentially a rebellion against the Lord and his anointed, a conspiracy on the part of these tribes against Judah and her king, Rehoboam.

Rehoboam becomes king in 930 at the age of 41. The discontented northern tribes exercise their right to "make him king", that is, anoint him and pay homage, by gathering at Shechem. The proper procedure should have been for these tribes to go to Jerusalem. But they choose Shechem, a city located in Ephraim, as their intention is to transfer the government to Jeroboam, the Ephraimite, for whom they have already sent from Egypt.

Jeroboam returns, goes to Shechem, and leads a delegation to the new king, asking that the heavy taxes and forced labor that Solomon had imposed upon them be lightened. Rehoboam consults with the elders who had served his father Solomon, and they advise Rehoboam to agree to this request. Rehoboam, however, rejects the advice of the elders and consults with the young men who had grown up with him and were now serving him. Their advice is to make the burden upon the people heavier still. Thus Rehoboam announces to Jeroboam and the assembly that he will increase the

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<sup>13</sup> 1 Kgs. 11:26-40. See Appendix 2.

<sup>14</sup> 1 Kgs. 11:26-27. Additional material is found in the LXX. According to that account, Jeroboam built a city called Sareira in the hill country of Ephraim, fortified it, and raised a force of 300 chariots (*The Interpreter's Bible*, [New York: Abingdon Press, 1954], III:108). Whether this is accurate is not known. The LXX account of Jeroboam not only adds details but also makes him look much worse than he is portrayed in the MT. It claims that his mother was a prostitute and attributes much of Ahijah's work to Shemaiah (the prophet in 1 Kgs. 12:22). Conservative scholars tend to support the primacy of the MT and suggest that political ideology might have motivated the anti-Israel changes and additions to the text.

hard labor that the Israelites had endured under Solomon. This harsh response from Rehoboam furnishes the people with the desired opportunity for carrying out the secession upon which they had already resolved.

In rebellion the discontented northern tribes of Israel make Jeroboam their king.<sup>15</sup> Rehoboam responds by raising an army of 180,000 men from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin to fight against Jeroboam and the rebellious tribes in order to bring them back under his rule. However, the word of God comes to Shemaiah, the prophet. He warns Rehoboam not to fight, as this loss of sovereignty over the 10 tribes is from God.

### *THE EARLY KINGS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH*

Not long after the beginning of his reign, Rehoboam forsakes the law of the Lord. As a divine punishment, in Rehoboam's fifth year, Shishak, king of Egypt, comes against Jerusalem.<sup>16</sup> He takes many fortified cities in Judah and advances as far as Jerusalem itself. When Rehoboam and the leaders humble themselves, the word of the Lord comes through the prophet Shemaiah that God's wrath will not be poured out on Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak, but Judah will instead become Shishak's vassal. Judah will learn by experience the difference between the rule of God and that of foreign kings. Shishak takes away the treasures of the temple as well as those of Rehoboam.<sup>17</sup> Rehoboam dies in 913 and the rule of Judah falls to his son Abijam.

In the north, Jeroboam begins his reign over Israel in 930. He has two main challenges: building his military and keeping the loyalties of his people from slowly returning to

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<sup>15</sup> Because Jeroboam was from Ephraim, it was the leading tribe of the secession and the most prominent tribe in the new kingdom. Perhaps for this reason the Northern Kingdom is often called "Ephraim" in the prophets (e.g., Isa. 7:1-9; Hos. 4:17; 5:13). However, Ephraim and Judah had been "mutually jealous" since Egypt; see Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 302. Judah was the largest tribe and had been honored with the lead position as the tribes moved through the wilderness (Num. 2:1-3, 9). But Ephraim became a very proud tribe. Joshua had been from the tribe of Ephraim, and the Tabernacle was first located at Shiloh, a city within Ephraim. Because of this pride, Ephraim had a history of making trouble (cf. Josh. 17:14; Judg. 8:1; 12:1).

<sup>16</sup> How Judah's relationship with Egypt had changed! An earlier Pharaoh had been pleased to give his daughter in marriage to Solomon to secure an alliance. We do not know who this pharaoh was, but he would have been one of the last rulers from the Twenty-first Dynasty. Moreover, Shishak (Sheshonk I), the founder of the Twenty-second Dynasty, had given political asylum to Jeroboam. Now this same pharaoh invades Palestine. Despite his former connection with Jeroboam, Shishak does not stop with Judah but continues his campaign of conquest into Israel against Jeroboam. Apparently, he wanted to reassert Egyptian supremacy in Palestine. In the inscriptions found on the outside south wall of the great Temple of Amon at Karnak, he lists 150 cities that he subjugated (James B. Pritchard, *ANET*, pp. 242-243; a picture of this list with the image of Shishak himself is found in Pritchard, *ANEP*, fig. 349). Curiously, the list does not include Jerusalem or other cities in central Judah. "His country at home, however, apparently was too weak for him to maintain a permanent hold. His design of establishing Egyptian authority in Palestine was not realized" (Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 340).

<sup>17</sup> According to the movie, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, Shishak takes the Ark of the Covenant back to Egypt. This is highly unlikely. More likely, it was either destroyed or carried to Babylon at the time Nebuchadnezzar destroys the temple in 586.

Jerusalem. To accomplish his first goal, he fortifies the city of Shechem and establishes it as his capital. He also fortifies Penuel.<sup>18</sup>

To accomplish his second goal, Jeroboam commits a notorious sin that will have consequences for generations.<sup>19</sup> He fears that the people will return to Rehoboam when they go to Jerusalem to worship,<sup>20</sup> so he institutes the worship of Yahweh under the image of a calf, setting up a golden calf in Dan and another in Bethel.<sup>21</sup> He also ordains non-Levite priests from every class of people. In addition, Jeroboam ordains a non-Levitical feast on the 15th day of the 8th month. He offers sacrifices to the calf that he has made upon the altar at Bethel. As Jeroboam is standing by the altar to offer incense, a man of God<sup>22</sup> from Judah cries out against the altar and predicts that a child will be born, named Josiah, who will defile this idolatrous altar.<sup>23</sup> As a sign that the Lord has spoken, the altar will split apart and the ashes pour out. Enraged at this announcement, Jeroboam stretches out his hand from the altar saying, "Arrest him!" But his hand becomes withered and he cannot pull it back. Then the altar splits, and the ashes pour out. Jeroboam entreats the man of God to pray for him. He does and Jeroboam's hand is restored.

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<sup>18</sup> 1 Kgs. 12:25. Shechem was near the border of Ephraim and Manasseh between Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim. John C. Whitcomb (*Solomon to the Exile* [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1971], p. 21) calls Penuel a second capital. It was east of the Jordan. Whitcomb also suggests that Jeroboam might have fortified Penuel because he anticipated Shishak's invasion of Palestine and sets up a secondary Transjordanian capital. However, C. F. Keil, "The Books of the Kings," *Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 198, suggests that it was "to defend his sovereignty over Gilead against hostile attacks from the north-east and east." Later, for some unknown reason, Jeroboam moves his capital to Tirzah (1 Kgs. 14:17; 15:33), west of the Jordan again, a city perhaps a little northeast of Shechem.

<sup>19</sup> Twenty-one times the OT writers refer to this corrupt worship and to Jeroboam as the man "who made Israel to sin" (e.g., 1 Kgs. 14:16; 15:26, 34). Even kings like Jehoram, Ahab's son, and Jehu, both of whom took major steps to abolish Baal worship, "did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam which he made Israel to sin" (2 Kgs. 3:1-3; 10:28-29).

<sup>20</sup> According to the law of Moses, "three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord God" (Exod. 23:17). These occasions were the feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. For these feasts, all males were required to journey to Jerusalem (Deut. 16:1-7; cf. Deut. 12). During these feasts, the Levites would likely instruct the people on the significance of the sacrifices and probably refer to Rehoboam as the legitimate Davidic king. Over time, the men from the Northern Kingdom might begin to question the legitimacy of their king, Jeroboam.

<sup>21</sup> This was not outright paganism, which at this juncture in history, even the northern tribes would probably not accept. Perhaps Jeroboam was influenced by his stay in Egypt, where calves and bulls were considered sacred. However, he likely pointed to the "precedent" set by Aaron in the wilderness. There Aaron had represented the golden calf as "a visible symbol of Jehovah's strength and power" (John C. Whitcomb, *Solomon to the Exile* [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1971], p. 23); see Exod. 32:4-5.

<sup>22</sup> I.e., a prophet.

<sup>23</sup> This is one of two spectacular prophecies in which a man is predicted by name far in advance of his birth. Here Josiah is named almost three centuries before he was born. Similarly, the Persian king, Cyrus, was named by Isaiah in a passage known as the "Cyrus Poem" about 160 years before he was born (Isa. 44:24-28; 45:1, 13). Liberal scholars explain both as interpolations after the fact. However, such an explanation is completely without any textual evidence and is based solely on a philosophical assumption that precludes the possibility of supernatural, predictive prophecy. Note, however, that interpolation after the fact is not a possible explanation for the prediction by name of the very town where the Messiah was to be born (Mic. 5:2), a fact well known in Herod's time (Matt. 2:4-6).

After Rehoboam's death in 913, his son, Abijam (aka Abijah), becomes king in Judah. He reigns for 3 years. The hostilities against Israel have not abated, so Abijam prepares for war with Jeroboam.<sup>24</sup> He assembles an army of 400,000 men; Jeroboam draws up to battle with 800,000 men.<sup>25</sup> Just before the battle, Abijam, standing on Mt. Zemaraim in the hill country of Ephraim, calls out to Jeroboam and the Israelite army, confronting Jeroboam with his idolatry and rebellion against the Lord.<sup>26</sup> In a clever military maneuver, however, Jeroboam sets up an ambush, and when Abijam sees the battle lines both in front and behind, he calls out to God for deliverance. The Lord routs Israel and gives Judah the victory; 500,000 men of Israel are slain.<sup>27</sup> Abijam grows in strength but then dies in 910, and his son Asa comes to the throne.

In Israel, Abijah, Jeroboam's son, becomes sick. Jeroboam directs his wife to travel to Shiloh and consult the prophet Ahijah.<sup>28</sup> Jeroboam's wife disguises herself and does so. Ahijah is old and cannot see, but the Lord reveals to him that it is Jeroboam's wife who has come. She enters the door and Ahijah greets her, "Come in, wife of Jeroboam....Go tell Jeroboam, 'Thus says the Lord God of Israel....You have done more evil than all who were before you, for you have gone and made for yourself other gods...behold, I will bring disaster on the house of Jeroboam and will cut off from Jeroboam every male in Israel.'" Ahijah continues, "Arise therefore, go to your own house. When your feet enter the city, the child shall die."

Jeroboam's wife arises and departs for her home in Tirzah. When she comes to the threshold of the house, Abijah dies. He is buried and all Israel mourns. Abijah is the only member of Jeroboam's house who receives burial, because in him only was there found something good toward the Lord God.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> The author of Kings gives only passing mention to Abijah (2 Kgs. 15:1-8). However, Chronicles relates this great victory that God granted him against Jeroboam (2 Chron. 13:1-20).

<sup>25</sup> These numbers may seem large, but they are generally accepted as accurate. They are consistent with Joab's census in 2 Sam. 24. "Jeroboam prepared for the war with 800,000 warriors. The number of Jeroboam's warriors is exactly that which Joab returned as the result, as to Israel, of the numbering of the people commanded by David, while that of Abijah's army is less by 100,000 men than Joab numbered in Judah" (Keil, "The Books of the Chronicles," *Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 350-351).

<sup>26</sup> It is this great address that makes the account especially noteworthy. The speech was delivered with "amazing skill and bitter sarcasm" (John C. Whitcomb, *Solomon to the Exile* [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1971], p. 30). "Do you not know that the LORD God of Israel gave the rule over Israel forever to David and his sons...Yet Jeroboam rose up and rebelled, and worthless men gathered around him...So now you intend to resist the kingdom of the LORD, being a great multitude and having with you the golden calves which Jeroboam made for gods for you. Have you not driven out the priests of the LORD, the sons of Aaron and the Levites, and made for yourselves priests like the peoples of other lands? Whoever comes to consecrate himself with a young bull and seven rams, even he may become a priest of what are no gods. But as for us, the LORD is our God...Now behold, God is with us at our head...O sons of Israel, do not fight against the LORD God of your fathers, for you will not succeed" (2 Chron. 13:5-12). A truly great testimony and speech! Unfortunately, however, this does not imply that Abijah was one of Judah's great spiritual kings. "Abijam, was capable, like his father (cf. II Chron. 11:4, 17; 12:6, 12), of occasional acts of faith in a life of general disobedience to the revealed will of God" (Whitcomb, p. 30; cf. 1 Kgs. 15:3).

<sup>27</sup> Jeroboam never recovered significant military strength after this defeat.

<sup>28</sup> This account is found in 1 Kgs. 14:1-18.

<sup>29</sup> 1 Kgs. 14:13,18.

Jeroboam's reign in Israel comes to an end in 909 when the Lord strikes him and he dies. Had he followed the Lord, God would have given him an enduring posterity over Israel like that of David.<sup>30</sup> But because of his great sin in setting up the golden calves, judgment comes upon his house.

After Jeroboam's death in 909, his son Nadab reigns over Israel in his place. Baasha of the house of Issachar conspires against him. In 908, while Nadab is besieging Gibbethon, a city in Dan but under Philistine control, Baasha murders him along with all the house of Jeroboam, in fulfillment of the prophecy of Ahijah.<sup>31</sup> Baasha reigns over Israel from 908 until 885.

After Abijam's death in Jerusalem, his son Asa becomes king over Judah in 910. Asa's grandmother is Maachah, the granddaughter of Absalom, but she is called the Queen Mother,<sup>32</sup> Asa's own mother probably having died. There is peace during the first 10 years of Asa's reign,<sup>33</sup> due in part to his father's victory over Jeroboam and also to the reforms that Asa himself enacted.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> 1 Kgs. 11:38.

<sup>31</sup> According to Keil, "The Books of the Kings," *Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 224, the prophecy of Ahijah concerning the judgment on Jeroboam's line did not give Baasha the right to put himself forward arbitrarily as the one to fulfill it. Baasha had exterminated Nadab's house not by divine authority, but in pursuit of his own selfish ends, not those of Yahweh.

<sup>32</sup> 1 Kgs. 15:10,13.

<sup>33</sup> 2 Chron. 14:1.

<sup>34</sup> Asa is the first king of Judah who receives the commendation that he "did what was right in the sight of the LORD" (1 Kgs. 15:11; 2 Chron. 14:2). His reforms, including even the removal of Maachah as Queen Mother, did much to stem the tide of idolatry in Judah (1 Kgs. 15:12-15; 2 Chron. 14:3-5).

In 895, Asa's 15th year,<sup>35</sup> "Zerah the Cushite"<sup>36</sup> invades Judah with an army of 1,000,000 men<sup>37</sup> and 300 chariots, but Asa is successful over them with God's help.<sup>38</sup> Following his victory over Zerah, Asa continues his reform and calls for a renewal of the covenant. He gathers all of Judah and Benjamin at Jerusalem, as well as those from Israel who had come over to him when they saw that God was with him. A festival of thanksgiving is held and burnt offerings are sacrificed to God. Asa and the people enter into a covenant with God to seek Him with all their heart and soul.<sup>39</sup> He also removes Maachah from being Queen Mother because of the obscene image of Asherah that she had made. Asa cuts it down, crushes it, and burns it. Asa is loyal to Yahweh all his

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<sup>35</sup> Possibly indicated by 2 Chron. 14:9-14; 15:10-11. C. F. Keil, "The Books of the Kings," *Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 219, states parenthetically and without supporting argument that Zerah came against Asa in his 11th year; cf. 2 Chron. 14:1. Nevertheless, Asa's 15th year is more likely. So states Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 342. Thiele, *MNHK*, p. 84. The argument in favor of the 15th year hinges on the interpretation of 2 Chron. 15:19 and 16:1. Thiele argues that the numbers 35 in 2 Chron. 15:19 and 36 in 16:1 refer to the total duration at that time of Judah's history, which began in 930, rather than Asa's sole reign. The phrase "of Asa" could then be a later addition to the text. This issue of the year of Zerah's invasion would not be of much importance except that this interpretation of 2 Chron. 15:19 and 16:1 is one of two solutions for an apparent conflict between these texts and 1 Kgs. 16:8. How could Baasha come up against Judah and fortify Ramah in Asa's 36th year (2 Chron. 16:1), about 875, when Baasha died and his son began to reign in Israel in Asa's 26th year (1 Kgs. 16:8), about 884? The two solutions to this problem are nicely summarized by Gleason L. Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982), pp. 225-226. If 2 Chron. 16:1 indeed refers to the 36th year of the kingdom of Judah, the conflict is resolved. That would put Baasha's invasion around 894 (930 - 36 = 894), which is Asa's 16th year (910 - 16 = 894), well before Baasha died in 885 or 884 (910 - 26 = 884). There is also a second solution to the conflict between 2 Chron. 16:1 and 1 Kgs. 16:8, the view that Keil takes ("The Books of the Chronicles," *Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 366-367). This view sees 35 as a copyist's error for an original 15 in 2 Chron. 15:19 and 36 as a copyist's error for an original 16. If the numbers in the autograph (original text) were spelled out, such a copy error is highly unlikely. On the other hand, if the numbers were written in numerical notation, this error could easily occur. However, accepting the first solution seems to give a good date for Zerah's invasion as well.

<sup>36</sup> Some identify this Zerah with the Egyptian Pharaoh Osarkon I (c. 914-874), while others have taken "Cush" to be a reference to an ethnic group living in the vicinity of Judah (see J. A. Thompson "1, 2 Chronicles," *The New American Commentary* [Broadman & Holman, 1994], 9:267). However, it is probably better to identify Cush with Ethiopia and Zerah as an Ethiopian leader of an Egyptian force under Osarkon I (Leon Wood, *SIH*, pp. 341-342).

<sup>37</sup> "The statement as to Zerah's army, that it numbered 1,000,000 warriors...rests upon a rough estimate, in which 1000 times 1000 expresses the idea of the greatest possible number" (C. F. Keil, "The Books of the Chronicles," *Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 358).

<sup>38</sup> We have here one of the great prayers of the OT: "Lord, there is no one besides you to help in the battle between the powerful and those who have no strength; so help us, O LORD our God, for we trust in you, and in your name have come against this multitude. O LORD, you are our God; let not man prevail against you" (2 Chron. 14:11).

<sup>39</sup> John C. Whitcomb, *Solomon to the Exile* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1971), pp. 32-33, discusses the nature of revival in the OT. First, Israel is the only nation in history that God ruled through royal and priestly mediators. Thus, a religious offense was also a crime against the state and could be punishable by death (cf. 2 Chron. 15:13). Second, "the very fact that people who did *not* seek Jehovah were executed proves that regeneration could not have been a prerequisite for 'revival' in ancient Israel. Those who *conformed* to the religious regulations of the nation and *avoided* the worship of other deities were accepted as legitimate citizens of the theocracy and were exempt from the penalties of the law." In the NT, revival can occur only in the hearts of regenerated people. Third, it was nevertheless God's desire for the people of Israel to experience individual regeneration first and then a revival of the outward religious forms (cf. Deut. 10:16; Jer. 4:4; Isa. 1:10-20; Mic. 6:6-8; Hos. 6:6). For a full-length study of

days. But notwithstanding his fidelity to the Lord, Asa is unable to thoroughly carry out the abolition of the high places.<sup>40</sup>

An attitude of hostility exists between Asa and Baasha all their days. In the year 894, Asa's 16th year as king, Baasha, king of Israel, comes up against Judah. He takes possession of Ramah and fortifies it. Ramah was roughly two hours from Jerusalem in the territory of Benjamin. The main road from Jerusalem north passed by Ramah. Baasha's likely intention is to make it impossible for devout Israelites to go south during Asa's revival.<sup>41</sup> Asa, this time lacking the faith he displayed in the face of Zerah's invasion, reacts to this new threat by sending the rest of the silver and gold that remained in the treasuries of the house of the Lord as well as his own treasuries to Ben-Hadad, king of Syria, in Damascus.

Ben-Hadad had a treaty with Baasha of Israel, but Asa asks him to break it off and come instead to his aid. Ben-Hadad does so and sends his army against the cities in the north of Israel's territory. When Baasha hears of it he withdraws from Ramah. Asa takes the building materials that Baasha had collected there and uses them to build Geba of Benjamin and Mizpah. However, because Asa relied on the king of Syria and not on Yahweh, as he had done only a few months earlier with Zerah's invasion, the seer Hanani predicts that Asa will no longer have peace in his kingdom but war. Enraged at these words, Asa has Hanani put in prison. In 872, Asa's 39th year, his feet become diseased, and he names his son Jehoshaphat coregent. In 869 Asa dies and Jehoshaphat assumes sole reign in Judah.

At some point during the reign of Baasha, the word of the Lord comes to the prophet Jehu against him. Because of his wickedness in following the ways of Jeroboam, God will cut off his posterity. When Baasha dies in 885, his son Elah reigns from Tirzah for 2 years. However, he has a servant named Zimri who is also one of his military leaders. Zimri conspires against Elah. In the year 884, while Elah is drinking himself drunk in the

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revival in the OT, see Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Quest for Renewal: Personal Revival in the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986).

<sup>40</sup> 1 Kgs. 15:11-14; 2 Chron. 14:2-5. Immediately after saying that the high places were not removed, 1 Kgs. 15:14 immediately adds, "Nevertheless the heart of Asa was wholly devoted to Yahweh all his days." If his heart was so devoted to Yahweh, why did he not remove the high places? Some have suggested that Asa removed the altars to foreign gods (note the word "foreign" in 2 Chron. 14:3) but not the unlawful altars to Yahweh. However, there is a better solution. In commenting on 1 Kgs. 15:14, Keil suggests that Asa "was unable to carry the abolition of them thoroughly out" ("The Books of the Kings," *Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 219). Perhaps the extreme difficulty in carrying out such an abolition throughout the kingdom is what caused the apparent discrepancy between the accounts of Jehoshaphat's reforms regarding the high places. Here two accounts say that they were not removed, while a third account states that they were. See the explanation below in footnote 66. Concerning the concept of "unlawful altars to Yahweh," it must be noted that although the altar in the temple at Jerusalem was *in general* the only legitimate altar, provision was made in Exod. 20:22-26 for other altars to be built, but only at a location where God had revealed himself. Numerous altars were built under this provision that involved no violation of tabernacle or temple worship (Josh. 8:30; Judg. 6:24; 21:4; 1 Sam. 7:17; 14:35). However, the design of the provision in Exod. 20:22-26 appears to be the prevention of great multiplicity of altars to Yahweh. Therefore, it was possible to have "unlawful altars to Yahweh."

<sup>41</sup> Cf. 2 Chron. 15:9.

house of his steward Arza, Zimri kills him. Zimri destroys all the house of Baasha according to the word of the Lord proclaimed through the prophet Jehu.

At the same time, Israel's troops are again attempting to capture Gibbethon from the Philistines. While encamped outside the city they hear of Zimri's conspiracy, usurpation of the throne, and murder of Elah. Outraged at this assassination, they proclaim Omri king and leave off their siege of Gibbethon to lay siege to Tirzah. When Zimri sees that the city is taken, he enters the citadel of the king's house and commits suicide by setting it on fire. Zimri reigned a total of 7 days.

### *THE HOUSE OF OMRI AND AHAB: THE DYNASTY OF BAAL*

There is civil unrest in Israel from 884 to 880. Tibni, the son of Ginath, rules over half of Israel and Omri, the commander of the army, rules over the other half. Omri finally prevails in this struggle and begins his full reign in 880 and rules over the whole house of Israel until 874. During his first 6 years he reigns from Tirzah. Then he builds a city on the hill of Samaria, which he bought from Shemer for two talents of silver and calls the city Samaria. He reigns from there during his final year. During his reign Omri subjugates Moab and forces them to pay heavy tribute. This subjugation would continue for 40 years.<sup>42</sup> Omri also enters into a profitable trading alliance with Phoenicia thereby making access to the Mediterranean by the Syrians more difficult.<sup>43</sup> Omri dies and his son Ahab takes the throne in his stead.

Ahab begins his reign over Israel from Samaria in 874. He cements Israel's relations with Phoenicia by marrying Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, king-priest of Sidonia. This marriage opens the door for Baal worship in Israel.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> This accomplishment of Omri is not recorded in the Bible. That Omri subjugated Moab and that this subjugation lasted 40 years both come from the Moabite Stone. The Moabite Stone was a monument found lying on the ground near the Arnon River by a German missionary, F. A. Klein, in 1898. It was written by Mesha, king of Moab (2 Kgs. 3:4). According to the Moabite Stone, Mesha successfully rebelled against Israel during the reign of Omri's "son." It is the mention of 40 years that creates the problem. The total time covered by the reigns of Omri and Ahab is only 34 years. However, understanding "son" to mean "grandson" or "descendent" is in complete accord with Semitic usage. The revolt might have occurred during the reign of Ahab's son Ahaziah (853-852) or his son Jehoram (852-841). Josephus places the uprising in the second year of Ahaziah (*Ant.* ix.2.1). See W. Ewing, "Mesha," *ISBE*, III:328.

<sup>43</sup> To gain an appreciation for the impact that Omri had for the Northern Kingdom, for over a hundred years after his reign the Assyrians referred to Israel as "the land of Omri." See James B. Pritchard, *ANET*, pp. 284-285.

<sup>44</sup> However, this was not the first contact between Israel and Baal worship. That occurred during the wilderness wanderings (see Num. 25:1-9; 31:16). For a brief description of Baal worship, see Appendix 3.

King Ahab becomes a worshipper of Baal,<sup>45</sup> who is hailed "Rider of the Clouds". He erects an altar to Baal in the temple of Baal that he had built for Jezebel, and he builds an Asherah pole.<sup>46</sup> He does more than all the kings before him to anger the Lord God of Israel. Elijah is sent to Ahab to proclaim the word of the Lord: "As Yahweh the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years except by my word." Elijah then departs to a remote place and there the ravens bring him bread and he drinks from the Brook Cherith. Meanwhile the land that looks to "the god of dew and rain" suffers drought.

In the third year of the drought there is a severe famine in Samaria. Ahab and his servant Obadiah, a godly man, search out the springs and brooks of the land for water so that their livestock might not perish. They divide the land to be explored between them, and while Obadiah is exploring, Elijah meets him. Elijah instructs Obadiah to tell Ahab that he, Elijah, is here and will present himself before the king that day.<sup>47</sup>

When Ahab sees Elijah he asks, "Is that you O troubler of Israel?"<sup>48</sup> Elijah answers that it is not he who troubles Israel but Ahab himself since he has forsaken God to follow Baal. Elijah instructs Ahab to gather the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah to Mt. Carmel. There it will be decided who is God, Yahweh or Baal.

Elijah directs the prophets of Baal to build an altar, cut a bull in pieces for a sacrifice, lay the wood for the sacrifice upon the altar but not to light a fire under it. They do as Elijah instructs and then pray to their god from morning until the time of the evening sacrifice to answer with fire. But Baal remains silent.<sup>49</sup> Elijah now repairs the altar to Yahweh that is broken down.<sup>50</sup> He has a trench dug around it. Wood is laid, the bull is cut up,

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<sup>45</sup> How whole-heartedly Ahab embraced Baal worship is open to some question. He certainly went along with everything Jezebel wanted, and was therefore ultimately responsible. 1 Kgs. 21:25 says that "Jezebel incited him." However, it was she who actively promoted Baalism (1 Kgs. 18:4, 19; 19:2). As for Ahab, he named his children with Yahweh-type names (Ahaziah, Jehoram, and Athaliah) and maintained 400 "prophets of Yahweh" on the payroll (1 Kgs. 22:5-6). See the discussion of this point in Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 310, n. 27.

<sup>46</sup> 1 Kgs. 16:31-33. It should be noted that although Solomon also built temples for his foreign wives (cf. 1 Kgs. 11:1-8), "Jezebel was not satisfied with the prerogative of private worship. Rather, she insisted on attempting to promote Baal as a replacement for Yahweh and took steps to silence opposition to her goals (1 Kgs. 18:1-15; 19:1-10)" (Paul R. House, "1, 2 Kings," *The New American Commentary* [Broadman & Holman, 1995], p. 211). It was nothing less than establishing Baal worship as the "state religion" in Israel.

<sup>47</sup> 1 Kgs. 18:10-12.

<sup>48</sup> 1 Kgs. 18:17.

<sup>49</sup> While Elijah is watching all this, he chides them with some of the classic examples of Biblical sarcasm. "Call out with a loud voice, for he is a god; either he is occupied or gone aside, or is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and needs to be awakened" (1 Kgs. 18:27).

<sup>50</sup> Keil, "The Books of the Kings," *Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 247, gives two possible explanations for the existence of this altar. It might have been left over from the time before the building of the temple (cf. 1 Kgs. 3:2) or it might have been erected earlier by pious worshippers from the Northern Kingdom prohibited from journeying to Jerusalem. However, on p. 40 Keil argues on the basis of Lev. 17:3-7 that, strictly speaking, such an altar would still be a violation of the Mosaic law. Not all agree. See footnote 41 above and note that Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979), p.241, argues that "the point by this law is that in the wilderness no secular slaughter is permitted. If an Israelite wished to eat meat, he must bring his chosen animal to the

and water is poured over everything. Water is poured a second time and a third. Then Elijah calls upon Yahweh who does answer by fire and consumes the sacrifice, the wood, the altar, and the water. Elijah then orders that the prophets of Baal be seized and he brings them down to the Kidron Brook. There they are executed.

Elijah now announces that the Lord is going to send rain on Israel. He urges Ahab to return home in anticipation and celebrate with a feast. Elijah returns to the top of Mt. Carmel where he bows down and prays. He sends his servant to see whether storm clouds are beginning to form over the sea. There are none. Seven times Elijah sends him to look and the 7th time he sees a small cloud arising. Elijah warns Ahab of the approaching storm. He needs to start back to Jezreel immediately or the chariot wheels may get stuck in the mud. A heavy rain begins to fall, and with the hand of the Lord upon him, Elijah runs ahead of Ahab the 17 miles to Jezreel.<sup>51</sup>

After the slaughter of her prophets, Jezebel threatens Elijah's life, and he retreats to the wilderness around Beersheba greatly discouraged.<sup>52</sup> However, the Lord encourages Elijah and directs him to anoint Hazael as king of Syria, Jehu as king over Israel, and

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tabernacle as a peace offering..."

<sup>51</sup> Perhaps this miraculous feat was intended to be one more evidence that Yahweh is God and not Baal; see Paul R. House, "1, 2 Kings," *The New American Commentary* (Broadman & Holman, 1995), p. 221.

<sup>52</sup> According to C. F. Keil, "The Books of the Kings," *Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 253, "It is obvious that Elijah did not flee from any fear of the vain threat of Jezebel." The LXX and the Vulgate both read "he was afraid" (indicating a Hebrew original from אָרַי, *to fear*). However, the MT has a 3ms Qal waw-imperfect of הָאָר, *to see*. Thus, "he saw." Keil argues strongly that the MT should not be amended to agree with the LXX and Vulgate. The likely interpretation of the MT as it stands is that when Elijah heard of Jezebel's threat, he "saw" that, at least in his opinion, his ministry was a failure. Paul R. House, "1, 2 Kings," *The New American Commentary* (Broadman & Holman, 1995), p. 222, quotes DeVries: "Elijah interprets Jezebel's personal attack on him as the end of his ministry." House also notes that Hauser "argues that Elijah was broken, not frightened by Jezebel." The phrase translated "ran for his life" is also difficult. The verb is a 3ms Qal waw-imperfect of the verb יָלַךְ, *to go*. Thus, "he went." The preposition in the phrase "for his life" is לְאֵל, usually meaning *to, toward*. However, *BDB*, p. 40, cites 1 Kgs. 19:3 as an example of the meaning *on account of or for the sake of*. Thus, "he went on account of his life (שָׁפַן, *life or soul*). Keil translates, "he went upon his life." However, he did not go to *save* his life, because in verse 4 he asks God to take it! Therefore, the idea is that he goes into the wilderness because he has given up on his life and wants God to take it.

Elisha as prophet in his place.<sup>53</sup> Elijah finds Elisha and throws his cloak upon him as a symbol of his call to the prophetic office.<sup>54</sup>

Elijah is not Ahab's only problem. Ben-hadad II<sup>55</sup> of Syria besieges Samaria, but twice Ahab defeats him.<sup>56</sup> Now at Ahab's mercy, Ben-hadad pleads for his life and promises to restore certain cities that his father had taken from Israel. He will also allow commercial concessions for Israel in the bazaars of Damascus. Ahab accepts these terms and spares Ben-hadad, possibly because he wanted Syria for an ally against the growing threat of Assyria. Three years of peace will result from this treaty. On the way

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<sup>53</sup> 1 Kgs. 19:15-18. There are a few problems associated with this word from the Lord. "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus," or "Go back the way you came," is probably not a direction on which road to take. As Keil points out, there was really only one way through the Arabian desert to get from Horeb to Damascus ("The Books of the Kings," *Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 259). Paul R. House, "1, 2 Kings," *The New American Commentary* (Broadman & Holman, 1995), p. 224, argues that the command "calls Elijah back into active service of the Lord." However, the real difficulty in the passage is in the interpretation of the three commissions: anoint Hazael, Jehu, and Elisha. The key is that most of the passage is figurative. Concerning Hazael, future king of Syria, Keil points out that these words "are not to be understood as signifying that Elijah was to go at once to Damascus and anoint Hazael there, but simply that he was to do this at a time which the spirit would more precisely indicate. According to what follows, all that Elijah accomplished immediately was to call Elisha to be his successor; whereas the other two commissions were fulfilled by Elisha after Elijah's ascension to heaven (2 Kings viii and ix)...The anointing of Hazael and Jehu is mentioned first, because God had chosen these two kings to be the chief instruments of His judgments upon the royal family [of Ahab] and the people [of Israel] for their idolatry." Moreover, the anointing itself was in two of the three cases figurative: "It was only in the case of Jehu that a real anointing took place (2 Kgs. ix:6); Hazael was merely told by Elisha that he would be king (2 Kings viii.13), and Elisha was simply called by Elijah to the prophetic office by having the cloak of the latter thrown upon him...Consequently, מָשַׁח [to anoint] must be taken figuratively here...denoting divine consecration to the regal and prophetic offices." In fact, the one literal anointing is not even done by Elisha personally: he sends one of the sons of the prophets to anoint Jehu. And so, again, the statement that Elisha would slay those who escaped the sword of Jehu is not to be understood literally. Elisha slew by the word of the Lord, which brought judgments upon the ungodly, as we see from 2 Kings ii.24..." Finally, the number 7000 in v. 18 is probably a "round number": "The number *seven* is the stamp of the works of God..." Observe how Paul in the NT uses this great verse: the 7000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal became the prototype for God's work in the NT, reserving for himself a "remnant according to the election of grace" from the nation of Israel (Rom. 11:5).

<sup>54</sup> Elisha's period of ministry lasted much longer than Elijah's. He began in Jehoram's early years, continued through the reigns of Jehu and Jehoahaz, and died sometime during the reign of Jehoash (2 Kgs. 13:20). This was a period of about 50 years, c. 850-800.

<sup>55</sup> 1 Kings 20. There is much disagreement as to whether this Ben-hadad is the same king to whom Asa appealed in 1 Kgs. 15:16-22. Some think they are the same, making only two rulers called Ben-hadad (e.g., Paul R. House, "1, 2 Kings," *The New American Commentary* [Broadman & Holman, 1995], p. 228, n. 46), while others argue that he is the son of the Ben-hadad in 1 Kgs. 15, making three rulers called Ben-hadad (e.g., C. F. Keil, "The Books of the Kings," *Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 261 and Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 311, n. 30). According to R. K. Harrison, "Ben-hadad," *ISBE*, I:459, until the discovery of the Melqart stele in 1939 and dated around 860 B.C., it was common to distinguish three Damascene rulers named Ben-hadad. Since that time many scholars have dropped the distinction between a Ben-hadad I and Ben-hadad II. Harrison, however, points out several problems with this view. Therefore, the more traditional view is adopted as a working hypothesis in this paper. On the basis of this view, we can summarize as follows: (2) Ben-hadad I, called the "son of Tabrimmon, son of Hezion, king of Syria" in 1 Kgs. 15:18; from his connections with Asa, he would be on the throne by 895, perhaps even by 900. (2) Ben-hadad II, son of Ben-hadad I; as the opponent of Ahab in 1 Kings 20, he would be on the throne by 860; probably the Ben-hadad of 2 Kgs. 5:1-19 and the Ben-hadad killed by Hazael in 2 Kgs. 8:14-15. (3)

back from the second battle, one of the sons of the prophets<sup>57</sup> meets Ahab on the road. He proclaims the word of the Lord to Ahab: "Because you have let slip out of your hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore your life shall go for his life and your people for his people."<sup>58</sup> The destruction to which Ben-hadad was devoted will fall upon Ahab and his people.<sup>59</sup>

At one point during Ahab's reign, he wants to buy a tract of land in Jezreel, where he had a summer palace. The land was a vineyard owned by a man named Naboth. He asks Naboth for this tract of land because he wishes to have a garden. Although Ahab is willing to pay for it, Naboth is not willing to sell it for it is his family inheritance, and Israelite law prohibits selling a paternal inheritance.<sup>60</sup> A plot is devised and carried out by Jezebel, Ahab's wife,<sup>61</sup> to obtain the land. She arranges to have Naboth accused of blasphemy. A fast is proclaimed, Naboth is given the seat of honor, and two false witnesses accuse him of blasphemy against Ahab and God. Naboth and his sons are taken outside the city and stoned to death. Ahab then takes possession of Naboth's vineyard.

The word of the Lord comes to the prophet Elijah instructing him to go to Ahab. Elijah does as the Lord directs and travels to Jezreel where he confronts Ahab with his crime. Elijah proclaims the word of the Lord: "In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, dogs shall lick your blood, even yours. Behold, I will bring calamity on you. I will take away your posterity and will cut off from Ahab every male in Israel, both bond and free. I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam."<sup>62</sup> Elijah further proclaims concerning Jezebel, "The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel."<sup>63</sup> In sincere repentance Ahab humbles himself before God and thus the calamity predicted does not come in his days but in the days of his son. Ahab's repentance, however sincere, was not lasting and produced no real conversion.

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Ben-hadad III, son of Hazael, the Ben-hadad of 2 Kgs. 13; probably on the throne ca. 796-770.

<sup>56</sup> There is not much good that one can say about Ahab in general. However, lacking in courage he was not. In the face of Syria's first aggression against Ahab, he tries to submit to Ben-hadad. When Ben-hadad responds with even more outrageous demands, Ahab then refuses. When faced with Ben-hadad's subsequent boastful threat, Ahab responds with a truly classical retort: "Let not him who girds on his armor boast like him who takes it off" (1 Kgs. 20:11).

<sup>57</sup> "Sons of the prophets" evidently referred to "schools" or "guilds" of young men (e.g., 1 Sam. 10:9-13; 19:18-24; 2 Kgs. 2:3; Amos 7:14) who apparently studied under recognized prophets (cf. 2 Kgs. 4:38; 6:1). See Hobart E. Freeman, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968), pp. 28-34.

<sup>58</sup> 1 Kgs. 20:42.

<sup>59</sup> C. F. Keil, "The Books of the Kings," *Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 269.

<sup>60</sup> Num. 36:7; cf. Lev. 25:23.

<sup>61</sup> Jezebel was the daughter of Ethbaal, king of Sidon. Her approach to the problem of Naboth might reflect what she learned from her father. He killed his royal predecessor at Tyre to gain kingship over all the Phoenician cities. "Ahab's marriage probably sealed an alliance between Israel and Tyre just when the Aramean powers of Syria were threatening the small coastal states" (E. B. Johnston, "Jezebel," *ISBE*, II:1057). Since building a house and altar for Jezebel's gods would have been required for alliance protocol, this marriage marked the introduction of Baal worship in Israel.

<sup>62</sup> 1 Kgs. 21:17-22.

<sup>63</sup> 1 Kgs. 21:23.

During Ahab's reign, a dark cloud is beginning to overshadow all the countries in the region. The political structure of the ancient Near East is about to undergo a radical change. This juncture in history marks the beginning of an era of truly "world empires" that dominate the Near East for the next thousand years. Up to this point, the enemies of Israel and Judah have been relatively small, local states such as Philistia, Syria, Edom, Moab, and Ammon. Egypt had made a few incursions into Palestine, but it was no longer a major power. Now, however, an empire was going to engulf the entire region. Assyria eventually extends its rule all the way into Egypt and destroys Israel; only God's direct intervention keeps it from destroying Judah as well. Assyria, in turn, is overthrown by an emerging Babylonian empire, which God does allow to destroy Judah. Babylon is overthrown by the Persian Empire, which is toppled by the Greeks under Alexander the Great. Alexander's empire is swallowed up by Rome, which brings us well beyond the New Testament era.

It was probably between Israel's second and third wars with Syria that Assyria makes its first attempt to overrun the Palestinian states. In his sixth year as king of Assyria, 853, Shalmaneser III (858-824) leads a large army toward Syria and Israel. He is met by a coalition of kings, including Ahab of Israel and Ben-hadad of Syria. They defeat him in the battle of Qarqar on the Orentes River somewhere north of Damascus.<sup>64</sup> Assyria's advance is temporarily stayed.

After the death of Asa in the south, Jehoshaphat assumes sole reign over Judah in 869. He walks in the ways of David. Jehoshaphat has the male cult prostitutes banished from the land, the Asherim are taken out of Judah,<sup>65</sup> and many of the high places are removed.<sup>66</sup> He introduces a system of public instruction for the whole land based upon the book of the Law of the Lord. Jehoshaphat also establishes local courts and two courts of appeal. One is an ecclesiastical court of appeal headed by the high priest and

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<sup>64</sup> The battle at Qarqar is an extra-biblical event, but Shalmaneser III left somewhat detailed records about it. His account of the campaign against the Syria coalition begins with typical humility: "I am Shalmaneser, the legitimate king, the king of the world, the king without rival, the 'Great Dragon,' the only power within the four rims of the earth, overlord of all the princes, who has smashed all his enemies as if they were earthenware, the strong man, unsparing, who shows no mercy in battle..." (James B. Pritchard, *ANET*, p. 276). Shalmaneser's account mentions Ahab and that he contributed 2000 chariots and 10,000 soldiers to the coalition. Of course, in his account of the campaign, Shalmaneser claimed victory, but "it was obvious that he had to return to face the Arameans several more times..." (W. S. LaSor, "Shalmaneser," *ISBE*, IV:446).

<sup>65</sup> The exact time when aspects of Baal worship began to filter into Judah is vague. Solomon's many foreign wives introduced many forms of pagan worship in Jerusalem. After his death, Rehoboam built high places, images, Asherim poles, and also permitted male prostitutes in the land (1 Kgs. 14:23-24). These features are those which Jehoshaphat sought to remove. However, though elements of Baal worship appeared early in Judah, it had not yet become the "state religion" as it had under Ahab and Jezebel in the north. That did occur in the very next generation under the influence of Athaliah, daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, whom Jehoshaphat had arranged for his son Jehoram to marry in forming an alliance with Israel (2 Chron. 18:1; 21:6; 22:2). After Athaliah's death, Baal worship was suppressed by the high priest Jehoiada during the minority of Joash (2 Kgs. 11:18) but was revived again by Ahaz (2 Chron. 28:2). Despite Hezekiah's reformation, it reached its zenith during the reign of his son Manasseh (2 Kgs. 21:3).

<sup>66</sup> Both 1 Kgs. 22:43 and 2 Chron. 20:33 state that the high places were not removed, while 2 Chron. 17:6 says that they were. "The situation likely was that the better known high places were, while those in which many of the common people worshipped (1 Kings 22:43) were not" (Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 343, n. 18).

the other is a civil court of appeal headed by a layman. God establishes Jehoshaphat's kingdom and gives him riches and honor in abundance.

In contrast to the former kings of Judah, Jehoshaphat sees greater benefit in an alliance with Israel than in civil war. So he makes peace with Israel and cements the union with the marriage of his son Jehoram to Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel.<sup>67</sup> This introduction of an Israelite princess to the court of Judah will ultimately be disastrous, for her propagation of the Tyrian Baal cult in Judah will negate any political and material advantages gained through the alliance.

In the north, the truce between Ahab and Ben-hadad is short-lived. Probably later in the very same year<sup>68</sup> that they had fought as allies against Assyria, 853, trouble breaks out for a third time between Israel and Syria. So Ahab asks Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, to go with him against the Syrians who are at Ramoth-gilead. This city, bordering Syria, belonged to Israel but was now in the hands of the Syrians. Jehoshaphat agrees but asks that inquiry be made of the Lord first as to whether they should undertake this campaign.<sup>69</sup>

Ahab gathers together his 400 prophets<sup>70</sup> and inquires of them whether he should go against Ramoth-gilead. Since the prophets know that the king is anxious to go to battle, they all without exception agree that the Lord will deliver Ramoth-gilead into his hand. Jehoshaphat, on the other hand, does not recognize these men as genuine prophets and so asks Ahab if there is not a true servant of the Lord still in existence of whom they can inquire. Ahab admits that there still is one, a man named Micaiah, whom he hates. This is because Micaiah never prophesies good concerning him but only evil. Nevertheless, Ahab sends a chamberlain to fetch Micaiah out of the prison where Ahab had put him.

On their way to the king the chamberlain tries to persuade Micaiah to prophesy success for the king as the others had done. But Micaiah replies with a solemn oath that he will only speak what Yahweh says to him.

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<sup>67</sup> That Jehoshaphat arranged this marriage to ally himself with Ahab is mentioned only in 2 Chron. 18:1. However, Athaliah is described as Jehoram's wife and daughter of Ahab when he assumes the throne in Judah at the death of Jehoshaphat (2 Kgs. 8:16-18; 2 Chron. 21:1-6). She is also described as the granddaughter of Omri when her son Ahaziah assumes the throne in Judah at the death of Jehoram (2 Kgs. 8:25-26; 2 Chron. 22:1-2). Note that Athaliah is not specifically stated to be the daughter of Jezebel, but this is very likely (Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 345, n. 21).

<sup>68</sup> Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 312, n. 33.

<sup>69</sup> This most interesting account is found in 1 Kgs. 22:1-28. For an extended discussion of God's use of a "lying spirit," see Paul R. House, "1, 2 Kings," *The New American Commentary* (Broadman & Holman, 1995), pp. 236-238.

<sup>70</sup> These are not the 400 prophets of Asherah who were absent from the contest on Mt. Carmel nor new prophets of Baal. Rather they were, in a sense, prophets of Yahweh and were therefore summoned by Ahab at Jehoshaphat's request; see Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 310, n. 27. However, they were not true prophets of Yahweh. According to Keil, they practiced prophesying as a trade without any call from God. Jehoshaphat did not recognize them as prophets of Yahweh.

Micaiah arrives and Ahab asks, "Micaiah, shall we go to Ramoth-gilead to battle or shall we refrain?" With a mocking tone Micaiah answers, "Go up and succeed, and the Lord will give it into your hand." Ahab perceives the mockery intended and adjures him by the name of Yahweh to speak only the truth. Now with great seriousness Micaiah warns them not to go, as disaster will come upon them if they do. Although Ahab had asked for a true word of the Lord, he endeavors to attribute this unfavorable prophecy to Micaiah's personal enmity against him. He says to Jehoshaphat "Did not I tell you that he prophesies nothing good concerning me but only evil?" Micaiah goes on to disclose a further revelation: "I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, like sheep that have no shepherd. And the Lord said, 'These have no master, let each of them return to his house in peace.'" In his consciousness of the divine truth of his announcement, Micaiah leaves the king with the words, "If you indeed return safely the Lord has not spoken by me."

Jehoshaphat and Ahab disregard the warning and go up against the Syrians. During the battle, Ahab is hit by a random arrow and wounded. He is taken out of the battle but propped up in his chariot facing the Syrians so that his soldiers might not become disheartened. As he is sitting in his chariot, his blood runs onto the chariot's floor. Ahab dies that evening and his body is brought back to Samaria where he is buried. As a man washes the chariot at the pool in Samaria, the dogs lick up Ahab's blood. Jehoshaphat returns to Jerusalem and there the prophet Jehu rebukes him for his alliance with Israel. He had helped the wicked and loved those who hate the Lord.

After Ahab's death in 853, his son Ahaziah takes the throne in Israel. He falls from his upper-room window and is injured. Messengers are sent by Ahaziah to the city of Ekron in Philistia to inquire of its local deity Baal-Zebub whether Ahaziah will recover. On their way the messengers are met by Elijah, who announces that Ahaziah will die because he went to consult a foreign god and not the God of Israel. Ahaziah dies in the year 852 and, since Ahaziah had no son, his brother Joram becomes king in his place.

Joram (aka Jehoram) reigns over Israel from 852 to 841. Mesha, the king of Moab, had been paying annual tribute during the reign of Ahab of 100,000 lambs and the wool of 100,000 rams.<sup>71</sup> But once he learned of Ahab's death, he rebelled against Israel.<sup>72</sup> Mesha established a Moabite population in the Israelite fortress at Jahaz. He also connected the two sides of the Arnon river with a highway. This river was the boundary between Israel on the north and Moab on the south. In addition, Mesha secured his own forts and built Dibon, north of the Arnon, into a self-sufficient city. Ahaziah had been unable to do anything during his short reign to renew the subjugation of Moab so that immediately upon assuming power, Joram is anxious to undertake what had been neglected. Joram asks Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, to go with him against Moab and Jehoshaphat agrees. Judah's vassal, the king of Edom, is also induced to join with them.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> 2 Kgs. 3:4.

<sup>72</sup> 2 Kgs. 3:5; see footnote 42 above.

<sup>73</sup> The quotations to follow are from the account in 2 Kgs. 3.

The route the united army decides to take is by way of the Wilderness of Edom. They march on this roundabout route for seven days and pass through a deep rock valley that divides the territory of Edom and Moab. They are in desperate need of water, and the river that flows through the valley is dry. The army and the animals with them are in the greatest danger of perishing from lack of water. King Joram cries out in despair, "Alas, for the Lord has called these three kings together to deliver them into the hand of Moab!" Jehoshaphat, on the other hand, has confidence in the Lord and inquires whether there is a prophet nearby from whom they can seek the Lord's counsel. A servant informs them that Elisha is there, and the three kings, humbled by the calamity, go to him.<sup>74</sup>

Elisha addresses Joram with the words, "What have I to do with you? Go to the prophets of your father and your mother." In a supplicatory manner, Joram replies that the Lord has brought not only him but Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom also into this trouble. With a solemn oath Elisha answers that were it not for his regard for Jehoshaphat he would not even look at Joram, much less help him.

Elisha calls for a musician and as he plays, the hand of the Lord comes upon Elisha.<sup>75</sup> He speaks out, "Thus says the Lord: Make this valley full of trenches. You shall not see wind, nor shall you see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water so that you, your cattle, and your animals may drink. And this is a simple matter in the sight of the Lord; He will also deliver the Moabites into your hand. Also you shall attack every fortified city and every choice city, and shall cut down every good tree; and stop up every spring of water, and ruin every good piece of land with stones."

The following morning a heavy rain falls in the eastern mountains of Edom, a great distance from the Israelite camp. This sudden abundance of water flows down into the trenches, and the reddish earth of the freshly dug trenches gives the water a reddish color. Intensified by the rays of the rising sun, the water from a distance looks like blood. The army of Moab, which has been on the march since hearing the report of the advance of the allied kings, is now stationed on the border. In the morning, after the sun has risen above the water, the Moabites see what they think is blood and assume that the allied kings have fought amongst themselves and killed each other. They hurry to the camp to take the spoil. But the allied army is waiting and the Moabites are routed and put to flight.

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<sup>74</sup> 2 Kgs. 3:11-12. J. H. Stek, "Elisha," *ISBE*, II:71, states that Elisha actually accompanied the army of Israel as Elijah's proxy. Keil, "The Books of the Kings," *Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 303-304, does not go quite so far but suggests that "Elisha may perhaps have come to the neighborhood of the army at the instigation of the Spirit of God, because the distress of the three kings was to be one means in the hand of the Lord, not only of distinguishing the prophet in the eyes of Joram, but also of pointing Joram to the Lord as the only true God." He also points out that the description of Elisha as the one "who used to pour water on the hands of Elijah" (v. 11) is another way of saying that Elisha "had been with him [Elijah] daily as his servant, and therefore could probably obtain and give a revelation from God." It is quite likely that Elijah is still around at this point; see footnote 84.

<sup>75</sup> Keil, "The Books of the Kings," *Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 304, remarks that Elisha sent for the minstrel in order "to collect his mind from the impressions of the outer world by the soft tones of the instrument, and by subduing the self-life and life in the external world to become absorbed in the intuition of divine things." Compare 1 Sam. 16:15-16.

The Moabites flee back to their own land with the Israelites in pursuit. The Israelites devastate the land as Elisha has prophesied. The Moabites take refuge in a fortress but the allied kings besiege it. With 700 men the king of Moab attempts to fight a way through but fails. In desperation he offers his first-born son, who was to succeed him as king, as a sacrifice to his own god Chemosh in order to procure his help by appeasing his wrath.<sup>76</sup> As a consequence of this desperate act on the part of Mesha, great wrath comes upon Israel.<sup>77</sup> They return to their own land without having obtained the object of their expedition, namely, to renew the subjugation of Moab under the power of Israel.

One of Jehoshaphat's last acts is to build merchant ships to go to Ophir in southern Arabia and bring back gold. However, before the ships set sail, they are destroyed at harbor in Ezion-geber, a port city of Edom on the north shore of the Gulf of Aqabah. This was a punishment on Jehoshaphat for his alliance with Ahaziah, king of Israel, son of Ahab.<sup>78</sup> Jehoshaphat reigned until 848 in Judah.

In 853, the year that Jehoshaphat joined with Ahab to fight against the Syrians, he had appointed his son Jehoram as coregent.<sup>79</sup> He served in this capacity for the last four years of Jehoshaphat's reign, from 853 to 848, and began his sole reign upon the death of his father in 848. Once established in the kingdom, Jehoram proceeds to kill all his brothers with the sword.<sup>80</sup> Most likely his brothers had made known their disapproval of

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<sup>76</sup> On the Moabite Stone, Mesha wrote that "Omri, the king of Israel, had oppressed Moab many days because Chemosh was angry with his land." Therefore, it is not surprising that Mesha now attempts to ward off defeat by sacrificing his son to appease some new wrath of Chemosh.

<sup>77</sup> 2 Kgs. 3:27. This seems very curious indeed. It almost sounds like a scribe from Moab wrote it: in response to the sacrifice, did Chemosh unleash his fury on Israel? Some scholars, in fact, think that the text here preserves remnants of a polytheistic theology. In response, House argues that "given the nature of the author's theology, however, it is much more likely that the action inspired Moab's army to fight more fiercely or that it caused Israel such indignation and sickness of heart that they lifted the siege" (Paul R. House, "1, 2 Kings," *The New American Commentary* [Broadman & Holman, 1995], p. 264). Keil, "The Books of the Kings," *Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 307, argues that every other occurrence of the phrase, לעַ פְּצַק הַיהוָה [wrath came against], refers to divine wrath against man brought about by his sin. Therefore, here it must have that same meaning and cannot refer to "human indignation." Keil's conclusion: "This act of abomination [the human sacrifice], to which the king of the Moabites had been impelled by the extremity of his distress, brought a severe judgment from God upon Israel. The besiegers...felt the wrath of God which they had brought upon themselves by occasioning human sacrifice." However, this view is almost certainly wrong. This was a battle directly sanctioned by prophetic revelation. Not only would God supply the desperately needed water, but "He shall also give the Moabites into your hand (v. 18). In no sense can Israel be held responsible for this act of Mesha. Over the centuries, God has delivered many armies and nations into the hand of Israel. Any one of those deliverances could have occasioned such an act of desperation. Moreover, the argument on the use of a three-word phrase is not conclusive. The best solution lies along the lines suggested by House. Nevertheless, the biblical account "does support Mesha's boast on the Moabite Stone that deliverance from Israel's dominance was achieved in his day" (Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 317).

<sup>78</sup> 1 Kgs. 22:48-49; 2 Chron. 20:35-37. Putting the two accounts together, apparently Jehoshaphat first refused Ahaziah's request to make this a joint venture (1 Kings). However, he later acquiesced, and it was for this reason that the Lord destroyed the ships (2 Chronicles).

<sup>79</sup> Jehoshaphat's incentive might have been to have his son ruling at home while he was away on what could become a prolonged war (Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 345).

<sup>80</sup> 2 Chron. 21:4.

his idolatrous conduct as well as that of his wife Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel.<sup>81</sup>

During Jehoram's reign, the Edomites rebel.<sup>82</sup> Now they name a king of their own and throw off the authority of Judah.<sup>83</sup> Jehoram advances against the Edomites but is surrounded. His army flees yet Jehoram manages to escape. Thus Jehoram fails in his mission and the Edomites remain in revolt.

At some point early in his reign, a letter comes to Jehoram in Judah from the prophet Elijah<sup>84</sup> predicting affliction for his people and a terrible disease for him personally because of the evil that he had done. To fulfil the first part of this judgment, the Lord stirs up the Philistines and Arabians to invade Judah.<sup>85</sup> They force their way into Jerusalem and plunder the royal palace, carrying away captive Jehoram's wives and

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<sup>81</sup> C. F. Keil, "The Books of the Chronicles," *Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 394.

<sup>82</sup> Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 346, suggests that although David had subjugated Edom (2 Sam. 8:14), control over Edom had probably been lost by Rehoboam's time (cf. 1 Kgs. 11:14; however, some scholars, like S. K. Mosiman and D. F. Payne, "Jehoram," *ISBE*, II:978, think that Edom continues to be subject to Judah until this revolt against Jehoram). Wood also thinks that Jehoshaphat probably regained control over Edom when he was saved by the Lord from a coalition of kings of which Edom was a part (2 Chron. 20:1-29). Shortly thereafter, Edom helped Jehoshaphat and Jehoram of Israel in the campaign against Moab. Therefore, from the time of Jehoshaphat, Edom remained subject to Judah until now with only a viceregent holding power (1 Kgs. 22:47). Note that 1 Kgs. 22:47 states that "a deputy was king." This would seem to explain the references to a "king of Edom" in 2 Kgs. 3:9,10,26.

<sup>83</sup> 2 Chron. 21:8.

<sup>84</sup> 2 Chron. 21:12. Some have questioned the authenticity of this letter. The letter is not attested elsewhere, and was not Elijah gone by this time? There is definitely a problem here. Elijah's ascension into heaven is given in 2 Kgs 2; Jehoshaphat is still alive in 2 Kings 3 (the campaign against Moab); finally, the letter was addressed to Jehoram, Jehoshaphat's son. Did Elijah write him from heaven? Keil cites a few scholars who have actually suggested this ("The Books of the Chronicles," *Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 397-398). However, several facts must be considered. First, in 2 Kgs. 1:16, Elijah predicts the death of Ahaziah, Ahab's son and king of Israel. Second, verse 17 states that Joram succeeds Ahaziah in Israel in the second year of Jehoram, king of Judah. Thus, Elijah could very well have been alive during the early years of Jehoram's reign in Judah (see J. A. Thompson "1, 2 Chronicles," *The New American Commentary* [Broadman & Holman, 1994], 9:299). J. H. Stek agrees ("Elisha," *ISBE*, II:67): "The best solution is that Elisha accompanied these armies [in the campaign against Moab in 2 Kings 3] on behalf of an aged Elijah; Elijah, then, outlived Jehoshaphat and, when he heard of Jehoram's apostasy and executions [2 Chron. 21:4], sent him a sharp letter of condemnation, lacking the physical strength to face the king in person. If, as is likely, Jehoram committed these atrocities shortly after his father's death in 848 B.C., this letter may be dated as early as 847, and Elijah's translation may have taken place the same year." Keil, pp. 398-399, agrees that Elijah might still be on earth at the beginning of Jehoram's reign in Judah. Of course, this does not explain why the account of Elijah's translation is placed in 2 Kings 2 prior to the death of Jehoshaphat. Therefore, Keil also suggests a possible alternative: "But even if we suppose that Elijah had been taken away from the earth before Jehoshaphat's death, we may...accept this explanation: that the Lord had revealed to him Joram's [Jehoram's] wickedness before his translation, and had commissioned him to announce to Joram in writing the divine punishment that would follow, and to send this writing to him at the proper time. This would entirely harmonize with the mode of action of this great man of God...But if Elijah committed the anointing of both Hazael and Jehu to his servant Elisha, why may he not also have committed to him the delivery of this threatening prophecy which he had drawn up in writing?"

<sup>85</sup> The Philistines and Arabians are the very peoples who earlier had feared Jehoshaphat and brought tribute to him (2 Chron. 17:11).

children. Only the youngest son, Ahaziah, is spared.<sup>86</sup> The gold, silver, and jewels from the temple are also taken. The men and women of Judah are used in trade and the captives sold to the Greeks by means of the Phoenicians and Edomites.

Edom takes great pleasure in Judah's misfortune and gives active support to the invaders. They seize the fleeing fugitives; some they kill and others are given into the hands of the enemy. The Edomites also participate in the division of the plunder. These actions on the part of Edom probably form the background to the prophet Obadiah.<sup>87</sup> He proclaims the word of the Lord concerning Edom's great sin. "As you have done, so shall it be done unto you."<sup>88</sup> Edom itself, the house of Esau, shall be destroyed.

At some point after the invasion by the Philistines and Arabians, Jehoram is afflicted with a gruesome disease, fulfilling the second part of the judgment predicted in Elijah's letter. He suffers from this disease for two years<sup>89</sup> and dies in great pain<sup>90</sup> in 841, to no one's sorrow.<sup>91</sup> Ahaziah (aka Jehoahaz),<sup>92</sup> his only surviving son, becomes king in Judah. Athaliah now occupies the powerful position of Queen Mother. Ahaziah reigns just one year.

### THE DYNASTY OF JEHU

During Ahaziah's one year reign, his uncle, Joram,<sup>93</sup> king of Israel, is defending Ramoth-gilead against an attack by Hazael, king of Syria. Ahaziah goes to Ramoth-gilead to join

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<sup>86</sup> 2 Chron. 21:16-17; 22:1. Somehow Athaliah, one of Jehoram's wives, also manages to escape because she is alive when her son Ahaziah assumes the throne in Judah at the death of her husband Jehoram (2 Kgs. 8:24-26; 2 Chron. 22:1-2). She is also very much alive when, at the death of her son Ahaziah she assumes the throne herself (2 Kgs. 9:27; 11:1; 2 Chron. 22:8-10). J. A. Thompson, "1, 2 Chronicles," *The New American Commentary* (Broadman & Holman, 1994), p. 301, suggest a possible explanation. These attacks [by the Philistines and Arabians] probably were against outlying fortified cities to which Jehoram had dispersed his sons and their mothers. Jehoram's youngest son [Ahaziah], with his mother [Athaliah], as chap. 22 makes clear, remained with the king in Jerusalem. The 'king's palace' [21:17] need not refer to the palace in Jerusalem where the king still resided after the raid and where Ahaziah was to be made king."

<sup>87</sup> Though many conservative scholars assign 586 for the date of Obadiah, another view takes 845 as the date, making Obadiah the earliest of the writing prophets; see Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, revised edition (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), pp. 299-303.

<sup>88</sup> Obad. 15.

<sup>89</sup> There is a problem translating 2 Chron. 21:19. The Hebrew actually has "days," not "years." Keil, "The Books of the Chronicles," *Commentary on the Old Testament*, pp. 401-402, has a long discussion in defense of "days," but most modern translations take the expression to mean "two years" (NIV, NEB, KJV, NASB), that is, Jehoram died two years after the onset of the disease.

<sup>90</sup> The cause of death is not mentioned in 2 Kgs. 8:24 but only in 2 Chron. 21:18-19 in connection with Elijah's letter.

<sup>91</sup> 2 Chron. 21:20 (NASB, NIV).

<sup>92</sup> In 2 Chron. 21:17 Ahaziah is called Jehoahaz. These are just variations of the same name with the compound elements "Ahaz" and "Yah" reversed.

<sup>93</sup> Athaliah, Ahaziah (Ahab's successor in Israel, 853-852), and Joram (Ahaziah's successor in Israel, 852-841) are all children of Ahab and, almost certainly, Jezebel. Thus, Athaliah's son, King Ahaziah of Judah, is nephew to Joram, the current king in Israel.

him. However, during the battle Joram is wounded and taken back to Jezreel to recover. Ahaziah goes to Jezreel to visit him.

Jehu, Joram's military captain, is left at Ramoth-gilead after the last battle. The prophet Elisha now executes the commission that had been given to Elijah at Mt. Horeb concerning Jehu.<sup>94</sup> He directs one of the sons of the prophets to go to Ramoth Gilead and anoint Jehu king over Israel and give him the Lord's commission regarding the house of Ahab. Jehu is to strike down the house of Ahab so that God may avenge the blood of the prophets and servants of the Lord struck down at the hand of Jezebel.

Jehu and a troop of men immediately ride from Ramoth-gilead to Jezreel. Upon seeing them approach, the watchman on the tower informs King Joram. A horseman is sent out to meet them, but he does not return. A second horseman is sent out but neither does he return. Both horsemen have joined Jehu. The watchman recognizes Jehu from the "furious" way in which he is driving his chariot and so informs the king. Thinking that Jehu has come in peace, Joram and Ahaziah ride out and meet Jehu on the portion of the garden of the king's palace that had belonged to Naboth the Jezreelite. However, Joram detects a conspiracy against him and turns around to flee crying "Treachery, Ahaziah!" Jehu draws his bow at full strength and shoots Joram in his chariot and Joram dies. Jehu directs his captain, Bidkar, to throw Joram's body out on the tract of land that had belonged to Naboth the Jezreelite.<sup>95</sup> When Ahaziah, king of Judah, sees this, he flees from Jezreel in his chariot. Jehu pursues him, and Ahaziah is mortally wounded by an arrow. The stricken king continues on to Megiddo where he dies<sup>96</sup> in 841.

Jehu returns to Jezreel, where Jezebel is watching from her upper window. At the command of Jehu, some chamberlains throw her out to the ground. Jehu tramples her underfoot, driving over her with his horses and chariot. Jehu then enters the palace and sits down to eat and drink. He directs some men to go and bury Jezebel, wicked though she was, because she had been the daughter of a king. The men go out but can find no more of her body than the skull, feet, and palms of her hands. The dogs had eaten the rest. Thus Jehu fulfilled Elijah's prophecy of twenty years ago.<sup>97</sup>

Jehu then sends a letter to Samaria and has Ahab's seventy sons killed and their heads sent to him in Jezreel. He has them laid in piles at the gate for all to see. Then he kills all the court officials in Jezreel. After this, he goes personally to Samaria and on the way

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<sup>94</sup> See footnote 53.

<sup>95</sup> According to 2 Kgs. 9:25-26, it seems that Jehu and Bidkar overheard Elijah's prophecy against Ahab ten years earlier (1 Kgs. 21:17-24). In Jehu's paraphrase of Elijah's pronouncement, 2 Kgs. 9:26, Jehu includes the sons of Naboth and therefore has Ahab's son thrown in the same field where Naboth and his sons were murdered. 1 Kgs. 21:13 does not specifically mention Naboth's sons, but if Ahab was to get the vineyard, Naboth's heirs would necessarily have to be killed also. See Keil, "The Books of the Kings," *Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 342.

<sup>96</sup> 2 Kgs. 9:27. But compare 2 Chron. 22:9. "Apparently Ahaziah fled toward Megiddo, with Jehu's men smiting him at Gur (unknown), but he reached Megiddo before dying. II Chron. 22:9 indicates that at some point Ahaziah hid in Samaria, perhaps going there first and later moving northwest to Megiddo. The detail is not clear" (Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 321, n. 56).

<sup>97</sup> 1 Kgs. 21:23.

meets and kills forty-two relatives (probably step-brothers, nephews, and cousins) of Ahaziah. When Jehu arrives in Samaria, he kills all the officials there as well, most likely including the men he ordered to kill Ahab's sons. Finally, he invites all the prophets and priests of Baal to their temple in Samaria, as if to honor them, and then orders eighty of his men into the temple to kill them to the last man. "Thus Jehu eradicated Baal out of Israel."<sup>98</sup> For this Jehu was commended by God.<sup>99</sup>

However, Jehu did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam, the "worship" of Yahweh under the images of the two calves in Dan and Bethel. Thus, Jehu forfeits God's continued approval, and in consequence he experiences many difficulties during his reign.<sup>100</sup> Jehu rules Israel for 28 years until 814 when he dies.

When Athaliah hears that Jehu has killed her son Ahaziah, she usurps the throne in Judah. She knows that all that stands between her and the throne are her grandchildren. She proceeds to massacre all the royal heirs.<sup>101</sup> However, one infant son, Joash, is rescued. Jehosheba, Ahaziah's sister<sup>102</sup> and the baby's nurse, takes him and hides him from Athaliah in a storage chamber of the palace. Jehosheba is married to the high priest Jehoiada. They take the baby to their home, which is located in one of the buildings of the court of the temple. He remains there from 841 to 835 under Jehoiada and Jehosheba's care. Athaliah believes she has killed all the royal heirs.

In 835 Jehoiada the priest gains the allegiance of the royal bodyguard and of the Levites. Together they make the necessary arrangements for presenting Joash as the rightful heir to the throne of David. This takes place on a sabbath during one of the great festivals. Joash is presented standing on a platform in front of the temple, the Law of the Testimony<sup>103</sup> in his hand and a crown on his head. He is anointed king amid great acclamations. Athaliah rushes to the scene with cries of treason and is driven out and killed. Joash (aka Jehoash) becomes king at the age of 7.

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<sup>98</sup> 2 Kgs. 10:28.

<sup>99</sup> 2 Kgs. 10:30. Leon Wood observes that "seldom has history witnessed a more thorough blood purging of a previous royal family and favored religious order than this" (*SIH*, p. 321). How are we to assess this blood bath? Wood continues: "Jehu received God's commendation at the beginning of his rule because of obedience in destroying the house of Omri (II Kings 10:30), but he failed to follow the path he had started. God's approval was given of the blood purge--even though certainly Jehu killed more than divinely intended--for this constituted the punishment forewarned against the wicked family years before, and it dealt a shattering blow to the cult of Baal-Melqart. Accordingly, God promised that four generations of Jehu's family would succeed him on the throne" (p. 322).

<sup>100</sup> 2 Kgs. 10:29, 31-36.

<sup>101</sup> The Hebrew has "royal seed" (2 Kgs. 11:1; 2 Chron. 22:10, that is, the male children of Ahaziah. The throne "rightfully fully belonged to the eldest male of those killed" (Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 347). Wood goes on to observe, "The two women [Jezebel and Athaliah] stand quite alone in biblical history for their forwardness and cruelty."

<sup>102</sup> Jehosheba was most likely a daughter of Jehoram by another wife, not Athaliah. A devoted Baal worshipper like Athaliah would hardly have allowed her own daughter to marry Yahweh's high priest; see Keil, "The Books of the Kings," *Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 356.

<sup>103</sup> Possibly a reference to the rules for kings, Deut. 17:14-20 (Paul R. House, "1, 2 Kings," *The New American Commentary* [Broadman & Holman, 1995], p. 299).

Thus Joash begins his reign over Judah in 835. He does right in the eyes of the Lord all the days in which Jehoiada the priest instructs him. The temple of the Lord is in need of major repairs, for Athaliah and her sons had damaged and plundered it.<sup>104</sup> To meet the expenses of its restoration,<sup>105</sup> Joash orders that all monies coming into the temple be appropriated for this purpose.<sup>106</sup> The responsibility for seeing to the completion of the repairs will be in the hands of the priests.

However, after many years the repairs to the temple have yet to be made. So Joash relieves the priests of the responsibility to collect money for the repairs and of the obligation to make the repairs. Under his new plan, he has a chest set up in which the priests are to place the money. A proclamation to this effect is made throughout all Judah. The people respond joyfully and in addition to the required taxes, many voluntary gifts are brought. Large sums of money are collected, the money is honestly expended, and the temple is thoroughly repaired. Even a surplus remains with which gold and silver vessels are made for use in the temple.

Some time during the reign of Joash, disaster comes upon the land of Judah without warning. A swarm of locusts descends upon the land and every living piece of vegetation is stripped bare. Both man and beast endure great suffering, and the calamity is so severe that the daily sacrifice can no longer be offered due to lack of provisions.

The prophet Joel calls upon the people to repent of their sins. If they return to God with all their heart, the Lord will have compassion according to his great grace. He will bless his people by sending the needed rain and restoring a bountiful harvest. The people take Joel's message to heart. The priests offer penitential and supplicatory prayer and the Lord responds by displaying his great mercy. The locusts are driven away to the sea where they perish and God sends the promised rains.

Jehoiada the high priest dies at the age of 130. During his lifetime he had saved the life and throne of Joash, preserved to the kingdom the royal house of David to which the promises belonged, and had put an end to the idolatry which had been transplanted into Judah by Jehoram's marriage into the royal house of Ahab. For this he was honored by being laid to rest in the city of David among the kings.

After Jehoiada's death, however, the people soon forget the benefits they owed him. Leaders of Judah come to Joash beseeching the king to allow them a greater freedom of worship than had been permitted while Jehoiada lived. This freedom would include

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<sup>104</sup> 2 Chron. 24:7.

<sup>105</sup> Until this time, temple expenses were met by the royal treasury (Paul R. House, "1, 2 Kings," *The New American Commentary* [Broadman & Holman, 1995], p. 302). Now Joash effectively transfers the obligation to the private sector.

<sup>106</sup> The money coming into the temple to be used for the repairs would be from three sources (2 Kgs. 12:4): (1) census redemption money (Exod. 30:12-16); (2) "valuation" money: vow offerings (Lev. 27:1-8) and the redemption money for first-born males (Num. 18:15-16); and (3) free will offerings. See Keil, "The Books of the Kings," *Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 366-367. The money to be used for temple repairs did not include the money from guilt offerings and sin offerings (v. 16).

the worship of Ashtoreth and numerous idols. Soon Asherim are set up in Jerusalem and other cities of Judah. Thus Judah forsakes the Lord God of her fathers and again serves wooden images and idols.

Prophets are sent to Judah but their warnings against idolatry are ignored. The Spirit of God comes upon Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada the high priest, and he confronts Joash and the people with a word from the Lord: "Why do you transgress the commandments of the Lord so that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the Lord, He has also forsaken you."<sup>107</sup> Joash chooses to forget the kindness that Zechariah's father had done for him and commands that he be killed in the temple court. Zechariah is stoned, but his dying words, "May the Lord see and avenge", soon come to pass.

In the spring of the year, Hazael, king of Syria, comes against Judah and Jerusalem and kills many leaders of the people. Only by giving Hazael a huge tribute does Joash succeed in persuading him to spare Jerusalem from complete destruction.<sup>108</sup> With a small army they defeat the great army of Judah, leaving Joash severely wounded. Joash's own servants conspire against him because of his murder of Zechariah and kill him. Joash dies in 796 and his son Amaziah reigns in his stead.

After the death of Jehu in 814, Jehoahaz his son becomes king in Israel. He does not restore Baal worship but does evil by continuing in the sin of Jeroboam. The Lord, therefore, delivers Israel into the hands of Hazael, king of Syria, and his son Ben-hadad III who follows him on the throne. However, Jehoahaz pleads with the Lord, and He sends Israel a "deliverer."<sup>109</sup> This "deliverer" was probably the Assyrian king, Adad-nirari III (810-783), who came to the throne during Jehoahaz's reign.<sup>110</sup> He "delivered" Israel in the sense that he attacked and subdued Damascus around 803 or 802, thus removing the Syrian oppression. Although he left Ben-hadad III on the throne in Damascus, Syria is now so weakened that Israel begins a long period of recovery and grows in strength. However, Israel is forced to pay tribute to Adad-nirari, along with Tyre, Sidon, Edom, and Philistia.<sup>111</sup>

In 798 Jehoahaz dies and his son Jehoash (aka Joash) begins his reign as king of Israel. Under him, there is a resurgence of prosperity in Israel.

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<sup>107</sup> 2 Chron. 24:20.

<sup>108</sup> 2 Kgs. 12:17-18.

<sup>109</sup> 2 Kgs. 13:4-5.

<sup>110</sup> Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 324; Harrison, "Ben-hadad," *ISBE*, I:459; S. J. Schultz, "Jehoahaz," *ISBE*, II:975. Other possibilities have also been suggested. Keil, "The Books of the Kings," *Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 375, thinks the deliverer consists of the two succeeding kings, Jehoash and Jeroboam II because under them Israel reaches its height of power. Along with a number of other scholars, Paul R. House, "1, 2 Kings," *The New American Commentary* (Broadman & Holman, 1995), p. 306, thinks Elisha fills the bill (cf. 2 Kgs. 13:14).

<sup>111</sup> The tribute might have started with Jehoahaz, but it certainly occurred during the reign of his son, Jehoash. A royal Assyrian stele discovered at Tell ar Rimah, Iraq, in 1967 lists "Jehoash of Samaria" among the kings who paid tribute to Adad-nirari.

Probably early in his reign, the young king goes to visit Elisha, who is now very old and near death. Bending over Elisha, Jehoash mournfully cries, "My father, my father! The chariots of Israel and horsemen thereof."<sup>112</sup> Elisha had repeatedly saved the armies of Israel from ambushes by the Syrians and had given assurance of the relief of the capital Samaria when it was at its worst extremity.<sup>113</sup> To Jehoash, Elisha's presence was indeed in place of chariots and horses. On account of this faith manifested in the recognition of Elisha's worth, the Lord gives Jehoash another gracious assurance through Elisha by means of a symbolical action.

Elisha directs Jehoash to shoot an arrow out the window, "Yahweh's arrow of victory...over Syria."<sup>114</sup> Next, Jehoash is to appropriate this promise of victory to himself through another act. He is told to take the remaining arrows and strike the ground with them. However, Jehoash strikes the ground only three times. Elisha becomes angry because Jehoash did not strike the ground five or six times. This would have demonstrated on Jehoash's part a proper zeal for obtaining the divine promise. This weakness of the king's faith would result in only three victories over Syria rather than its total defeat.

Nevertheless, Israel continues to grow in power during the reign of Jehoash. He is able to recover a number of cities taken from Israel by Hazael and Ben-hadad III during the reigns of Jehoahaz and Jehu. Three times he defeats Ben-hadad.<sup>115</sup>

During the reign of Jehoash in Israel, Amaziah becomes king over Judah in 796. He executes the servants who were responsible for the murder of his father Joash. In 793 Amaziah makes preparations to go to war against the Edomites. The control of Edom was essential to Judah's commercial prosperity as Edom could cut off Judah from her southern port Elath.

Amaziah hires the help of 100,000 men from King Jehoash of Israel for 100 talents of silver. But a man of God warns Amaziah that God is not with Israel, and that he should go to battle with God's help alone. So Amaziah dismisses the Israelite troops. However, they become enraged since now they will not have any part of the booty taken in the war.

Amaziah and his army take the field against the Edomites. In the Valley of Salt the Edomites are routed and 10,000 men are killed. The army moves on to the capital city of Sela where they take 10,000 prisoners. These prisoners are taken to the top of a rock, and there they are thrown off to their death. Meanwhile, the enraged Israelite

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<sup>112</sup> 2 Kgs. 13:14. This "affectionate exclamation...casts a pleasing light upon his character...Josephus gives Jehoash a high character for godliness; but like each of his predecessors, he followed in the footsteps of Jeroboam..." (W. S. Caldecott and D. F. Payne, "Joash," *ISBE*, II:1061-1062).

<sup>113</sup> 2 Kgs. 6:24-7:20.

<sup>114</sup> 2 Kgs. 13:17.

<sup>115</sup> 2 Kgs. 13:25.

soldiers, before returning home,<sup>116</sup> attack the northern frontier cities of Judah as far as Beth-horon killing 3000 and plundering as they go.

Returning home from battle, Amaziah brings with him the gods of the Edomites. He sets them up in Jerusalem and worships them. The anger of the Lord is aroused and a prophet is sent to Amaziah. He points out the utter foolishness of Amaziah worshipping gods who could not even save their own people from Amaziah's hand. However, the king is contemptuous of this warning and asks the prophet, "Have we made you the king's counselor?" The prophet perceives that further discussion is futile and leaves with the words, "I know that God has determined to destroy you because you have done this and have not heeded my warning."<sup>117</sup>

Amaziah is flushed with success over his defeat of the Edomites, and the plundering of Judah by the Israelite mercenaries provides him with the excuse to go to war against Jehoash, king of Israel. Amaziah challenges Jehoash to battle. Jehoash is in no mood to fight and recognizes that pride has lifted up Amaziah. He warns him to stay home.<sup>118</sup> Amaziah does not heed this advice,<sup>119</sup> so Jehoash, king of Israel, faces Amaziah and the army of Judah at Beth-shemesh in Judah. Before leaving Samaria, Jehoash sets his son Jeroboam II on the throne as coregent. Jehoash engages Amaziah in battle and Judah is utterly routed. Amaziah, king of Judah, is captured. Jehoash brings Amaziah to Jerusalem and there the army of Israel breaks down a portion of the wall. The army of Israel also plunders the temple of its gold and silver articles as well as the treasuries of the king's house.

With the breaching of Jerusalem's walls, Jehoash subjugates Judah. Nevertheless, Jehoash is content with plunder and hostages, so he returns to Samaria, probably

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<sup>116</sup> See 2 Chron. 25:6-13. According to Keil, "The Books of the Chronicles," *Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 423-424, the most likely scenario is that the hired Israelite troops had already left Samaria and gathered at the frontier of Judah. It is here that Amaziah dismisses them. On the way back to Israel, they raid the northern cities of Judah.

<sup>117</sup> 2 Chron. 25:16.

<sup>118</sup> The brilliant response of Jehoash is a literary device known as a *fable*. "The thorn bush which was in Lebanon sent to the cedar which was in Lebanon, saying, 'Give your daughter to my son in marriage.' But there passed by a wild beast that was in Lebanon, and trampled the thorn bush" (2 Kgs. 14:9). Note how a fable differs from a similar literary device called a *parable*.

<sup>119</sup> Amaziah's pride was "of God" in the sense that God intended to punish Amaziah for his idolatry with the gods of Edom; 2 Chron. 25:20.

taking Amaziah with him.<sup>120</sup> Uzziah (aka Azariah), Amaziah's son, is placed on Judah's throne as coregent<sup>121</sup> in anticipation of Amaziah's release.<sup>122</sup> He is 16 years old.

In 792 when Uzziah becomes coregent, Judah is in a very weakened state. Uzziah does nothing to precipitate further interference from Jehoash, king of Israel. In 782 Jehoash dies and his son Jeroboam II assumes full control in Samaria. He maintains a policy of friendship with Judah and probably allows Amaziah to return to Jerusalem to finish his reign.<sup>123</sup>

Amaziah's apostasy, which began with the introduction of the gods of Edom into Jerusalem, gives occasion for discontent among the people. After reigning in Jerusalem for 15 years, a conspiracy arises against him. Amaziah learns of it and flees to Lachish, but he is pursued there and killed. His body is brought back to Jerusalem where he is buried in the royal tomb. His son Uzziah now assumes sole reign in Judah. The year is 767.

Jeroboam II assumed sole reign over Israel in 782 and he reigns until 753. Israel reaches the zenith of its power under him. According to the word of the Lord spoken through the prophet Jonah, Jeroboam restores all the original territory of Israel from the entrance of Hamath to the Sea of the Arabah. He also restores to Judah the port city of Elath taken by Damascus.

However, Jeroboam's military victories are accompanied by spiritual decay and apostasy in Israel. The people are warned by the prophet Amos, and when he prophesies the end of Jeroboam's dynasty, he is accused of plotting against Jeroboam and asked to leave the country. Jeroboam's reign continues until 753, when his son Zechariah takes the throne.

In the year 767 Uzziah becomes the sole ruler in Judah. He does what is right in the eyes of the Lord, and as long as he follows the Lord, God causes him to prosper. Uzziah wages war against the Philistines and is successful. He defeats the Arabians and the Meunites. The Ammonites bring tribute to Uzziah and his fame spreads as far

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<sup>120</sup> This is not explicitly stated, but Amaziah was captured by Jehoash, and 2 Kgs. 14:13-14 seems to imply that Amaziah was among the "hostages" taken to Samaria.

<sup>121</sup> According to Thiele's chronology (*MNHK*, p. 119), 792 is the year of the battle between Jehoash and Amaziah. The key point in this chronology is that Amaziah is indeed taken to Samaria as prisoner. Thus, Judah puts his son on the empty throne in 792 as coregent. 2 Kgs. 14:21, like 15:1-2, can be taken simply as a summary statement, not necessarily requiring that Uzziah is placed on the throne at the death of Amaziah. Rather, the statement in v. 21 that "the people of Judah" place Uzziah on the throne makes more sense if Amaziah is taken to Samaria as a prisoner leaving an empty throne in Jerusalem. Continuing the argument, if Amaziah also returns to Jerusalem at the death of Jehoash in 782 (see footnote 122), then from 782 until 767 Amaziah finishes his reign in Jerusalem. This scheme gives Amaziah's total reign as 796-767, 29 years, and Uzziah's total reign (including his co-regency) as 792-740, 52 years, completely harmonizing 2 Kgs. 14:2 (for Amaziah) and 15:1-2 (for Uzziah).

<sup>122</sup> 2 Kgs. 14:17, in stating that Amaziah lived fifteen years after Jehoash died, seems to imply that at the death of Jehoash, Amaziah was released and allowed to finish his reign in Judah. Clearly in v. 19 he is back in Jerusalem when conspirators seek to assassinate him. Amaziah flees to Lachish, but they follow him and kill him there.

<sup>123</sup> See footnote 122.

as the entrance of Egypt. Uzziah not only dominates Edom but advances his control as far south as Elath on the Gulf of Aqabah, opening up extensive commercial opportunities.<sup>124</sup> He builds towers in Jerusalem as well as in the desert. He digs many wells. Uzziah has much livestock and many farms and vineyards, for he loves the soil.

But when he becomes strong, pride lifts him up. Uzziah transgresses against the Lord by entering the temple to burn incense. Azariah the high priest along with 80 other valiant priests withstand Uzziah, pointing out that it is unlawful for him to burn incense to the Lord. They order Uzziah to get out of the sanctuary. Uzziah becomes furious, and while he is standing with the censer in his hand, God strikes him with leprosy. Azariah and the priests hurriedly thrust him out of the sanctuary. Indeed, Uzziah himself is now anxious to leave. Until the day of his death, Uzziah remains a leper and dwells in an isolated house. His son Jotham becomes regent for the last 10 years of Uzziah's reign, from 750 to 740, most likely due to Uzziah's leprosy.<sup>125</sup>

Zechariah, the son of Jeroboam II, begins to reign in 753. He reigns over Israel for only six months. Shallum, the son of Jabesh, conspires against Zechariah and strikes him down in front of the people, probably in 752. With Zechariah's death the prophecy of Hosea is fulfilled, not only in the extermination of Jehu's line after four generations, but also in the end of the monarchy in Israel.<sup>126</sup> The successors to Zechariah are not so much kings as they are assassins, robbers, and tyrants. This era begins Israel's downward path to final destruction by the Assyrians.

#### *THE DECLINE AND FALL OF ISRAEL: THE ASSYRIAN CAPTIVITY*

Shallum's reign in 752 lasts 1 month. He is assassinated by Menahem, the commander of the army, who comes up to Samaria from Tirzah.<sup>127</sup>

Although Menahem follows Shallum as ruler of Israel, not all of Israel readily accepts his rule. First, at the assassination of Zechariah by Shallum, apparently Pekah also claimed the throne and in 752 began ruling over most of Israel's East Bank territory from Gilead.<sup>128</sup> He was probably a military officer in command of some Israelite forces

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<sup>124</sup> This is also the time of unparalleled success in the north under Jeroboam II. Between the two kings, the total land area controlled by Israel and Judah was approximately the same as under David and Solomon.

<sup>125</sup> Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 352.

<sup>126</sup> Hos. 1:3-4.

<sup>127</sup> 2 Kgs. 15:8-16. The implication is that Menahem probably held power in Tirzah as an appointee of Jeroboam II.

<sup>128</sup> This conclusion is based on Thiele's chronology; see Thiele, *MNHK*, pp. 63, 120, 129-131. 2 Kgs. 15:27 states that Pekah became king in the 52nd year of Uzziah. Beginning with Uzziah's coregency in 792, that makes 740 his 52nd year. But the verse also states that Pekah reigned 20 years. Twenty years from 740 is beyond the fall of Samaria in 722. The 20 years must begin with 752 when Menahem assassinates Shallum. Then 20 years takes us precisely to 732, when Hoshea kills Pekah and is placed on the throne in Samaria by Tiglath-pileser. Thiele also sees a suggestion of two northern kingdoms in Hos. 5:5.

stationed at Gilead. Second, there are some holdouts in the city of Tiphseh. Tiphseh is a northeastern border city located on the Euphrates. It had come back under Israel's control when the ancient boundaries of the nation were restored under Jeroboam II. However, it apparently does not accept Menahem's rule ("open its gates to him"), so Menahem ruthlessly punishes the inhabitants and brutally kills all the pregnant women.

<sup>129</sup>

In the year 745, Tiglath-pileser III comes to power as king of Assyria. He was, perhaps, Assyria's strongest king, in marked contrast to his three predecessors, and restores Assyria's empire status. In this his first year, he turns his attention to Babylon which has for years been in a weakened condition. Tiglath-pileser enters the Babylonian territory and builds a palace for himself. He also brings in people from the lands that he has conquered and settles them in Babylon.<sup>130</sup> In his second year, Tiglath-pileser directs his attention to the northeast, and his conquests are carried out with great cruelty: "The gorges and precipices of the mountains I filled with their bodies."<sup>131</sup> Once having made himself the undisputed master of the "lands of the two rivers", he turns his attention toward the northwest, where lay Syria and Israel.

The years from 743 to 738 mark the first campaign of Tiglath-pileser westward. He puts forth a major effort to bring the entire region of the northwest and the Mediterranean coastlands under his control. The coastal nations unite under the leadership of Judah's king Uzziah, forming a coalition to stop the Assyrian advance.<sup>132</sup> Tiglath-pileser fights the coalition at Arpad,<sup>133</sup> but the result is indecisive. Although Tiglath-pileser claims a victory, Uzziah is not forced to pay any tribute.<sup>134</sup> However, Menahem does pay a heavy tribute of one thousand talents of silver that he exacts from the wealthy.<sup>135</sup> Satisfied for

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<sup>129</sup> 2 Kgs. 15:16; K. E. Corley, "Tappuah," *ISBE*, IV:727.

<sup>130</sup> This marks the beginning of a new strategy. "Former [Assyrian] kings had been satisfied merely with nominal control and a reception of tribute, but this had resulted in constant revolt. Tiglath-pileser incorporated conquered land as Assyrian provinces and deported native leaders who might instigate revolution. The policy proved effective and was copied by successors" (Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 328).

<sup>131</sup> Cannot find this anywhere.

<sup>132</sup> After the death of Jeroboam II, Israel's power and influence declines rapidly. Syria is still weak from its defeat by Adad-nirari some fifty years earlier. So Uzziah had become the strongest ruler along the Mediterranean coast. Known for his success in the south against Edom and the control he exerted all the way to Elath on the Gulf of Aqabah, Uzziah becomes the acknowledged leader of a coalition to stand against Assyria. See Leon Wood, *SIH*, pp. 352-353.

<sup>133</sup> See James B. Pritchard, *ANET*, p. 282, and the assessment of this text by S. J. Schultz, "Menahem," *ISBE*, IV:961. Uzziah was no longer young in 743. It would be the 48th year of his rule, he would be 64 years old, and 8 years a leper (Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 353).

<sup>134</sup> At least Tiglath-pileser's record includes no notice of any tribute from Uzziah, and the biblical record mentions none. The Assyrian records, however, do record a tribute from Menahem.

<sup>135</sup> 2 Kgs. 15:19-20. However, it is difficult to determine exactly when the battle between the coalition and Tiglath-pileser was fought and when Menahem paid his tribute. It would be sometime between 743 and 738, the years for the great Mediterranean campaign of Tiglath-pileser. Three possibilities have been advanced by scholars for the payment of the tribute, 743, 740, and 738. If we take Menahem's death to be in 742, the date would necessarily be 743 or 742. However, there is some disagreement about the years Menahem reigned. Contrary to the dates in this paper, 752-742, W. H. Shea, "Menahem," *ISBE*, III:318, argues for 747-737 and a tribute date of 740. The dates in this paper, 752-742, follow Thiele, *MNHK*, pp. 124-129, Wood, *SIH*, p. 328, and W. S. LaSor, "Tiglath-peleser," *ISBE*, IV:850. Whatever view is taken would set a lower limit for the time of the battle itself. Thiele gives a detailed analysis of the

the moment, Tiglath-pileser turns back. After this encounter, apparently Israel temporarily provides a buffer zone for Judah, allowing Uzziah to continue his anti-Assyrian policy.<sup>136</sup> The coastal nations now experience a brief respite from overt Assyrian aggression.

The same year that Uzziah goes north to lead the coalition against Tiglath-pileser, namely 743, Jotham, his son and coregent, very likely elevates his own son, Ahaz, as a coregent under him.<sup>137</sup> Left alone in Jerusalem, Jotham may have doubted that Uzziah would return from the confrontation with Assyria and sought to strengthen Judah by raising his son to coregent under him.<sup>138</sup> This results in a four-year overlap of coregencies from 743 to 740, the year that Uzziah dies.

Menahem's reign in the Northern Kingdom ends with his death in 742. His son, Pekahiah, accedes to the throne in Samaria, but rules for only two years. Although at the ascension of Menahem in 752 Pekah had been a rival for the legitimate throne of Israel, he now is a military officer under Pekahiah.<sup>139</sup> Then in 740, as a trusted officer,

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Assyrian records and concludes that a date of 743 for this battle is consistent with those records (pp. 141-159).

<sup>136</sup> See S. J. Schultz, "Uzziah," *ISBE*, IV:961.

<sup>137</sup> Working out the dates for Ahaz and Hezekiah represent one of the standard problems in OT chronology. The suggestion that Jotham made Ahaz a coregent in 743, while he, Jotham, was himself a coregent under Uzziah, is based on the work of H. G. Stigers, "The Interphased Chronology of Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, and Hoshea," *Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society* 8 (Spring, 1966), pp. 86-88, cited positively by Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 354. Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), p. 291, takes the same view. Evidence for the suggestion is based on the following correlation: 2 Kgs. 15:30 and 17:1 establish that (1) the last year of Pekah, (2) the first year of Hoshea, (3) the twelfth year of Ahaz, and (4) the twentieth year of Jotham are all one and the same year. This must be 732, the terminus of Tiglath-pileser's western campaign of 734-732. If 732 is the twelfth year of Ahaz, then his first year must be 744 or 743. Contrary to the scheme suggested here, Thiele believes that Ahaz becomes coregent in 735. According to Thiele, *MNHK*, p. 133, Ahaz is first raised to the throne in a pro-Assyrian coup in 735 or 734, although Jotham lives another four years until 732 or 731. On either view, however, Ahaz becomes supreme ruler in 735 or 734 as a result of some sort of pro-Assyrian coup. Also on either view, Jotham's 16-year reign of 2 Kgs. 15:32-33 would extend from 750, when Uzziah makes Jotham his coregent, until the time of the coup 735/734. The "twentieth year of Jotham" in 2 Kgs. 15:30 indicates simply that he has lived the additional four years, not necessarily that he is giving the orders. However, the two views differ on the reign of Ahaz. On Stiger's view, Ahaz reigned a total of 28 years, from 743 to 715, when he dies; the 16-year reign of 2 Kgs. 16:1-2 would be from 735 (the 17th year of Pekah) to 719, the years from the coup until his son, Hezekiah, is raised as coregent (see Appendix 4). On Thiele's view, Ahaz reigned a total of 20 years from 735 to 715. However, Thiele has to say that the 16-year reign of 2 Kgs. 16:2 would be from 732/731, when Jotham dies, to 715, when Ahaz dies (*MNHK*, p. 133), while the "became king" in 16:1 must refer to 735, the 17th year of Pekah (*MNHK*, p. 136). Therefore, Thiele's view is less satisfactory.

<sup>138</sup> Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 354. In n. 49, Wood also suggests a second possible reason. Ahaz may already have indicated his pro-Assyrian tendencies, clearly demonstrated later during his own reign, and perhaps a pro-Assyrian party in Jerusalem was influential in forcing this elevation.

<sup>139</sup> It is difficult to determine the role Pekah played during the confrontation between the coalition and Tiglath-pileser in 743 or 742. Pekah is not listed in the Assyrian records as one of the kings who paid tribute to Tiglath-pileser but Menahem is. So in the face of the Assyrian threat, it is possible that although Pekah was a rival of Menahem for the throne of Israel, he placed himself and his military forces under the command of Menahem. This is the scenario suggested by Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 330. He follows Thiele in suggesting that Pekah began a rival reign in Gilead in 752 when Menahem gained the throne in Samaria (see footnote 128 in this paper), but he also considers Pekah as one of Pekahiah's "military leaders" at

Pekah, with 50 men from Gilead, conspires against him and kills him. Pekah begins his rule over all of Israel and continues until the year 732.

Also in 740, Jotham in Judah, who had reigned as coregent with his father Uzziah from 750-740, becomes sole king when Uzziah dies in 740. He does right in the eyes of the Lord, and Judah enjoys a measure of prosperity. At the death of Uzziah, the Ammonites rebel. In his only military engagement, Jotham defeats them and forces them to pay tribute for the next three years.

Around 736,<sup>140</sup> Tiglath-pileser returns to continue his attempt to subdue all the coastal nations. Jotham is ruling in Judah. However, a faction of Judah thinks that further resistance to Assyria is useless, and thus Jotham finds it difficult to maintain his father's anti-Assyrian policy. In a pro-Assyrian coup, Ahaz assumes supreme rule in 735 or 734. Jotham lives for another four years, but his power has essentially ended.

Religiously, Ahaz also reverses the policies of Uzziah and Jotham. He erects images to Baal, practices infant sacrifice in the Valley of Hinnom, and worships at the high places.<sup>141</sup>

So the Lord does not bless Ahaz, and problems plague his reign. His pro-Assyrian stand brings bitter opposition against him from the neighboring states that are valiantly battling to keep Assyria out. Thus attacks are brought against Ahaz from several directions.<sup>142</sup>

The first of these attacks likely comes in 734 from the Philistines. They begin inflicting severe destruction and seize several cities in the outlying districts of Judah.

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the time when Pekahiah accedes to the throne. Once Tiglath-pileser had withdrawn from Israel, Pekah apparently continued in the role of an officer under the throne in Samaria when Pekahiah becomes king. 2 Kgs. 15:25 explicitly calls Pekah an officer under Pekahiah. Gleason L. Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982), p. 209, suggests a slight modification to this scenario. "[At the time of Menahem's death, Pekah] must have entered into a treaty of reconciliation with Menahem's son and successor, Pekahiah, according to the terms of which Pekah received a command in the army headquarters in Samaria. He then conspired with fifty of his trusted supporters from Gilead and murdered Pekahiah in his palace."

<sup>140</sup> This is the date suggested by Thiele, *Chronology*, p. 49; see also his table in *MNHC*, p. 151.

<sup>141</sup> 2 Chron. 28:1-4.

<sup>142</sup> Even the experts admit that "the sequence of events is not entirely clear" in connection with Tiglath-pileser's campaigns against the coastal nations (W. S. LaSor, "Tiglath-pileser," *ISBE*, IV:850). It is common to see two campaigns into the area: 743-738 and then 734-732 (W. H. Shea, "Menahem," *ISBE*, IV:850; Thiele, *Chronology*, p. 49; and Leon Wood, *SIH*, pp. 328 and 332. What is more difficult is piecing together the sequence of attacks against Ahaz by the coalition of coastal nations and those of Tiglath-pileser against the coalition in his campaign of 743-732. The sequence given in this paper is based on Wood, pp. 332, 355-357, and W. S. Coldecott and S. J. Schultz, "Ahaz," *ISBE*, I:76-78.

Then Rezin<sup>143</sup> of Syria and Pekah of Israel form an alliance and essentially declare war on Ahaz, apparently in an effort to force Judah into the coalition against Assyria. Their goal is to seize control of Judah, overthrow Ahaz, and install a vassal king who will join the coalition. The man they have in mind is Tabeal from the other side of the Jordan near the Syrian border.<sup>144</sup>

Upon hearing of this alliance against him, Ahaz prepares for war. He goes out to the conduit of the upper pool to ascertain the situation of the water supply. This was the main supply of water to the city and could possibly be cut off during a siege. The prophet Isaiah is directed by the Lord to meet him there.<sup>145</sup> He takes his son Shear-jashub along with him. The name Shear-jashub means "a remnant will return". They meet Ahaz. Isaiah commands Ahaz not to be afraid of the Syrian/Israelite alliance but to trust in God. Syria and Israel are not a threat, since their strength is all but gone. Their plan to take Judah and overthrow Ahaz will fail.

Isaiah directs Ahaz to ask the Lord for a sign as confirmation of his words. This would also be a manifestation of Ahaz' faith that he believed the word of the Lord proclaimed to him by Isaiah. Ahaz refuses under the pretense of not testing the Lord. He knows that should he ask for this sign, it most certainly will be given, and he would then be compelled to trust in the Lord. But Ahaz has already determined to place his trust in Assyria, for he has rejected the Lord. So the Lord Himself gives Ahaz a sign: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel...before the Child shall know to refuse evil and choose the good, the land that you dread will be forsaken by both her kings. The LORD will bring the king of Assyria upon you and your people and your father's house."<sup>146</sup>

So Ahaz does not put his trust in the Lord but sends a letter with a large tribute to Tiglath-pileser, appealing to him for help. To raise this tribute, Ahaz plunders his own palace as well as the temple. Tiglath-pileser eventually responds, beginning his second campaign of 734-732 against the coastal nations. He first attacks the Philistines.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> After subduing Damascus in 803, Adad-nirari III had left Ben-hadad on the throne. However, Adad-nirari is followed by three weak kings, and Assyria has little influence in Palestine from about 783-746. So at some later point, ca. 775 or 770, Ben-hadad III leads a powerful military coalition against king Zakir of Hammath. Zakir, however, defeats him. This temporarily, at least, brings an end to an independent kingdom in Damascus. Jeroboam II (782-753) incorporates Damascus into Israel (2 Kgs. 14:23-27). According to D.K. Stuart, "Rezin," *ISBE*, IV:180, Rezin becomes king in Damascus ca. 740. However, Rezin is listed along with Menahem as paying tribute in the annals of Tiglath-pileser; see James B. Pritchard, *ANET*, p. 283. This might put him on the throne in 743 or earlier, but the dates are difficult to determine.

<sup>144</sup> Cf. Isa. 7:6.

<sup>145</sup> Isa. 7:1-7.

<sup>146</sup> Isa. 7:14-17.

<sup>147</sup> It is not certain whether Ahaz sends two appeals to Tiglath-pileser or just one. If he sends two, the first would be for help against the Philistines, and the Philistines are the first to be neutralized by Tiglath-pileser. The second appeal would be at the time he hears of the Syro-Israelite alliance against him. If he sends only one appeal, it would be when he hears of the alliance. Wood, *SIH*, p. 357, argues for a single appeal, while Coldecott and Schultz, "Ahaz," *ISBE*, I:77, seem to prefer two.

However, before Tiglath-pileser can do anything about Syria and Israel, the two allied kings, Rezin and Pekah, attack Judah in 734, and Ahaz sustains two defeats. The one from Pekah is north of Jerusalem and the other from Rezin south of Jerusalem in Edom.

Pekah's attack is a fierce battle carried out with extreme cruelty. Israel kills 120,000 men of Judah and leads away 200,000 prisoners, including women and children, to Samaria. They also take a great amount of spoil.

Almost simultaneously, the Edomites revolt against Judah, and Rezin captures Elath, the important seaport town in Edom controlled by Judah since the time of Amaziah and Uzziah. Rezin drives out the Judaeans and establishes a Syrian<sup>148</sup> colony there. As soon as the Edomites are freed from the control of Judah, they also begin to plunder Judah, carrying away prisoners.

Soon Pekah and Rezin besiege the city of Jerusalem itself. However, Tiglath-pileser, probably in 733, marches into Israel and destroys cities all across Galilee, taking many captives away to Assyria.<sup>149</sup> Rezin and Pekah must return to their own countries.

In 732, Tiglath-pileser moves against Damascus, capturing the city and executing Rezin. Many inhabitants are led away to Kir as the prophet Amos had prophesied.<sup>150</sup> With Damascus conquered, the kingdom of Syria has ceased to exist.

In 732, in the middle of this great conflagration, Hoshea, the son of Elah, leads a conspiracy against Pekah and kills him, relieving Tiglath-pileser of that job.<sup>151</sup> Hoshea assumes the throne in Samaria and pledges allegiance to Assyria, though Tiglath-pileser promptly puts him under heavy tribute. But the kingdom of Israel survives. Its territory, however, is much reduced. Tiglath-pileser takes most of the north and Transjordan, incorporating these areas as Assyrian provinces. Hoshea is left only with the hill country west of the Jordan.

Thus, the appeal of Ahaz to Tiglath-pileser brings relief to Judah from Syria and Israel. However, when Isaiah had met with Ahaz, he also told him that the king of Assyria would be a heavy burden indeed, "shaving" Judah from head to toe.<sup>152</sup> When Ahaz goes to Damascus to meet Tiglath-pileser at the close of his devastating campaign, he is forced to pay a second tribute in addition to the initial gift.<sup>153</sup> Ahaz, rather than becoming a free and independent prince as he had hoped, is made a tributary vassal of Assyria. Thus, Tiglath-pileser was ultimately no real help to Ahaz, for Tiglath-pileser's intention had always been to extend his own imperial dominion over the entire region.

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<sup>148</sup> The MT in 2 Kgs. 16:6 has the "Edomites" repopulating Elath (followed by the NIV); other ancient texts read "Syrians" (followed by the NASB).

<sup>149</sup> 2 Kgs. 15:29.

<sup>150</sup> Amos 1:5.

<sup>151</sup> In his annals, Tiglath-pileser records this assassination and claims to put Hoshea on the throne in Samaria. Therefore, Hoshea's conspiracy was probably in concert with the Assyrian king.

<sup>152</sup> Isa. 7:17-20.

<sup>153</sup> 2 Chron. 28:20-21.

In Israel, Hoshea does nothing to reverse the moral and spiritual corruption in Israel, although he is less offensive than his predecessors.<sup>154</sup>

Tiglath-pileser dies in 727, and Shalmaneser V (727-722) becomes king of Assyria. Hoshea foolishly thinks that this is the opportune time to revolt against Assyria. He secretly sends ambassadors to make a pact with Egypt. Now thinking that Egypt is his ally, he withholds his annual tribute to Assyria. However, Egypt at this time is both weak and divided, unable to provide the assistance for which Hoshea hoped.<sup>155</sup>

When no tribute is received, Shalmaneser marches against Israel in 724. When no help comes from Egypt, Hoshea goes out to meet him, bringing his long overdue tribute. However, Shalmaneser suspects a conspiracy, and immediately takes Hoshea captive.<sup>156</sup> Shalmaneser then places Samaria under siege. He probably expects that it will fall quickly, since its king has already been imprisoned.<sup>157</sup> However, the city holds out for three years.<sup>158</sup> But the inevitable happens and in 722 Samaria falls. It is utterly destroyed, thus fulfilling the word of the Lord proclaimed by the prophet Micah.<sup>159</sup> Israel is carried away captive to Assyria. This is the end of Israel, the northern kingdom. All this came upon Israel because they had forsaken their God and walked in the ways of the nations whom the Lord had cast out before them.<sup>160</sup>

The fall of Samaria takes place in the 9th year of Hoshea's reign, 722, while Shalmaneser is still ruling in Assyria. Sargon II comes to the Assyrian throne 9 months later. He was a general under Shalmaneser when Samaria was captured.<sup>161</sup>

After Samaria's fall, an Assyrian governor is placed over the land, now incorporating Israel west of the Jordan as a province. Many Israelites are carried off captive to Assyria.<sup>162</sup> In place of these, a foreign upper class of people are imported.<sup>163</sup> These

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<sup>154</sup> 2 Kgs. 17:2.

<sup>155</sup> Who was this mysterious, "So, king of Egypt" (2 Kgs. 17:4)? "By about 725 BC, Egypt had two lines of senior pharaohs reigning in the Delta--at this time, Osorkon IV in Tanis (Zoan) and Iuput II in Leontopolis further south. Neither king actually ruled effectively over anything more than his own local province. 'So' is most likely to have been an abbreviation for Osorkon IV of Tanis (Zoan), the recognized object of Hebrew envoys to Egypt in the eighth and seventh centuries BC (cf. Isaiah 19:11,13; 30:2,4)" (K. A. Kitchen, *The Bible in Its World: The Bible and Archeology Today* [InterVarsity Press, 1977], p. 113.

<sup>156</sup> 2 Kgs. 17:4.

<sup>157</sup> Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 333.

<sup>158</sup> 1 Kgs. 17:5. The siege began in 724 and ended in 722. Partial years are counted here. Thus, the siege lasted a minimum of 14 months. See Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 333, n. 93.

<sup>159</sup> Micah 6:13-16.

<sup>160</sup> 2 Kgs. 17:7-18.

<sup>161</sup> There is some uncertainty as to who was actually on the Assyrian throne at the time Samaria falls. The biblical account seems to favor Shalmaneser. Sargon II (722-705) claims to have been the ruler at the fall of Samaria (James B. Pritchard, *ANET*, p. 284), but it is more likely that Shalmaneser still reigned (Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 333, n. 94). For the technical arguments, see W. S. LaSor, "Shalmaneser," *ISBE*, IV:447.

<sup>162</sup> 2 Kgs. 17:6. Sargon lists 27,290 (James B. Pritchard, *ANET*, p. 284), which must have taken place just after the fall of Samaria. Many more had been taken by Tiglath-pileser and probably Shalmaneser prior to the fall.

<sup>163</sup> 2 Kgs. 17:24.

people came from Babylon, Cuthah,<sup>164</sup> Avva,<sup>165</sup> Hamath, and Sepharvaim,<sup>166</sup> areas widely scattered throughout the Assyrian Empire. Additional importations of foreigners also occurred under Esarhaddon (681-669) and Ashurbanipal (669-627).<sup>167</sup>

Since only the leading classes were exiled,<sup>168</sup> a sizeable Israelite population remained in the land.<sup>169</sup> The foreigners intermarried with the native Israelites, producing a people later known as Samaritans. The result is a mixture of culture and religion in which Yahweh was worshipped, at least in outward form, along with many other gods.<sup>170</sup>

## AHAZ AND HEZEKIAH

Jotham dies in 732 or 731, leaving Ahaz the sole king in Judah. The visit of Ahaz to Damascus in 732 has a highly detrimental effect on the religious life in Judah, and he does much evil in the sight of the Lord.<sup>171</sup> While in Damascus, he admires a pagan altar<sup>172</sup> and sends a plan of it home to Urijah the priest with instructions to erect a copy in Jerusalem. When he later returns, he establishes this altar as the official place of sacrifice at the temple in place of the brazen altar prescribed in the Law of Moses.

In addition, Ahaz removes several of the sacred vessels from the temple. Apparently, he also fears that Tiglath-pileser may at some time in the future desire to take possession of Jerusalem. In such a case the covered sabbath porch and external temple entrance might be used by him in his siege.<sup>173</sup> So Ahaz has them removed. However, he apparently is able to pacify the Assyrian kings with sufficient tribute so that Judah continues without much interference until the period of the fall of Samaria in 722.

In 729, the third year of Hoshea,<sup>174</sup> Ahaz appoints his eleven-year old son, Hezekiah, as coregent. Ten years later in 719 Hezekiah becomes supreme ruler,<sup>175</sup> possibly at the insistence of a growing anti-Assyrian party which objects to further pro-Assyrian actions by Ahaz.<sup>176</sup> Nevertheless, while Sargon is still on the throne Hezekiah continues to send

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<sup>164</sup> 20 miles NW of Babylon.

<sup>165</sup> Unknown.

<sup>166</sup> Two towns in Syria.

<sup>167</sup> Ezra 4:2,10.

<sup>168</sup> A. van Selms, "Samaria," *ISBE*, IV:296.

<sup>169</sup> R. T. Anderson, "Samaritans," IV:303.

<sup>170</sup> 2 Kgs. 17:25-41.

<sup>171</sup> 2 Kgs. 16:10-21; 2 Chron. 28:22-25.

<sup>172</sup> This altar was probably Assyrian, set up in Damascus by Tiglath-pileser to his gods (Paul R. House, "1, 2 Kings," *The New American Commentary* [Broadman & Holman, 1995], p. 337). 2 Chron. 28:22-23 cannot be used to argue that the altar was Syrian. As Keil argues, a correct translation of the participle "smitten" or "defeated" in v. 23 implies that Ahaz sacrificed to the Syrian gods while engaged in the war with Syria, not after its conclusion when he was in Damascus with Tiglath-pileser ("The Books of the Chronicles," *Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 443).

<sup>173</sup> 2 Kgs. 16:18.

<sup>174</sup> 2 Kgs. 18:1-2.

<sup>175</sup> The scheme presented here is based on the material in Appendix 4.

<sup>176</sup> Leon Wood, *SIH*, p 357.

tribute to Assyria. Four years later in 715, Ahaz dies, and Hezekiah assumes sole rule in Judah.

Hezekiah does what is right in the eyes of the Lord: "After him there was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor among those who were before him."<sup>177</sup> He effects a great revival. He opens the doors of the temple again, and removes all the foreign cult objects; he orders that the Passover be observed; he removes the high places and crushes the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for it had become an object of worship.<sup>178</sup> Never before had Judah undergone such a thorough religious reformation.

In political matters, Hezekiah, in contrast to his father Ahaz, is anti-Assyrian. However, since Hezekiah does not rebel against Assyria, Judah is not threatened during Sargon's reign, even during the crisis of 711.

This crisis is precipitated by the Philistine city of Ashdod, which tries to assemble a coalition to revolt against Assyria. Hezekiah is invited to join the effort. Wisely, and probably on the advice of Isaiah,<sup>179</sup> he declines. In 711, Sargon comes and utterly crushes the revolt, but he leaves Hezekiah alone.

However, the international scene soon changes. Sargon is killed in battle in 705 and his son Sennacherib becomes king in Assyria. Following the death of Sargon, revolts break out in several parts of the Assyrian Empire. Babylon rebels as do various tribes east of the Tigris.

In addition, a new coalition of the coastal states is forming, headed this time by Tyre.<sup>180</sup> Hezekiah apparently thinks the time to rebel against Assyria has come. He joins the coalition and withholds his tribute from Assyria.<sup>181</sup> Ashkelon also joins, but Ekron resists because her king, Padi, wants to remain loyal to his oath of allegiance to Assyria.<sup>182</sup> Hezekiah invades Philistia<sup>183</sup> most likely to force its city-states to join the coalition.<sup>184</sup> He deposes Padi and imprisons him in Jerusalem.

Hezekiah also makes extensive preparations for the expected retaliation from Sennacherib.<sup>185</sup> He constructs fortifications and makes new weapons. He gives special attention to stopping the water supplies that Assyria could use. "Why should the kings of

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<sup>177</sup> 2 Kgs. 18:5.

<sup>178</sup> 2 Kgs. 18:3-6; 2 Chron. 29:2-31:21.

<sup>179</sup> Cf. Isa. 20:1-6.

<sup>180</sup> Leadership swings to Tyre because the Philistine city-states are reluctant to lead a new revolt (Leon Wood, *SIH*, p 359, n. 66).

<sup>181</sup> 2 Kgs. 18:7.

<sup>182</sup> Sennacherib writes in his annals: "The officials, the patricians and the common people of Ekron--who had thrown Padi, their king, into fetters because he was loyal to his solemn oath sworn by the god Ashur, and had handed him over to Hezekiah, the Jew--and he Hezekiah held him in prison, unlawfully, as if he Padi be an enemy... (James B. Pritchard, *ANET*, p. 287).

<sup>183</sup> 2 Kgs. 18:8.

<sup>184</sup> Paul R. House, "1, 2 Kings," *The New American Commentary* (Broadman & Holman, 1995), p. 353.

<sup>185</sup> 2 Chron. 32:1-8.

Assyria come and find abundant water?"<sup>186</sup> He also builds the Siloam Tunnel from the Spring of Gihon, through the hill of Ophel, to a place within Jerusalem lower than the starting point.<sup>187</sup>

Finally, the inevitable happens. After dealing with two revolts elsewhere, Sennacherib, in his third campaign, moves west in 701 to crush the rebellion among the coastal nations.<sup>188</sup> He moves first against Tyre, then Sidon, and continues down the coast, subduing Ashkelon and other Philistine cities. With the coastline in his control, he turns inland toward Judah.<sup>189</sup> Sennacherib captures 46 fortified cities in Judah, including Lachish.<sup>190</sup> He gives several of these cities to vassal kings whom he had just set on the thrones in Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron, and Gaza.

While Sennacherib is capturing the cities of Judah, Hezekiah relents and sends a message to Sennacherib at Lachish, saying he will pay whatever Sennacherib demands. Hezekiah sends his tribute<sup>191</sup> and probably at this time, also releases Padi.<sup>192</sup> To pay this tribute, Hezekiah uses all the silver from the house of the Lord as well as that from his own treasuries.

But Sennacherib is not satisfied with this show of submission. He sends Rabshakeh with a "large army" to Jerusalem demanding a full surrender.<sup>193</sup> In front of the walls

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<sup>186</sup> 2 Chron. 32:4.

<sup>187</sup> This was a remarkable piece of engineering. The tunnel also contains an inscription, the oldest extant example of Hebrew. "An inscription found near the mouth of the tunnel (cf. *ANET*, p. 321 for text) states that diggers worked from both ends. Their place of meeting shows a slight jog but the degree of skill in maintaining the right slope and direction is incredible" (Leon Wood, *SIH*, p 359, n. 67.). The tunnel measures 1771 feet, about a third of a mile.

<sup>188</sup> 2 Kgs. 18:13. Note that chronologically, v. 13 follows v. 8. 2 Kgs. 18:9-12 is an interlude that "repeats information already covered in 2 Kgs. 17:1-6, with the intention of demonstrating Hezekiah's awareness of the dangers inherent in opposing Assyria" (Paul R. House, "1, 2 Kings," *The New American Commentary* [Broadman & Holman, 1995], p. 360).

<sup>189</sup> There is a difference of opinion among scholars as to whether Sennacherib invaded Judah once in 701 or twice, first in 701 and again after 688/687. This paper uses the single-invasion theory as its working hypothesis. See the discussion of this problem in Appendix 5.

<sup>190</sup> When Sennacherib's annals discuss Judah in the description of his campaign of 701, he mentions only Jerusalem, where he made Hezekiah a "prisoner...like a bird in a cage" and "46 of his strong cities" (James B. Pritchard, *ANET*, p. 288). There is no individual mention of Lachish, but since the biblical record mentions it (2 Kgs. 18:13-14; 19:8), Lachish must have been one of the 46 strong cities.

<sup>191</sup> Sennacherib's annals give the tribute as 30 talents of gold and 800 talents of silver, while the biblical account has 30 talents of gold and 300 talents of silver. Wood suggests that the weight, "talent" was different in Judah and Assyria (*SIH*, p 360, n. 70).

<sup>192</sup> Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 360. Sennacherib's record contains the line, "I made Padi, their king, come from Jerusalem..." Sennacherib goes on to say that he restored Padi to his throne (James B. Pritchard, *ANET*, p. 288).

<sup>193</sup> Why does Sennacherib move against Jerusalem after Hezekiah paid the required tribute? "There is every reason for a siege to follow the giving of tribute. Why should the mightiest king in the world be troubled by convention? Why should he not take money to leave Jerusalem alone and, having taken the money, then refuse to perform the request? If Hezekiah wanted to shower Sennacherib with money, that was Hezekiah's business, but it surely would not have meant Sennacherib was honor-bound to go home. In fact, by his light he would have been foolish to do so. Moreover, it is hard to believe that the man who memorialized himself for the taking of Lachish would not much rather have had himself depicted taking Jerusalem. Surely he would not let a small matter of having accepted tribute money stand in the way of

surrounding Jerusalem, Rabshakeh, speaking in Hebrew, boasts of Assyria's superiority and tells the people of Jerusalem that it is a vain thing for them to trust in the Lord their God. He points out that the gods of all the other lands have not been able to save their people from the hand of Sennacherib. Hezekiah consults Isaiah, who reassures the king. God says,<sup>194</sup> "Behold, I will put a spirit in him so that he shall hear a rumor<sup>195</sup> and return to his own land."<sup>196</sup> And I will make him fall by the sword in his own land."

When Hezekiah does not immediately surrender, Rabshekah returns to Sennacherib, but the king has left Lachish and is fighting at Libnah.<sup>197</sup> There Sennacherib hears that Tirhakah is advancing from Egypt to wage war against him.<sup>198</sup> Before leaving Libnah to engage the Egyptians,<sup>199</sup> Sennacherib once again sends ambassadors to Hezekiah with a letter boasting of his other victories and summoning Hezekiah to give up his confidence in God, essentially making the same demands he had already made through Rabshekah.<sup>200</sup>

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achieving complete devastation of the enemy" (John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39* [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986], p. 702). In this regard it is also noteworthy that Shalmaneser accepted tribute from Pekah but then immediately imprisoned him and besieged Samaria (2 Kgs. 17:3-5).

<sup>194</sup> 2 Kgs. 19:7.

<sup>195</sup> What was this rumor? Very likely the rumor was of new troubles in Babylon (S. J. Schultz, "Hezekiah," *ISBE*, II:705). Indeed, Bel-ibni had revolted, Merodach-baladan probably playing a role. According to his own records, immediately upon his return to Assyria in 701, Sennacherib set out once again to subdue Babylon, his fourth campaign.

<sup>196</sup> The phrase, "I will put a spirit in him," "reflects God's complete control of the situation. His is not troubled by Sennacherib, so that he must take hasty, world-shaking action. Things as ephemeral as a vague uneasiness or a distant rumor are all that is necessary to remove the emperor from before Jerusalem. For God, access to the psyche of humanity or the interrelationships of society is as nothing. The 'spirit' mentioned here is neither the Holy Spirit nor an angelic spirit, but rather an attitude, disposition, or feeling. God is going to predispose Sennacherib to leave" (John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39* [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986], p. 647).

<sup>197</sup> Libnah has not yet been identified. No reason is given for this move, but perhaps Lachish was not the last of the 46 cities taken. Oswalt suggests that it might have been a "mopping up" operation (*The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39* [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986], p. 649).

<sup>198</sup> A number of commentators think that the report about Tirhakah is the "rumor" predicted by Isaiah in 2 Kgs. 19:7; see, e.g., C. F. Keil, "The Books of the Kings," *Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 443, and Paul R. House, "1, 2 Kings," *The New American Commentary* (Broadman & Holman, 1995), p. 353. However, this is not the best interpretation. Upon receiving the report about Tirhakah, Sennacherib does not return to Assyria but goes south to engage him in battle. "The words 'returned' and 'heard' in verses 8 and 9 are not the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy (II Kings 19:7) that the king of Assyria would 'hear' and 'return.' Instead, verses 8 and 9 refer to a temporary shift in strategy in southern Palestine in the light of a new threat from Tirhakah" (John C. Whitcomb, *Solomon to the Exile* [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1971], p. 118).

<sup>199</sup> In his annals, Sennacherib states that the battle was fought in the plain of Eltekeh and claims victory (James B. Pritchard, *ANET*, p. 287).

<sup>200</sup> There are really no new "arguments" in this message beyond what Rabshekah had already presented. However, there are two possible reasons that Sennacherib sends the letter. "First, he may have been trying to force Jerusalem's capitulation before he faced the rumored Egyptian attack so as not to have enemies both behind and before him. Second, he may have wished to prevent Hezekiah from receiving any encouragement from the reported action. It is as though he says to the beleaguered Judean, 'Everything is just as it was. There is no hope for you'" (John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39* [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986], p. 650). With regard to the first possibility, it should be noted that fortifications like Lachish and Libnah could be taken in a relatively short time by

Hezekiah brings the letter to the temple and presents it to the Lord. Again, the Lord answers through Isaiah: "I will defend this city."<sup>201</sup> According to the word of the Lord, Sennacherib will not come to Jerusalem, shoot an arrow at it, or set up a mound against it. The same night that Isaiah gives Hezekiah this reassurance,<sup>202</sup> the angel of the Lord<sup>203</sup> strikes down 185,000<sup>204</sup> Assyrian soldiers.<sup>205</sup> Sennacherib returns to Assyria,<sup>206</sup> and, some twenty years later, is killed with the sword, as Isaiah had predicted.<sup>207</sup> In the year 681, while worshipping in the temple of his god Nisroch, two of Sennacherib's sons strike him down and escape into the land of Ararat. Another son, Esarhaddon, whom he had appointed viceroy in 701, accedes to the throne.<sup>208</sup>

While Sennacherib is engaged in his campaign against the western alliance and Judah, Hezekiah faces a new problem. He becomes sick and is nigh unto death.<sup>209</sup> Isaiah the

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violent assault, but Jerusalem was difficult to capture. With Tirhakah approaching, Sennacherib had no time for a prolonged siege and so would want to induce Hezekiah to surrender the city quickly by a boastful description of his own power.

<sup>201</sup> 2 Kgs. 19:34.

<sup>202</sup> This appears to be the implication of the Hebrew for "that night" in 2 Kgs. 19:35 (C. F. Keil, "The Books of the Kings," *Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 457).

<sup>203</sup> Much has been made of the passage in Herodotus, based on an Egyptian legend, (*History* ii.141) in which he states that Sennacherib's host was attacked by field mice, devouring quivers, bows, and shield handles. Therefore, some have suggested that the real cause of death was bubonic plague carried by the mice. This explanation is doubtful, but the account in Herodotus does provide indirect confirmation of some type of catastrophe. What Herodotus learned in Egypt was "simply a legendary imitation of our account, i.e., an Egyptian variation of the defeat of Sennacherib in Judah" (C. F. Keil, "The Books of the Kings," *Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 458, n. 1).

<sup>204</sup> Nowhere is it stated that this force of 185,000 men constituted the entire Assyrian army. On the basis of Assyrian reports, the "Grand Army" must have numbered in the hundreds of thousands; see John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), pp. 669-670.

<sup>205</sup> Where the 185,000 soldiers were encamped is not stated. Nor is it stated that the 185,000 men were encamped with the rest of the army. This group of 185,000 might have been the "large army" of 2 Kgs. 18:17, and they may have remained at Jerusalem after the departure of Rabshekah. See the discussion by C. F. Keil, "The Books of the Kings," *Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 457.

<sup>206</sup> Isaiah had predicted that hearing a "rumor" would induce Sennacherib to return to Assyria (2 Kgs. 19:7), not the loss of 185,000 men. Although traumatic, the army could have sustained this loss, so that this was not the reason Sennacherib returned home. If not for the rumor, Sennacherib surely would have stayed and taken Jerusalem. In this same regard, it must not be thought that because of this loss of 185,000 men, Sennacherib went back to Assyria with his tail between his legs and pouted. Almost immediately, still in 701, he set out once again to subdue Babylon, his fourth campaign.

<sup>207</sup> 2 Kgs. 19:7. Isaiah predicted the "rumor" (not reiterated in 19:35-37), the return to Assyria, and the assassination; 2 Kgs. 19:35-37 reiterates the return and the assassination. Why did Isaiah not predict the spectacular death of the 185,000 soldiers? "...no mention was made of that event because the central issue here [in 19:7] is not the deliverance of Jerusalem but what will become of Sennacherib for his blasphemy. For that reason divine control of Sennacherib's dispositions [believing the rumor] and his eventual death by treason were more significant" (John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39* [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986], p. 648).

<sup>208</sup> Assyria reached the zenith of its power under Esarhaddon (681-669) and Ashurbanipal (669-627). Both rulers campaigned successfully as far south as Egypt, for the first time in Assyrian history, and Ashurbanipal conquered most of Elam, including its capital Susa in 639 (Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 365).

<sup>209</sup> Scholars also disagree on the time of Hezekiah's sickness and the subsequent visit of the envoys from Merodach-baladan. Three dates have been suggested, but this paper takes 701 as its working hypothesis. See the discussion in Appendix 5.

prophet proclaims the word of the Lord to him: Hezekiah is to set his house in order because he will die. Hezekiah prays and weeps bitterly before the Lord,<sup>210</sup> and before Isaiah has gone out into the middle court, the word of the Lord comes to him to tell Hezekiah that he will be healed and live another 15 years. Also, the Lord reassures Hezekiah again that Jerusalem will be delivered from the hand of the king of Assyria.

A short time after Sennacherib returns to Assyria, but still in 701, Merodach-Baladan, who has just stirred up another rebellion in Babylon, hears of Hezekiah's recovery and divine deliverance from Assyria. He sends emissaries to Judah to visit him. Although the outward reason for sending these envoys to Hezekiah was to congratulate him upon his recovery, Merodach-baladan no doubt wants to enlist Hezekiah as an aid in his life-long struggle against Assyria. If Hezekiah is so favored by his God, he would be a powerful ally.

Hezekiah shows the Babylonian envoys all his treasures.<sup>211</sup> The Lord is displeased. Isaiah is sent to Hezekiah and gives him a word from the Lord: all these treasures will someday be given into the hands of the Babylonians. His sons also shall be taken to become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon. Hezekiah submits to this declaration in humility and says, "The word of the Lord which you have spoken is good. At least there will be peace and steadfastness in my days."<sup>212</sup> Although he desires the prosperity of future generations, Hezekiah is grateful that God has given him a token of his clemency by delaying judgment.

#### *FROM MANASSEH TO THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY*

Hezekiah raises his son, Manasseh, to coregent in 697. When Hezekiah dies in 686, he becomes supreme ruler and reigns until the year 642 for a total of 55 years, the longest of any king in Israel or Judah. However, he does much evil in the sight of the Lord. He rebuilds the high places, raises up altars to Baal, practices witchcraft, institutes the worship of the heavens, and offers his sons as sacrifices to the god Moloch in the Valley of Hinnom. Manasseh seduces Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to do more evil than the nations whom God had destroyed before the children of Israel. The Lord sends prophets to Manasseh and the people of Judah. They proclaim the word of the Lord: "Because Manasseh has done these abominations...I am bringing such calamity upon Jerusalem that whoever hears of it, both his ears will tingle."<sup>213</sup> The prophet

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<sup>210</sup> We need not suppose that Hezekiah trembles like a child in the face of death. Hezekiah would weep bitterly because he would be dying in the midst of Jerusalem's greatest crisis to date, leaving it without a king. On Thiele's scheme, his son Manasseh would be only about 8 years old in 701. He became coregent under his father in 696 when he was 12 years old (2 Kgs. 21:1; *MNHK*, p. 176-178).

<sup>211</sup> Soon after his deliverance and the departure of Sennacherib for Assyria, Hezekiah accumulates "very great wealth" and this accumulation precedes the visit of the envoys from Merodach-baladan (2 Chron. 32:22-29). Therefore, even though Hezekiah had stripped his resources to pay the tribute to Sennacherib in 2 Kgs. 18:14-16, he indeed had plenty to show the Babylonians!

<sup>212</sup> 2 Kgs. 20:19.

<sup>213</sup> 2 Kgs. 21:10-12.

Habakkuk further reveals that this great judgment that will fall on Judah and Jerusalem will be by the Babylonians.<sup>214</sup>

Neither Manasseh nor the people of Judah heed these warnings, and punishment from God finally falls.<sup>215</sup> The Lord brings upon them the king of Assyria, Ashurbanipal, who had come to power in 648.<sup>216</sup> He binds Manasseh<sup>217</sup> and carries him off to Babylon.<sup>218</sup> But Manasseh prays and humbles himself before the Lord,<sup>219</sup> and the Lord brings him back to Jerusalem.<sup>220</sup> Upon his return, he tries to reverse the effects of his earlier reign.<sup>221</sup> Manasseh removes the pagan altars from the temple of the Lord and from Jerusalem and casts them out of the city. He also takes measures to secure his kingdom, especially Jerusalem, against hostile attacks. Manasseh's turning to the Lord, however, is not with all his heart. Worship in the temple is simply restored. The idolatry in Jerusalem and Judah is not extirpated but only repressed in that it can no longer be publicly practiced in the temple. Manasseh's godlessness makes the punishment of Judah and Jerusalem announced by Habakkuk unavoidable.<sup>222</sup>

Manasseh dies in 642 and his son, Amon, becomes king in Judah at the age of 22. Amon again sets up those idols that his father had cast out of the city. After he reigns

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<sup>214</sup> Hab. 1:5-11.

<sup>215</sup> 2 Chron. 33:10-13.

<sup>216</sup> There is a difference of opinion among scholars as to whether it was Esarhaddon (681-669) or Ashurbanipal (669-627) who took Manasseh captive. W. S. LaSor, "Ashurbanipal," *ISBE*, I:321, argues in favor of Esarhaddon. However, taking the king to be Ashurbanipal "better correlates with the biblical story, which implies that Manasseh's captivity came toward the close of his reign, following his many years of idolatrous practice" (Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 365). J. A. Thompson "1, 2 Chronicles," *The New American Commentary* [Broadman & Holman, 1994], p. 369, agrees. Manasseh probably curried favor with Esarhaddon. He lists Manasseh among those who made a compulsory visit to Nineveh in 678 with a tribute of building materials (James B. Pritchard, *ANET*, p. 291), and the language hardly suggests captivity. It is difficult to put dates to the many campaigns of Ashurbanipal (Lasor, "Ashurbanipal," *ISBE*, I:321), but in the course of his first Egyptian campaign, he lists Manasseh as one of 22 kings who paid him tribute (*ANET*, p. 294). Again, there is no suggestion of captivity. However, Judah may have joined a later revolt by Edom and Moab just after 652. This would be the most likely time for Manasseh's captivity (S. J. Schultz, "Manasseh," *ISBE*, III:235). Nevertheless, there is no surviving record from either Esarhaddon or Ashurbanipal that Manasseh was taken as a captive to Assyria or Babylon.

<sup>217</sup> 2 Chron. 33:11 states that he was taken in hooks and fetters. The practice was to bind the prisoner with fetters and place a hook in his lips by which to lead him in abject submission" (Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 365, n. 81).

<sup>218</sup> 2 Chron. 33:11. Babylon has been completely destroyed and flooded by Sennacherib in his eighth campaign, ca. 690; see Appendix 5. Therefore, some scholars have suggested that this is an error, "Babylon" having been substituted for "Nineveh." However, Esarhaddon rebuilt Babylon "and made it an integral part of the Assyrian domain once again. Manasseh may very well have been held captive there" (Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 365, n. 82).

<sup>219</sup> There is an apocryphal book called "The Prayer of Manasseh." See Appendix 6.

<sup>220</sup> "There is no way to know how long Manasseh was held captive...If he was taken [prisoner] in his forty-sixth year [651], he could have been there four or five years and still have had four or five after returning to Jerusalem" (Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 366, n.85).

<sup>221</sup> 2 Chron. 33:14-17.

<sup>222</sup> J. A. Thompson "1, 2 Chronicles," *The New American Commentary* [Broadman & Holman, 1994], pp. 369-370, makes the point that the captivity and restoration of Manasseh foreshadows the captivity and restoration of Judah from Babylon.

only two years, servants conspire against him and kill him in his own house.<sup>223</sup> But the people of the land execute those who had taken part in the conspiracy and make Josiah, Amon's son, king in his place.

Josiah begins reigning in 640 when he is eight years old and reigns a total of 31 years. He is relatively free of foreign interference until close to the end of his reign. This is primarily due to the fact that the last part of Ashurbanipal's reign sees little military activity.<sup>224</sup>

Josiah is a godly king. In the 18th year of his reign the high priest Hilkiah finds<sup>225</sup> the Book of the Law in the house of the Lord.<sup>226</sup> Hilkiah has Shaphan the scribe take the book to Josiah and read it. Upon hearing these words, Josiah humbles himself and weeps before the Lord. He commands Hilkiah to inquire of the Lord, so Hilkiah and a group of men go to Huldah the prophetess. She announces that calamity will come upon Judah for their idolatry, but that it will not come during Josiah's reign because he humbled himself before the Lord.

Josiah restores true worship in Judah. All idolatrous images are removed from the temple, the city of Jerusalem, and throughout the land and burned. The high places that Solomon had built for the gods of Sidon, Moab, and Ammon are defiled and razed. Taking advantage of Assyria's disinterest in the area, Josiah extends his reform even beyond Judah to Bethel, the long-time site of golden-calf worship established by Jeroboam I. According to the word of the Lord spoken to Jeroboam over three hundred years ago by the "man of God,"<sup>227</sup> Josiah digs up the bones of the false priests from

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<sup>223</sup> It is possible that the servants were repulsed by his actions (Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 366).

<sup>224</sup> Ashurbanipal's interest shifted from militarism to the arts during the second half of his reign. There is much evidence that he devoted himself in those years to architecture, sculpture, and building his library. Ashurbanipal built a palace in Nineveh and embellished it with rich ornamentation and fine sculptures. The sculptures from this period represent the zenith of that form of Assyrian art. However, his main love was his library: "But above all, Ashurbanipal's great interest in literature, the training of scribes to read the ancient Sumerian literary remains, which resulted in bilingual and trilingual word-lists and sign-lists (which, in turn, have made possible the great achievements in modern study of Assyrian and Sumerian), not to speak of the preservation of great quantities of the ancient literature of Sumer and Akkad, is, beyond cavil, Ashurbanipal's greatest monument" (W. S. LaSor, "Ashurbanipal," *ISBE*, 1:322).

<sup>225</sup> "Manasseh may have destroyed all copies of the Law that he could find, which prompted someone to hide this one so well that it became lost to knowledge. It is possible, too, that this copy had been placed in the Temple cornerstone by Solomon, a practice not uncommon for the day" (Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 367, n. 87).

<sup>226</sup> According to the classic version of the JEDP theory of the origin of the Pentateuch, this book of the law was not the whole Pentateuch but the book of Deuteronomy. Also, although Hilkiah claimed to "find" it in the temple, he actually wrote it at this time (622 or 621). See the discussion in Gleason L. Archer, *Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), p. 89. However, the author of 1 and 2 Kings clearly seems to indicate that all of God's law was mediated through Moses (e.g., 1 Kgs. 2:3; 9:56; 2 Kgs. 14:6; 18:12; 23:25). What was found may have been just the book of Deuteronomy, but a number of scholars argue that it was the entire Pentateuch (J. A. Thompson "1, 2 Chronicles," *The New American Commentary* [Broadman & Holman, 1994], pp. 377, 379; Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 367, n. 88). Keil thinks that it was the temple copy that had been deposited by the side of the ark of the covenant according to Deut. 31:26, but that it had been lost during the idolatrous reigns of Manasseh and Amon ("The Books of the Kings," *Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 478).

<sup>227</sup> 1 Kgs. 13:1-3.

tombs on the mountains, and burns them on the altar, defiling it. Then he crushes the altar to powder and destroys its high place.

Most significant of all, Josiah reinstates the observance of the Passover in perfect accordance with the precepts of the law. Such a Passover had never been held since the days of the judges.<sup>228</sup> "Before him there was no king like him who turned to the LORD with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might."<sup>229</sup> As long as he lived, Josiah allowed no open idolatry but maintained the worship of the Lord. Nevertheless, these measures could not effect a real, heartfelt conversion of the people to God. They remained unchanged and their temporary obedience was likely due to fear.

Josiah is an able ruler; otherwise he could not have instituted such sweeping reforms. However, toward the end of his reign, the international scene is beginning to change radically. When Josiah seeks to shape, to some extent, world developments, he brings about his untimely death.

In 627, Sinsariskun, Ashurbanipal's son, is reigning in Assyria.<sup>230</sup> He is a weak ruler<sup>231</sup> and does little to strengthen an Assyria that has already been weakened by Ashurbanipal's de-emphasis of military activities.<sup>232</sup> By 626, the Chaldean Nabopolassar (626-605) has won independence for Babylon and is recognized as king there. In 624, Cyaxares, a strong king, ascends to the throne of Media. By 617, the Assyrian garrisons in Babylonia have withdrawn. By 616, Assyria begins to lose further territory to Nabopolassar, who defeats them at Qablinu. Asshur falls to the Medes in 614. In 612, the combined forces of Media and Babylon march up the Tigris to Nineveh. The heavily fortified city holds out against the siege for about three months. However, an unusually severe flood of the Tigris<sup>233</sup> carries away part of the great wall, allowing the attackers to gain entrance into the city. Nineveh is utterly destroyed and turned into a heap of ruins,<sup>234</sup> according to the word of the Lord proclaimed by the prophets Zephaniah and Nahum.<sup>235</sup>

Sinsariskun dies when Nineveh is destroyed, but some Assyrians escape. Under Assurballit II (612-606), they set up a new capital at Haran, west of Nineveh in

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<sup>228</sup> More specifically, "since Samuel the prophet" (2 Chron. 35:18). The implication is that the Passover is now observed with even greater care and detail than it had been during Hezekiah's reform; Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 369, n. 91).

<sup>229</sup> 2 Kgs. 23:25; cf. 18:5. "The verdict [in 18:5] refers to Hezekiah's confidence in God (חַטָּב), in which he had no equal, whereas in the case of Josiah his conscientious adherence to the Mosaic law is extolled in the same words...so there is no ground for saying that there is a contradiction between [18:5 and 23:25]" (C. F. Keil, "The Books of the Kings," *Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 432).

<sup>230</sup> The last years of Ashurbanipal's reign are obscure because there are no extant historical records after 639.

<sup>231</sup> The following summary is taken, for the most part, from D. J. Wiseman, "Assyria," *ISBE*, I:338.

<sup>232</sup> W. S. LaSor, "Ashurbanipal," *ISBE*, I:322.

<sup>233</sup> This is mentioned only by the Greek historian Ctesias, 5th century, B.C.

<sup>234</sup> So thorough is this destruction, that for centuries afterward even the location of Nineveh was unknown. Only in 1845 did Layard identify a site known as Kuyunjik as the remains of ancient Nineveh.

<sup>235</sup> Zeph. 2:13-15; the entire book of Nahum.

northern Arbia. Nabopolassar and the Babylonians continue to push westward and in 609 take Haran.<sup>236</sup> The remnant of the Assyrian forces retreat to Carchemish.<sup>237</sup> Also in 609, Pharaoh Necho of Egypt marches northward to help the Assyrians.<sup>238</sup> Necho had just come to power a year earlier, in 610. He had inherited from his father a strong, united Egypt and now wants to check the rising power of Babylon and reestablish world prominence for Egypt.<sup>239</sup> At this point Josiah becomes involved.

With Assyria's power all but broken, the independent Syrian princes as well as those vassals of Assyria, like Judah, were hoping that they would now be successful in freeing themselves from their vassal status. Josiah believed that if the Egyptians took control of Syria, his own hope for independence would be gone.<sup>240</sup> He overlooked Habakkuk's prophecy that the Babylonians would eventually dominate his country. Therefore, he attempts to stop Necho in his march northward to help the Assyrians at Carchemish.<sup>241</sup> Josiah chooses to face the Egyptians at the strategic location of Megiddo.

In disobedience to God,<sup>242</sup> Josiah forces Necho to do battle. Josiah is mortally wounded, and his servants take him to Hadad-rimmon in the valley of Megiddo where he dies. His body is brought back to Jerusalem, and there he is buried. All of Jerusalem and Judah mourn him, including Jeremiah.<sup>243</sup>

After fighting Josiah, Necho continues northward and reinforces the Assyrians at Carchemish.<sup>244</sup> However, he sets up his headquarters at Riblah<sup>245</sup> and holds the Babylonians at bay for the next three years (609-605).

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<sup>236</sup> Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 369, gives the date as 610; other scholars prefer 609: D. J. Wiseman, "Assyria," *ISBE*, I:338 and K. A. Kitchen, "Neco," *ISBE*, III:510.

<sup>237</sup> Carchemish is just to the west of Haran on the northern part of the Euphrates River.

<sup>238</sup> Note the KJV mistranslation in 2 Kgs. 23:29. Necho did not go up "against" the king of Assyria but "to" him--to help him.

<sup>239</sup> K. A. Kitchen, "Neco," *ISBE*, III:510; Leon Wood, *SIH*, pp. 369-370.

<sup>240</sup> This reconstruction of Josiah's motives is based on C. F. Keil, "The Books of the Kings," *Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 494, n. 1.

<sup>241</sup> This is Necho's purpose given in 2 Chron. 35:20. Some scholars seem to think that his original goal was to reinforce Haran but that he arrived too late because of Josiah's interference (D. J. Wiseman, "Assyria," *ISBE*, I:338 and K. A. Kitchen, "Neco," *ISBE*, III:510). In any event, now that the Assyrians have retreated to Carchemish, that is where Necho heads after defeating Josiah.

<sup>242</sup> See the amazing statement in 2 Chron. 35:20-24. Although Necho's statement in v. 21 that God had ordered him to pursue this campaign might have been self-serving, the author of 2 Chronicles in v. 22 states that the "words of Necho" had come "from the mouth of God." Keil, "The Books of the Chronicles," *Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 506, comments, "During his whole reign, Josiah had endeavored to carry out the will of God; while in his action against Pharaoh, on the contrary, he had acted in a different way, going into battle against the will of God." He further argues that although Pharaoh did not receive a specific divine revelation, he was referring to Yahweh, not his own gods. J. A. Thompson, "1, 2 Chronicles," *The New American Commentary* [Broadman & Holman, 1994], p. 385, also speaks of "Josiah's refusal to accept divine warning in this unusual way by the words of the pagan king Necho," but he adds this interesting note: "Perhaps more important to the Chronicler than the word of a foreign king was the lack of any statement that Josiah had 'sought the LORD' before engaging an enemy in battle."

<sup>243</sup> 2 Chron. 35:24-27.

<sup>244</sup> R. Youngblood, "Carchemish," *ISBE*, I:617. Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 371, thinks that Necho and the Assyrians then attempt unsuccessfully to retake Haran from Nabopolassar.

<sup>245</sup> 2 Kgs. 23:33. Riblah, on the Orontes River, is south of Hamath, which in turn is south of Carchemish.

At the death of Josiah, the people of Judah take Jehoahaz (aka Shallum and Jeconiah), the middle son of Josiah,<sup>246</sup> and anoint him king, preferring him above his elder brother Eliakim.<sup>247</sup> But three months later, now 608, Necho deposes him<sup>248</sup> and places the older brother, Eliakim, on the throne in Jerusalem as an Egyptian vassal.<sup>249</sup> Necho changes Eliakim's name to Jehoiakim,<sup>250</sup> and imposes a heavy tribute on him. The dethroned Jehoahaz is brought as a prisoner to Necho's headquarters at Riblah. He is put into chains and transported to Egypt. The prophet Jeremiah offers the people of Judah no consolation:<sup>251</sup> Jehoahaz will not return but will die in Egypt.<sup>252</sup>

Jehoiakim is an incompetent ruler. Foolishly, he squanders state funds and uses forced labor to build a new palace for himself, despite the heavy tribute Judah has been forced to pay to Necho. Jeremiah shows his disdain for this act by declaring that Jehoiakim would be "buried with the burial of an ass."<sup>253</sup>

Also Jehoiakim does evil in the eyes of the Lord. He is not in sympathy with the reforms of his father, Josiah, and maintains an attitude of hostility towards the prophets. Judah reverts to idolatry during his reign.

The prophet Jeremiah is directed by the Lord to take a stand in the temple court and declare that this temple will be reduced to ruins.<sup>254</sup> He does so, but there is a violent reaction on the part of the people to this message.<sup>255</sup> Jeremiah is seized. The palace princes hear the commotion and arrive at the temple. The king's prophets and priests demand the execution of Jeremiah. Jeremiah responds to all the princes and people, telling them that the Lord has sent him. If they will amend their ways the Lord will not

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<sup>246</sup> Josiah had three sons, all of whom become king of Judah. The eldest was Eliakim, whom Necho renamed Jehoiakim, the middle son was Jehoahaz, and the youngest was Zedekiah.

<sup>247</sup> We are not told why. Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 371, suggests a possibility. Subsequent events show that Jehoiakim was an incompetent ruler. Perhaps his ineptitude was already known in Jerusalem.

<sup>248</sup> How Necho effected this is not stated and is a matter of much debate. Ewald, quoted by C. F. Keil, "The Books of the Kings," *Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 498, n. 1, thinks that somehow Necho managed to entice Jehoahaz to come to Riblah; Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 371, n. 97, seems to agree. Keil's solution is that he sent part of his army to Jerusalem and had Jehoahaz brought back to Riblah. 2 Chron. 36:3 would be true whether or not Necho personally came to Jerusalem to depose Jehoahaz and bring him to Riblah. We simply do not know what happened.

<sup>249</sup> We are not told why Necho prefers Eliakim. Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 371, suggests that Necho might have had reason to believe Eliakim would be more cooperative with him. C. F. Keil, "The Books of the Kings," *Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 497, suggest that perhaps Eliakim had complained to Necho.

<sup>250</sup> Eliakim means "God has established," and Jehoiakim means "Yahweh has established." Since the meanings are almost identical, Necho perhaps wanted only to demonstrate his authority to make the change (Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 371, n. 97).

<sup>251</sup> Jer. 22:10-12.

<sup>252</sup> Which he does: 2 Kgs. 23:34.

<sup>253</sup> Jer. 22:13-19.

<sup>254</sup> This is the famous "Temple-Gate Sermon" in Jeremiah 7. Most likely it was delivered shortly after Jehoiakim was put on the throne in 609 or 608 (J. A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980), p. 274.

<sup>255</sup> For this response and Jeremiah's defense, see Jer. 26:7-24.

send the threatened punishment. Jeremiah is effectively defended by some of the elders and Ahikam, son of Josiah's scribe Shaphan,<sup>256</sup> and therefore not put to death.

Jeremiah is also instructed by the Lord to prepare a scroll containing all the warnings that the Lord has declared against Israel, Judah, and the surrounding nations.<sup>257</sup> Jeremiah obeys, and dictates the words of the Lord to his servant Baruch. However, since Jeremiah cannot enter the Lord's house, he directs Baruch to take the scroll into the temple and read it.

Baruch follows Jeremiah's instructions and reads the scroll in the hearing of all the people. He reads it a second time to the princes of Judah. Upon hearing the words, the princes direct Baruch to go into hiding, taking Jeremiah with him. The princes relate the contents of the scroll to King Jehoiakim. He sends for the scroll itself, and proceeds to defiantly cut it up and burn it. Jeremiah then gives forth a prophetic judgment concerning Jehoiakim's ignominious death. Jeremiah proceeds to dictate a second scroll.

Three years pass, and in the spring of 605 Nebuchadnezzar, the son of Nabopolassar, king of Babylon, marches at the head of his army up the Euphrates River to Carchemish. There he engages the Egyptian army and what is left of the Assyrian army in the world-changing Battle of Carchemish. The young Babylonian displays his genius and sends the Egyptians reeling in a headlong defeat. Necho falls back to Hamath, hoping to regroup, but Nebuchadnezzar gives him no opportunity, pursuing him and virtually annihilating the Egyptian force. He pushes Necho all the way back to Egypt. Babylon is now the undisputed ruler of Mesopotamia, Syria, and Palestine. Egypt will never again be a world power, and Assyria has ceased to exist.

On August 16, 605, after a reign of 21 years, Nabopolassar dies and Nebuchadnezzar hurries home to secure his claim to the throne.

In 604 Nebuchadnezzar returns to Judah. He comes against Jehoiakim and makes him his vassal for the next 3 years. Nebuchadnezzar also carries off some of the treasures of the temple. He takes a portion of the population into captivity, mainly those skilled and educated as well as those of royal lineage and of the upper classes.<sup>258</sup> Daniel and his three friends, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, are among them.

Egypt reasserts its power and in 601 Nebuchadnezzar marches against Necho. Both sides suffer heavy losses and Nebuchadnezzar is forced to retreat and rebuild his army.

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<sup>256</sup> 2 Kgs. 22:12.

<sup>257</sup> Jer. 36:1-32

<sup>258</sup> In total there are three deportations. Using the scheme in W. S. LaSor, "Nebuchadnezzar," *ISBE*, III:507-508, these deportations occurred in the following years: (1) **604**: this deportation in which the cream of the crop, including Daniel, are taken; (2) **597**: Jehoiachin, all his captains and mighty men, all the craftsmen and smiths, 10,000 in all, including Ezekiel (2 Kgs. 24:10-16); and (3) **586**: the complete destruction of Jerusalem (2 Kgs. 25:1-21). Note that some scholars think the first deportation occurred in 605 before Nebuchadnezzar returns to Babylon at the death of his father Nabopolassar (Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 373).

This Babylonian setback furnishes Jehoiakim with a motive for rebelling against Babylon<sup>259</sup> despite the warnings of Jeremiah to submit.<sup>260</sup> But after the losses suffered by Egypt, Necho can provide no support to Jehoiakim in his revolt.<sup>261</sup>

Despite this, in 601 Jehoiakim rebels against Babylon, and to punish this rebellion the Lord sends against him raiding bands of Babylonians, Syrians, Moabites, and Ammonites. Since the Lord had given Judah into the hands of the Babylonians as punishment for its apostasy, any revolt against them was rebellion against the Lord.

Jehoiakim dies in 597<sup>262</sup> and his son Jehoiachin (aka Coniah) reigns in his place. He is 18 years old<sup>263</sup> and stays in power 3 months. In 597, Nebuchadnezzar besieges the city of Jerusalem a second time. Jerusalem holds out for 3 months, but on March 16, 597, Jehoiachin is taken prisoner by the king of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar carries off all the treasures in the temple and the king's palace. In addition, he takes all the captains and mighty men, all the craftsmen and smiths, 10,000 captives in all, back to Babylon. Only the poorest people remain behind. The prophet Ezekiel is taken in this deportation.<sup>264</sup>

Nebuchadnezzar then appoints Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle, as a puppet king and changes his name to Zedekiah. Zedekiah was the youngest son of Josiah, and since Jehoiachin, who was only 18 when he took the throne, had no son of ruling age, Zedekiah had first claim to the throne.<sup>265</sup>

Zedekiah begins to reign in 597 and rules for 11 years. He does evil in the sight of the Lord. He is urged by a strong anti-Babylonian group in Jerusalem to rebel against Babylon. False prophets claim that God had already broken the yoke of Babylon and that the captives now in Babylon would return within two years.<sup>266</sup> However, Jeremiah denounces these false prophets and continues to urge Zedekiah to accept Babylonian lordship.<sup>267</sup> Nevertheless, Zedekiah eventually does rebel against Babylon<sup>268</sup> and in 588 Nebuchadnezzar comes against Jerusalem for the third time. He builds a siege wall against it.<sup>269</sup> Jerusalem holds out for about 18 months, but by 586 there is a terrible

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<sup>259</sup> W. S. LaSor, "Nebuchadnezzar," *ISBE*, III:507.

<sup>260</sup> Jer. 21:9,10; 27:8-22.

<sup>261</sup> K. A. Kitchen, *ISBE*, III:510.

<sup>262</sup> "The exact time is established by comparing the Babylonian Chronicle with II Kings 24:6,8. Jeremiah's scathing predictions, as to the nature of Jehoiakim's death and burial (Jer. 22:18-19; 36:27-32), suggest that he was killed in a battle with one of the marauding bands and in a situation which prevented a normal, honorable burial" (Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 374, n. 105).

<sup>263</sup> 2 Kgs. 24:8. 2 Chron. 36:9 gives the age as 8, but this must be due to a copyist's error in simply omitting the small Hebrew letter *yodh*, which as a number signified ten (Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 374, n. 106).

<sup>264</sup> Ezek. 1:1-3.

<sup>265</sup> Protocol, however, was probably not Nebuchadnezzar's only reason for setting Zedekiah on the throne. The Babylonian records state that Nebuchadnezzar "appointed a new king of his liking" (James B. Pritchard, *ANET*, p. 564). Evidently, he thought Zedekiah would remain faithful to his oath of allegiance.

<sup>266</sup> Jer. 28:1-3.

<sup>267</sup> Jer. 27:4-22.

<sup>268</sup> Apparently, a new coalition had formed that included Edom, Moab, Ammon, and Phoenicia; cf. Jer. 27:1-3.

<sup>269</sup> Cf. Jer. 37:1-10. Apparently, this time an Egyptian army, now under Pharaoh Hophra, did come up to aid the rebellion, and the siege is temporarily broken off. However, Nebuchadnezzar seems to have no

famine in Jerusalem. Zedekiah and his army attempt to flee the city by breaking through the wall during the night. But he is overtaken by the Babylonians near Jericho and his army is scattered. Zedekiah is taken before Nebuchadnezzar at his headquarters in Riblah.<sup>270</sup> There Zedekiah is made to watch as his sons are killed. He himself is then blinded and led away to Babylon, chained with double chains of brass, and kept a prisoner until his death. As prophesied by Ezekiel, Zedekiah goes to Babylon but is unable to see the land.<sup>271</sup> He dies in Babylon. Jerusalem is completely destroyed and the temple burned to the ground.

Nebuzaradan, the captain of the Babylonian guard, carries away the rest of the inhabitants of Judah, leaving only a handful of the poor as vinedressers and farmers. Thus Judah is carried away captive from its own land. Gedaliah is appointed governor over those who are left.

Nebuchadnezzar had given Nebuzaradan strict orders that Jeremiah was to be protected during the destruction of Jerusalem.<sup>272</sup> Jeremiah is then given his choice of staying in Judah or returning to Babylon where Nebuzaradan would look after him. Jeremiah chooses to remain behind in Judah with Gedaliah.

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problem repelling this advance, and, in fulfillment of Jeremiah's prediction (37:11-21), soon the Babylonian army is back outside Jerusalem. See Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 375.

<sup>270</sup> Judah was not Nebuchadnezzar's only goal in this campaign. He eventually crushed the new alliance. From his headquarters at Riblah, he "sent out army contingents in various directions...He besieged Tyre from the years 587 to 574 B.C. The Lachish Letters indicate devastation all through Judean cities" (Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 375, n. 108).

<sup>271</sup> Ezek. 12:13.

<sup>272</sup> Jer. 39:11-14.

"Why has the LORD done such a thing to this land and to this temple? Because they have forsaken the LORD, the God of their fathers, and have adopted other gods, worshipping and serving them--that is why he brought all this disaster on them."

2 Chronicles 7:21-22

## Appendix 1 Dates of Reigns

### *THE KINGS OF THE UNITED KINGDOM*

Saul	
David	1010-970
Solomon	970-930

### *THE KINGS OF ISRAEL (NORTHERN KINGDOM)*<sup>273</sup>

Jeroboam	930-909	
Nadab	909-908	
Baasha	908-886	
Elah	886-885	
Zimri	885	(7 days)
Tibni	885-880	(rules over half the northern tribes)
Omri	885-880	(rules over the other half)
Omri	880-874	
Ahab	874-853	
Ahaziah	853-852	
Jehoram	852-841	(aka Joram)
Jehu	841-814	
Jehoahaz	814-798	
Jehoash	798-782	
Jeroboam II	793-782	(coregency)
Jeroboam II	782-753	(sole reign)
Zechariah	753-752	
Shallum	752	(1 month)
Menahem	752-742	(rules from Samaria)
Pekah	752-740	(rules from Gilead)
Pekahiah	742-740	(Pekah begins reign in Samaria in 740)
Pekah	752-732	(total reign)
Hoshea	732-723	

### *THE KINGS OF JUDAH (SOUTHERN KINGDOM)*

Rehoboam	930-913
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<sup>273</sup> The dates in this paper generally follow the scheme developed by Edwin R. Thiele, *MNHK* and his *Chronology*. His system of dating is based on what he considers two firm dates: "We thus have two key dates established in Hebrew chronology, viz., 853 for the death of Ahab and 701 as the fourteenth year of Hezekiah. From these dates it is possible to go forward and backward in accord with the biblical data of synchronisms and lengths of reign to establish the dates of all the other Hebrew rulers" (*Chronology*, p. 30; he argues for the same firm dates in *MNHK*, pp. 67-78).

Abijam	913-910	(aka Abijah)
Asa	910-869	
Jehoshaphat	872-869	(coregent)
Jehoshaphat	869-848	(sole reign)
Jehoram	853-848	(coregent)
Jehoram	848-841	(sole reign)
Ahaziah	841	(aka Jehoahaz)
Athaliah	841-835	(a usurper and not legitimate ruler)
Joash	835-796	
Amaziah	796-767	
Uzziah	792-767	(aka Azariah; coregent)
Uzziah	767-740	
Jotham	750-740	(coregent at Uzziah's leprosy)
Jotham	740-732	
Ahaz	743-732	(coregent)
Ahaz	735-715	(Ahaz becomes supreme)
Hezekiah	729-686	(coregent)
Hezekiah	719-686	
Manasseh	696-686	(coregent)
Manasseh	687-642	(sole reign)
Amon	642-640	
Josiah	640-609	
Jehoahaz	609	(aka Shallum and Jeconiah; 3 months)
Jehoiakim	609-598	
Jehoiachin	598-597	(aka Coniah; 3 months)
Zedekiah	597-586	(aka Mattaniah)

#### *THE KINGS OF SYRIA*

Ben-hadad I	ca. 895	
Ben-hadad II <sup>274</sup>	ca. 860-841	
Hazael	ca. 841-798(?)	
Ben-hadad III	ca. 796(?) - 770	
Rezin	ca. 743(?) - 732	(Damascus destroyed)

#### *THE KINGS OF ASSYRIA*

Shalmaneser III (Turmoil)	859-824	
Adad-nirari III (3 Weak kings)	810-783	
Tiglath-pileser III	745-727	(aka Pul)
Shalmaneser V	727-722	
Sargon II	722-705	
Sennacherib	705-681	

<sup>274</sup> See footnote 55.

Essarhaddon	681-669
Ashurbanipal	669-627

*THE KINGS OF BABYLON*

Nabopolassar	625-605
Nebuchadnezzar	605-562

## Appendix 2

### Jeroboam's Ten Tribes

#### 1 Kgs. 11:26-40

This passage raises many difficulties. The prophet Ahijah, after tearing his new cloak into twelve pieces, instructs Jeroboam to take only ten pieces, representing ten tribes. Is this number to be taken literally? Moreover, since 10 from 12 is 2, how is it that Rehoboam will retain only "one tribe" (11:32)?

Some background is helpful. Jacob had twelve sons. However, there was no tribe of Joseph. Ephraim and Manasseh, the sons of Joseph, were called "half tribes"<sup>275</sup> to keep the total number of tribes equal to twelve. At the conquest of Canaan, the land was divided twelve ways. Ephraim and Manasseh, as separate political entities, each received a parcel. Consistent with this division of the land, Levi, the priestly tribe, was not given a parcel.<sup>276</sup> Thus, in the division of the land, Ephraim and Manasseh were counted as full tribes and Levi was not counted as a tribe in a political sense, again making twelve tribes.

Now to the question: Did Jeroboam receive ten tribes? C. F. Keil has a lengthy discussion in which he answers no.<sup>277</sup> He argues that "ten" is symbolic of completeness, namely, "all Israel"<sup>278</sup> in contrast to "one," which implies merely that which is left over. Numerically, Jeroboam got only nine tribes, since Simeon was a territory surrounded entirely by Judah.<sup>279</sup> Nor, according to Keil, was the division even a clean 9 to 3 (Judah, Benjamin, and Simeon). Some cities in Benjamin went to Jeroboam, while some cities in Dan stayed with Judah. Finally, Keil emphatically denies that the "one tribe" of 11:32 is Benjamin.

However, this is the solution offered by a modern commentator, Paul R. House: "David's descendants from the tribe of Judah will have one other tribe (Benjamin) to rule. Jeroboam will govern the remaining ten tribes."<sup>280</sup> This is a neat solution to the "one tribe" problem in 11:32 when obviously Rehoboam gets at least Judah and most of Benjamin. Nevertheless, it would seem that in view of the phrase, "for the sake of David and for the sake of Jerusalem," the most natural interpretation of the "one tribe" is Judah. Perhaps Judah alone is singled out by Ahijah precisely because David and Jerusalem are cited as the reason why the *entire* kingdom is not taken from Rehoboam. Historically, the tribe of Benjamin had always aligned itself with the northern tribes<sup>281</sup>, but at this juncture in history Benjamin soon joined Judah under Rehoboam's rule.<sup>282</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> Num. 32:33; 34:13-15; Josh. 13:7-8.

<sup>276</sup> Josh. 14:1-4.

<sup>277</sup> C. F. Keil, "The Books of the Kings," *Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 178-181.

<sup>278</sup> 1 Kgs. 12:20.

<sup>279</sup> Josh. 19:1-9; 1 Chron. 4:24-43.

<sup>280</sup> Paul R. House, "1, 2 Kings," *The New American Commentary* (Broadman & Holman, 1995), p. 171.

<sup>281</sup> Cf. 2 Sam. 2:9; 20:1-22.

<sup>282</sup> Cf. 1 Kgs. 12:21-23.

As far as Simeon is concerned, J. A. Thompson argues that the Simeonites appear at times in the north, as in 2 Chron. 34:6: "Perhaps some incursion of people like the Edomites into Judah displaced the Simeonites northwards. Certainty is not possible."<sup>283</sup>

Leon Wood argues similarly.<sup>284</sup> To the question of why the tribe of Simeon is not included in the southern kingdom, he responds, "The answer is best found in an apparent movement of many (perhaps most) Simeonites, some time prior to the division of the kingdom, north to the region of Ephraim and Manasseh, perhaps more specifically to northern Manasseh."

In conclusion, I believe the usual 10/2 division still seems the best overall solution. The statements in 11:31-32 do not seem symbolic: "Take ten pieces...I will give you ten tribes." Rehoboam gets Judah and Benjamin, Jeroboam the other ten. This division is political. Thus, Ephraim and Manasseh would be counted as separate tribes to make the ten tribes of the northern kingdom; Levi was not counted as either part of the ten northern tribes or the two southern tribes, although because of their priestly duties, most of the Levites lived in Judah.<sup>285</sup>

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<sup>283</sup> J. A. Thompson "1, 2 Chronicles," *The New American Commentary* (Broadman & Holman, 1994), p. 271.

<sup>284</sup> Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 337.

<sup>285</sup> Cf. 2 Chron. 13:9.

## Appendix 3 Baal Worship

We now know a great deal about this religion from the discovery of the Ugaritic material at Ras esh-Shamrah, the modern Arabic name of the ancient city of Ugarit on the coast of northern Phoenicia (now part of modern Syria). The site was excavated from 1929 to 1937. Ugaritic is the closest ancient language to Biblical Hebrew. The evidence indicates that very little change in the contents of this Canaanite religion occurred between 1400 and 700 B.C. Here is a brief summary.

In the Canaanite pantheon, **El** was the supreme deity. Some of his descriptions were "Father of Years," "Creator of Creatures," and "Bull El," meaning progenitor of the gods, tacitly likening him to a bull in the midst of a herd of cows.

**Asherah** was the wife of El, referred to as "Lady of the Sea." Later, in lower Canaan, she was apparently considered the consort of Baal. The word "Asherah" and its plural "Asherim" occur about 40 times in the OT. 1 Kgs. 18:19 may refer to the goddess herself, but these words usually refer to sacred trees or wooden images representing the female deity, mistranslated "grove" or "groves" in the KJV.

El and Asherah produce a family of over 70 gods and goddesses. The best known is **Baal**, meaning "lord" or "master." He is also identified with the storm god "Hadad."<sup>286</sup> Baal was thus the god of rain and vegetation. As such he was responsible for germination and reproduction in crops, flocks, and humans. He is described as the "Rider of the Clouds" in the Ugaritic literature. There is no doubt that Baal was considered the supreme fertility god of Canaanite religion.

**Anath**, the goddess of sex and war, was the sister and consort of Baal in the Ugaritic literature. Together they are the leading figures in the great epic poem found in the Ras Shamrah tablets.

**Ashtoreth** (plural, Ashtaroth) was considered the consort of Baal in southern Syria and Palestine.<sup>287</sup>

According to Wood, "The concepts of all three female deities, Anath, Asherah, and Ashtoreth, were somewhat fluid, tending to change and merge into one another, so that clear distinctions were not always maintained."<sup>288</sup> The following is a good assessment of the nature of these Canaanite gods:<sup>289</sup>

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<sup>286</sup> Recall several Syrian kings, e.g., 1 Kgs. 20, are called Ben-Hadad or "son of Hadad."

<sup>287</sup> See Jud. 2:13; 1 Kgs. 11:5.

<sup>288</sup> Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 208.

<sup>289</sup> *The Westminster Historical Atlas to the Bible*, revised edition, edited by George Ernest Wright and Floyd Vivian Filson [Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956], p. 36.

"The amazing thing about the gods, as they were conceived in Canaan, is that they had no moral character whatsoever...Certainly the brutality of the mythology is far worse than anywhere else in the Near East at that time. Worship of these gods carried with it some of the most demoralizing practices then in existence. Among them were child sacrifice, a practice long since discarded in Egypt and Babylonia, sacred prostitution, and snake worship on a scale unknown among other peoples."

The severe command given by God to destroy the Canaanites and this religion when Israel entered the land under Joshua<sup>290</sup> can now be seen in its full significance. However, Israel not only failed to fulfil this command and stamp out this hideous religion, but eventually it thoroughly embraced it. It is a sad commentary on the faithlessness of Israel that God turned to the Gentiles to rid the earth of this religion once and for all.

First, Assyria destroyed Israel (722), and Babylon destroyed Judah (586), thus finally eradicating Israel's infatuation with Baal. Next to be destroyed was Phoenicia itself. Although Babylon began the process, Alexander the Great finally destroyed all of Phoenicia (332), while the straight-laced Romans destroyed Carthage (146), a Phoenician colony in northern Africa and the last remnant of Baal worship anywhere. Cato, a Roman statesman who was known for his upright life, ended all his speeches in the Roman senate with the words, "Carthage must be destroyed!"

"In 146 B.C. the order was given that Carthage should be completely wiped out. The Roman army ruthlessly carried out the command. The Carthaginians who were not killed during the siege of the city were slaughtered or sold into slavery. Carthage was plundered and then burned. After that, the ground on which Carthage had stood was turned under with a plow, and a terrible curse was laid on anyone who should ever try to rebuild the city. Thus the great Phoenician trading center of the Mediterranean passed out of existence."<sup>291</sup>

Without knowing what was really at stake, it is easy today to feel sorry for Hannibal and his elephants in this colossal struggle between Rome and Carthage. However, the following comments are significant:<sup>292</sup>

"It is interesting to note the statement in Josephus that the grand niece of Jezebel, about 20 years after the death of Jezebel's father, founded the city of Carthage in Northern Africa, the forces of which, under Hannibal, nearly overwhelmed Rome...Had Jezebel succeeded in Palestine and Hannibal in Italy, this faith [Baalism] might have overspread the world. The sword of Scipio Africanus and the faith of Elijah the Tishbite were strange allies, but the Lord used them both to save the world from such a fate."

<sup>290</sup> See Exod. 34:12-13; Deut. 7:1-5; 20:16-18.

<sup>291</sup> Lester B. Rogers, Fay Adams, and Walker Brown, *Story of Nations* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1960), pp. 115-116.

<sup>292</sup> Albertus Pieters, cited by Charles F. Pfeiffer, *Old Testament History* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973), p. 76.

Hannibal was defeated and Carthage completely destroyed. Perhaps the Lord's humor can be seen here: the name "Hannibal" means "Baal has been gracious."

## Appendix 4

### The Reign of Hezekiah

The reign of Hezekiah is perhaps the most difficult problem in OT chronology. There are three major components to the problem:

- Harmonizing the Scriptural data given about its length and the dates of the beginning and end of his reign.
- Determining whether Sennacherib made one or two invasions or assaults against Judah.
- Fixing the time that Hezekiah becomes ill and the subsequent visit of the envoys from Merodach-baladan.

The first problem is addressed in this appendix, while the second and third problems are discussed in Appendix 5.

The scheme adopted in this paper is based on the work of H. G. Stigers<sup>293</sup>, cited positively and defended by Leon Wood.<sup>294</sup> The logic is as follows.

1. 2 Kgs. 18:1-2 states that Hezekiah "became king" in the third year of Hoshea. That year was 729 (or possibly 728). But since Ahaz was clearly still ruling, this must be an appointment to a coregency.
2. 2 Kgs. 16:1-2 states that Ahaz "became king" in the seventeenth year of Pekah. The seventeenth year of Pekah was 735. Therefore, this must be the year of the coup that makes Ahaz supreme, although he had been appointed regent in 743.
3. 2 Kgs. 16:1-2 also states that Ahaz reigned 16 years. That makes the terminus 719 (735 - 16 = 719), four years prior to his death in 715. Therefore, Hezekiah became supreme in 719. Note that the 16 years of 2 Kgs 16:1-2 represents only the years of the supremacy of Ahaz.
4. 2 Kgs. 18:13 states that Sennacherib attacked Judah in the "fourteenth year" of Hezekiah. The date of this attack is well-established from Assyrian records as 701. Working backward, that makes Hezekiah's "first year" 715 (701 + 14 = 715), the death of Ahaz. So 2 Kgs. 18:13 begins counting from the year that Hezekiah becomes sole king. This presents a different way of looking at the beginning of his reign from what is given in 2 Kgs. 18:1-2, but it is not contradictory. 2 Kgs 18:1-2 views the beginning of his reign as the beginning of his coregency; 2 Kgs 18:13 views the beginning of his reign to be the death of Ahaz.

<sup>293</sup> H. G. Stigers, "The Interphased Chronology of Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, and Hoshea," *Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society* 8 (Spring, 1966), pp. 86-88.

<sup>294</sup> Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 354, nn. 52,53 and p. 357, nn 57,58.

5. However, 2 Kgs. 18:1-2 also states that Hezekiah reigned 29 years. This period must be from 715 with the death of Ahaz to 686 with the death of Hezekiah (715 - 29 = 686). So *half* of the statement in 2 Kgs. 18:1-2 represents the perspective of 2 Kgs. 18:13: the 29 years must start in 715 with the death of Ahaz. In other words, 2 Kgs. 18:1-2 states that he "became king" with his coregency in 729, but it also states that his true reign of 29 years as supreme ruler begins in 715, in agreement with the point of view in 2 Kgs. 18:13.
6. Finally, 2 Kgs. 18:1-2 states that Hezekiah was 25 years old "when he became king." This is taken to be 715, the beginning of the 29-year reign. Thus, 18:1 describes the beginning of his coregency, while 18:2 describes the beginning of his sole reign.

Admittedly, the problems associated with Hezekiah's reign are difficult, but this scheme seems to be the best fit for the Scriptural data. The above scheme may not be entirely satisfying, but the two alternatives are less so.

Thiele, on the basis of 2 Kgs. 18:13, does not see any coregency for Hezekiah and begins his reign in every sense in 715. He then reluctantly admits that "the third year of Hoshea" in 2 Kgs. 18:1-2 is an error.

"In a discussion of the regnal data of Hezekiah, it is of paramount importance that the synchronisms between him and Hoshea [in 2 Kgs. 18:1, 9-10] be recognized as late and artificial. These synchronisms came into being because the final editor of Kings did not understand dual dating for Pekah."<sup>295</sup>

Archer does not consider the author of 2 Kings to be in error in 18:1-2 (or anywhere else!). His solution is that the Masoretic text has a copy error at 2 Kgs. 18:13.<sup>296</sup> Only a very small change is required to make the "14" into "24." This change makes the first year of Hezekiah to be 725. On this basis Archer makes that the year Ahaz dies. E. J. Young also argues for a change from 14 to 24.<sup>297</sup> However, not only is there no manuscript support for such an emendation (admitted by Young), but this device does not really remove the fundamental problem: there would still be a double perspective in this chapter: in 18:1-2, the 29 years mentioned cannot start with the third year of Hoshea.

Here is a summary of the scheme used as the working hypothesis for this paper:

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<sup>295</sup> Thiele, *MNHK*, p. 174. He does not seem to be bashful about making this assertion, for he repeats it in several other places in his book (e.g., p. 201), and again on p. 202: "We now know that the final redactors of Kings did not understand the chronological data of those years." Indeed, on pp. 198-199, he lists multiple "editorial misunderstandings" in the book of 2 Kings.

<sup>296</sup> Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, revised edition (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), pp. 291-292.

<sup>297</sup> E. J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1969), II:540-542.

A	792	Uzziah becomes coregent under Amaziah
B	767	Amaziah dies; Uzziah becomes sole ruler
C	750	Jotham becomes coregent at Uzziah's leprosy
D	743	Ahaz becomes coregent under Jotham
E	740	Uzziah dies; Jotham becomes supreme
F	735/734	Ahaz becomes supreme during pro-Assyrian coup
G	732/731	Jotham dies; Ahaz becomes sole ruler
H	729	Hezekiah (11 years old) becomes coregent under Ahaz ("3rd year of Hoshea")
I	719	Hezekiah becomes supreme (21 years old)
J	715	Ahaz dies; Hezekiah becomes sole ruler (25 years old)
K	701	Sennacherib invades; (14th year of Hezekiah)
L	686	Hezekiah dies

Here is the harmonization represented by this scheme:

**From A to E: 52 years; 2 Kgs. 15:1-2.**

**From C to F: 16 years; 2 Kgs. 15:32-33.**

**From F to I: 16 years; 2 Kgs. 16:1-2.**

**From J to L: 29 years; 2 Kgs. 18:1-2.**

**From J to K: 14 years; 2 Kgs. 18:13.**

## Appendix 5

### Sennacherib and Hezekiah

There are two remaining problems associated with Hezekiah's reign:

- Determining whether Sennacherib made one or two invasions or assaults against Judah.
- Fixing the time that Hezekiah becomes ill and the subsequent visit of the envoys from Merodach-baladan.

Sargon II (722-705) was killed in battle at Tabalu, north of the Taurus mountains. In the same month, his son, Sennacherib, ascends the throne of Assyria. As background to the problem of the Judean invasion, it is convenient to summarize the campaigns of Sennacherib based on his own annals.<sup>298</sup>

#### *THE EIGHT CAMPAIGNS OF SENNACHERIB*

##### Campaign 1 (702)

Merodach-baladan, most likely a member of the Yakin tribe, one of the five Chaldean tribes,<sup>299</sup> reigned as king in Babylon from 721-710. In 710, Sargon invaded Babylon and Merodach-baladan was forced to flee. Apparently, Sargon allowed him to continue as ruler of the province of Bit-Yakin. After Sargon died, however, Merodach-baladan, with the help of the kingdom Elam, seized the throne in Babylon in 703 and so reigned as king again from 703-702. In his first campaign, Sennacherib marched on Babylon in 702. Elam had sent 80,000 archers to help, but Sennacherib inflicted a terrible defeat, forcing Merodach-baladan to flee in order to save his life. He placed Bel-ibni on the throne in Babylon (702-700), a Babylonian who had served at the palace in Assyria.

##### Campaign 2 (702)

With Sennacherib busy in Babylon, it seemed a good time for revolt in other regions of the empire. Therefore, Sennacherib's second campaign was against various tribes east of the Tigris. The Medes satisfied Sennacherib by paying a tribute.

##### Campaign 3 (701)

In his third campaign, Sennacherib moves west against a coalition of the coastal states. He moves first against Tyre, then Sidon, and continues down the coast subduing

<sup>298</sup> This summary is based on W. S. LaSor, "Sennacherib," *ISBE*, IV:394.

<sup>299</sup> W. S. LaSor, "Sennacherib," *ISBE*, III:325.

Ashkelon and other Philistine cities. Finally, he moves inland against Judah, capturing 46 fortified cities and making Hezekiah a "prisoner in Jerusalem...like a bird in a cage."<sup>300</sup>

#### Campaign 4 (701)

Sennacherib's fourth campaign, like the first, was against Bit-Yakin. Bel-ibni had revolted, Merodach-baladan probably having played a role. Sennacherib once again puts down the revolt and places Assur-nadin-sumi on the throne in Babylon.

#### Campaign 5 (?)

The fifth campaign was again against the tribes east of the Tigris.

#### Campaign 6 (700)

The sixth campaign was once again against Bit-Yakin. Merodach-baladan receives further support from Elam, but again the Assyrians were victorious. According to Sennacherib's records, Merodach-baladan flees to Elam and dies there.

#### Campaign 7 (694-693)

The seventh campaign was against Elam, probably to secure the loyalty of the border cities between Elam and Assyria. Merodach-baladan most likely was already dead at this point. Elam is defeated but not occupied.

#### Campaign 8 (ca. 690)

The final campaign recorded by Sennacherib was again against Elam. Sennacherib claims victory at the battle of Halule, but the results were probably indecisive.<sup>301</sup> On his return, Sennacherib sacked Babylon and diverted the canals to flood the city. The Babylonian Chronicle records that for eight years (689-681) Babylon had no king.

#### *ONE INVASION OR TWO?*

Following the death of Sargon, revolts break out in several parts of the Assyrian Empire. Merodach-baladan seizes the throne again in Babylon. A new coalition in the west among the coastal nations forms, headed by Tyre. Hezekiah joins this coalition and withholds his tribute to Assyria.

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<sup>300</sup> James B. Pritchard, *ANET*, p. 288.

<sup>301</sup> A. R. Millard, "Elam," *ISBE*, II:51.

After dealing with two revolts elsewhere, Sennacherib moves west in 701 to crush the rebellion among the coastal nations. He moves first against Tyre, then Sidon, and continues down the coast subduing Ashkelon and other Philistine cities. With the coastline in his control, he turns inland toward Judah. According to Sennacherib's annals, he captures 46 fortified cities (campaign 3).

The theory that Sennacherib made two invasions into Judah has been debated for at least a century. According to the two-invasion theory, the first invasion occurred during Sennacherib's third campaign in 701. The second invasion occurred after 688/687, that is, after the eighth and last campaign recorded in the annals of Sennacherib.

The argument for a single invasion includes the following points: (1) Sennacherib's annals mention only one invasion of Judah, and (2) the biblical account in 2 Kgs. 18:13-19:37 likewise seems to mention only one invasion.

The argument for two invasions includes the following points: (1) the biblical mention of Sennacherib's occupation of Lachish in 2 Kgs. 18:14; 19:8 together with the Lachish reliefs in Sennacherib's palace in Nineveh,<sup>302</sup> when his annals do not mention Lachish in the campaign of 701; (2) the battle with Tirhakah of Egypt in 2 Kgs. 19:9; and (3) the juxtaposition of Sennacherib's hasty retreat and his assassination in 2 Kgs. 19:35-37.

Although current scholarly opinion for the moment seems to favor the two-invasion theory,<sup>303</sup> the working hypothesis for this paper is that there was only one invasion. The main reason is due to what a two-invasion theory does to the account in 2 Kings. LaSor, himself an advocate of the two-invasion theory, admits that the two invasions have been "merged" in the account in 2 Kings.<sup>304</sup> However, when the account is examined in detail, "merged" would seem to be a euphemism for "hopelessly confused." Consider the following points.

First, one of the arguments for the two-invasion theory is the fact that Lachish is not mentioned in Sennacherib's annals of his campaign of 701, and therefore the relief at Nineveh must depict a later invasion after 688. Yet the very first mention of Sennacherib in the biblical account, 2 Kgs. 18:13, is followed immediately in 18:14 by the statement that he has occupied Lachish.

Second, advocates of the two-invasion theory like LaSor attribute the payment of the overdue tribute described in 2 Kgs. 18:14-16 to the first invasion, even though it is mentioned after picturing Sennacherib at Lachish and clearly implies that the tribute was sent to Sennacherib at Lachish.

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<sup>302</sup> James B. Pritchard, *ANEP*, figs. 371-374.

<sup>303</sup> LaSor, "Sennacherib," *ISBE*, IV:396, quotes John Bright in the latest edition of his book (3rd edition, 1981) favorably: "Though new evidence may altar the picture, and though dogmatism is certainly to be avoided, a two-campaign theory seems at present to satisfy the evidence best."

<sup>304</sup> LaSor, "Sennacherib," *ISBE*, IV:396.

Such an account by the author of 2 Kings would indeed constitute quite a "merger"! Therefore, it is appropriate to examine the arguments for two invasions more carefully to see if they actually require attributing such a confusing "merger" to the author of 2 Kings.

### The Problem of Tirhakah

There are several parts to the argument from Tirhakah. First, he is called "king of Ethiopia" (Cush) in 2 Kgs. 19:9, but he did not become king until 690. So how could the battle in 2 Kgs. 19:9 have occurred in 701? However, this argument has been answered by Kenneth Kitchen in at least three different places. The use of "king" is simply a prolepsis, since the account in 2 Kings was written after 690. Such proleptic usage does not constitute an error. Kitchen cites two extra-biblical examples from the ancient world where the same type of prolepsis occurs.<sup>305</sup> Regarding this argument, Kitchen has a rather biting comment:

"Unaware of the importance of these facts, and badly misled by a wrong interpretation of some of Tirhakah's inscriptions, Old Testament scholars have often tumbled over each other in their eagerness to diagnose hopeless historical errors in Kings and Isaiah, with multiple campaigns of Sennacherib and what not--all needlessly."<sup>306</sup>

So the use of the title "king" in 2 Kgs. 19:9 does not preclude a battle in 701.

Second, there is the question of Tirhakah's age. Some scholars have placed his birth in 709, making him only nine years old in 701. However, a much-improved interpretation of Tirhakah's Kawa texts would place the death of his father, Piankhy, between 717 and 713, and it is likely that Tirhakah was about twenty years old in 701.<sup>307</sup> The chronology would be as follows: Piankhy died in 713. His brother, Shabataka, then reigned from 713-702. Piankhy had two sons, Shabataka and Tirhakah. Shabataka was on the throne from 702-690, when Tirhakah became king. So Tirhakah, as a prince, could lead an army to Palestine on behalf of his brother Shabataka in 701.<sup>308</sup>

Third, LaSor argues that "evidence from Egypt places the reign of Shabataka 713-699."<sup>309</sup> He agrees that Tirhakah was commander of the forces under his brother Shabataka<sup>310</sup> and therefore argues that Tirhakah could not have led an army in 701 when Shabataka did not come to the throne until 699. Notice how the validity of this

<sup>305</sup> Kenneth A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament* (InterVarsity Press, 1966), pp. 82-83, *The Bible in Its World: The Bible and Archeology Today* (InterVarsity Press, 1977), pp. 113-114, and "Tirhakah," *ISBE*, IV:859.

<sup>306</sup> *The Bible in Its World: The Bible and Archeology Today*, p. 114.

<sup>307</sup> Kenneth A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament* (InterVarsity Press, 1966), pp. 83-84.

<sup>308</sup> Even LaSor, an advocate of the two-invasion theory, admits this: "Scholarly opinion at this writing seems to favor the suggestion that Tirhakah was commander of the forces of his brother Shabataka" ("Egypt," *ISBE*, II:45).

<sup>309</sup> W. S. LaSor, "Sennacherib," *ISBE*, IV:396.

<sup>310</sup> See footnote 308."

argument hinges on whether the terminus of Shabataka's reign was 699 or 702. Boldly basing an argument on 699 presumes a mighty small range of error! These dates are just not that certain. Egyptologist Kenneth Kitchen, whose scholarly status is unquestioned, writes in the very same volume of *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* that dates for the reigns of Shabataka are "ca. 702-690."<sup>311</sup> Therefore, this argument is hardly conclusive. Kitchen concludes his article as follows:

"A second Assyrian campaign in Palestine by Sennacherib is theoretically possible but not required by the Egyptian data."

### The Problem of Lachish

This argument also has several parts. First, Lachish is not mentioned in Sennacherib's own account of his third campaign in 701 but its conquest is depicted in reliefs in his palace at Nineveh. However, this has a simple answer. When Sennacherib comes to Judah in the description of his campaign of 701, he mentions only Jerusalem, where he made Hezekiah a "prisoner...like a bird in a cage" and "46 of his strong cities." There is nothing to prohibit Lachish from being one of these 46 cities.

Second, LaSor argues that evidence from Lachish indicates that its destruction was later than 701.<sup>312</sup> But here again, scholarly opinion is just not unanimous on this point. Another article in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* has this to say:

"Sennacherib of Assyria made Lachish his field headquarters (701) and received there Hezekiah's suit for peace (2 K. 18:14, 17; 2 Ch. 32:9; Isa. 36:2). Scholars disagree on whether the Assyrian occupation of Lachish mentioned in 2 K. 19:8 refers to a second, later campaign by Sennacherib; it is more likely that he conducted a single campaign against Hezekiah's kingdom...After the Assyrian conquest Lachish remained a desolate and abandoned site for perhaps a half-century."<sup>313</sup>

Therefore, it hardly seems the case that archeological evidence requires attributing a confusing "merger" of two invasions to the author of 2 Kings. The biblical account becomes a very straightforward presentation when interpreted in light of a single invasion.

### The problem of Sennacherib's Assassination

The final argument against a single invasion is based on the juxtaposition of Sennacherib's hasty retreat and his assassination in 2 Kgs. 19:35-37. This argument, at least, is not archeological but exegetical.

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<sup>311</sup> Kenneth A. Kitchen, "Tirhakah," *ISBE*, IV:859.

<sup>312</sup> W. S. LaSor, "Sennacherib," *ISBE*, IV:396.

<sup>313</sup> V. R. Gold and K. N. Schoville, "Lachish," *ISBE*, III:56-58.

"The topical treatment here could give the impression that his death took place shortly after his return from Jerusalem. In fact, he did not die for some twenty years, not until 681. However, there is nothing in the present statement to demand an immediate death, and the fact that the writer's report of the nature of the death coincides with the Assyrian account--murder by his sons in his own temple--makes it plain that the author knows of the intervening period but is consciously telescoping events in order to show how God's promise concerning Sennacherib and Jerusalem was kept."<sup>314</sup>

### *THE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS IN THE BIBLICAL ACCOUNT*

What, then, is the sequence of events if the account in 2 Kings is taken as a reference to a single invasion?

**2 Kgs. 18:7-8:** As already noted, Hezekiah rebelled against Sennacherib, withheld his tribute, and prepared for war.

**2 Kgs. 18:13:** After defeating Tyre, Sidon, and the Philistines, Sennacherib turns inland and attacks Judah, taking many fortified cities, including Lachish.

**2 Kgs. 18:14-16:** Hezekiah relents and sends a message to Sennacherib at Lachish, saying he will pay whatever Sennacherib demands. Hezekiah sends his tribute and probably at this time, also releases Padi (not mentioned in the biblical account).

**2 Kgs. 18:17-37:** Sennacherib is not satisfied with this show of submission. He sends Rabshakeh with a "large army" to Jerusalem demanding a full surrender.<sup>315</sup>

**2 Kgs. 19:1-7:** Hezekiah consults Isaiah, who reassures the king. He promises that Sennacherib will "hear a rumor," return to his own land, and be killed "by the sword in his own land."

**2 Kgs. 19:8-13:** Rabshekah returns to Sennacherib, but the king has left Lachish and is fighting at Libnah. There Sennacherib hears that Tirhakah is advancing from Egypt to wage war against him. Before leaving Libnah to engage the Egyptians, Sennacherib once again sends ambassadors to Hezekiah with a letter boasting of his other victories and summoning Hezekiah to give up his confidence in God, essentially making the same demands he had already made through Rabshekah.

**2 Kgs. 19:14-19:** Hezekiah brings the letter to the temple and presents it to the Lord.

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<sup>314</sup> John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), p. 670.

<sup>315</sup> It is sometimes argued that Rabshakeh's threats and Sennacherib's letter imply a second invasion, since Hezekiah had already paid the tribute. However, there is a good explanation for these actions on the part of Sennacherib, and there is no need to hypothesize a second invasion. See footnote 200.

**2 Kgs. 19:20-34:** Again, the Lord answers through Isaiah. "I will defend this city." According to the word of the Lord, Sennacherib will not come to Jerusalem, shoot an arrow at it, or set up a mound against it.

**2 Kgs. 19:35-37:** The angel of the Lord strikes down 185,000 Assyrian soldiers. Sennacherib returns to Assyria, and, some twenty years later, is killed with the sword, as Isaiah had predicted in 2 Kgs. 19:7.

### *HEZEKIAH'S ILLNESS AND MERODACH-BALADAN*

One problem remains in the chronology of Hezekiah's reign: when do the events of 2 Kings 20 take place? That is, when did Hezekiah become mortally ill, and when did Merodach-baladan send his representatives to Jerusalem? According to the biblical record, when Hezekiah was healed, God added 15 years to his life. This is a key point in establishing the time of the recovery and the time the envoys arrived, which was just after Hezekiah's recovery.

It must be recognized, of course, that Merodach-baladan's motive for sending representatives to Jerusalem was not primarily to congratulate Hezekiah on his recovery. He no doubt wanted to enlist Hezekiah as an aid in his life-long struggle against Assyria. Virtually all scholars agree on this point.

On the question of when Merodach-baladan might have sent envoys to Hezekiah, three answers have been given.

1. During Merodach-baladan's first reign as king in Babylon, 721-710.<sup>316</sup> More specifically, the visit would be during the formation of the first coalition under Ashdod in order to induce Hezekiah to join that coalition (which he did not). This would place the visit sometime before 711 when Sargon defeated the coalition.
2. During Merodach-baladan's second reign in Babylon, about 703.<sup>317</sup>
3. In 701, at the beginning of Sennacherib's invasion of Judah.<sup>318</sup> On this view, Hezekiah becomes ill at the height of the crisis, and God heals him and delivers Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib. Upon hearing of the healing, the miraculous sign, and the return of Sennacherib to Assyria, Merodach-baladan sends his envoys to congratulate Hezekiah, still in 701.

View one has the advantage that Merodach-baladan is actually reigning in Babylon as king, which accords nicely with the statement in 2 Kgs. 20:12. The problem with the 711

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<sup>316</sup> This view is preferred by John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), pp. 674-675, 692-693.

<sup>317</sup> This view is preferred by W. S. LaSor, "Sennacherib," *ISBE*, IV:394.

<sup>318</sup> This view is preferred by C. F. Keil, "The Books of the Kings," *Commentary on the Old Testament*, pp. 460-461, Leon Wood, *SIH*, p. 361, J. A. Thompson "1, 2 Chronicles," *The New American Commentary* [Broadman & Holman, 1994], p. 365, and S. J. Schultz, "Hezekiah," *ISBE*, II:704-705.

date or earlier is that it would require Hezekiah's death to be around 697 or 696, a radical departure from the chronology of Thiele, which in general forms the basis for this paper.

View two also has the advantage that Merodach-baladan is actually reigning in Babylon as king. However, also like view one, it sets an unlikely date for the death of Hezekiah. A more serious problem, however, is that God's announcement of recovery in 2 Kgs. 20:6 includes the promise that he will deliver Hezekiah and Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib. This promise would have much less cogency if given two years before Sennacherib even arrives on the scene.

View three fits reasonably well with the archeological data. In 701, when Merodach-baladan hears of Hezekiah's divine deliverance and Sennacherib's return to Assyria, he probably knows that he will soon face Sennacherib again himself. Indeed, almost immediately upon his return to Assyria in 701, Sennacherib sets out to subdue Bel-ibni in Babylon and his likely confederate, Merodach-baladan, thus launching his fourth campaign. Therefore, if Hezekiah is so favored by his God, this would be an ideal time to enlist his aid.

View three also appears to best account for the biblical data:

1. In general, Thiele's scheme is the basis for the dates in this paper. If, according to Thiele, Hezekiah died in 686, 15 years earlier gives 701.
2. The promise of recovery and the addition of 15 years includes a promise for the deliverance of Jerusalem from the king of Assyria: "I will defend this city" (2 Kgs, 20:6). This is the same wording as in 19:34. View three gives this promise a cogency lacking in views one and two, when no Assyrian king is actually on the scene.
3. 2 Kgs. 20:3 states that when Isaiah told Hezekiah that he would die, Hezekiah "wept bitterly." Based on view three, this can be given a much better interpretation than supposing that Hezekiah trembles like a child in the face of death. Hezekiah would weep bitterly because he would be dying in the midst of Jerusalem's greatest crisis to date, leaving it without a king.<sup>319</sup>
4. This view also fits very nicely into the accounts in 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles. In general the account in 2 Kings gives more details. However, the account in 2 Chronicles includes two sections not found in 2 Kings. These two additional sections show that in very short order Hezekiah had accumulated "very great wealth" and that this accumulation preceded the visit of the envoys from Merodach-baladan. Therefore, even though Hezekiah had stripped his resources to pay the tribute to Sennacherib in 2 Kgs. 18:14-16, he indeed had plenty to show the Babylonians! Here is how the two accounts synchronize:

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<sup>319</sup> On Thiele's scheme, his son Manasseh would be only about 8 years old in 701 (see footnote 210).

2 Kgs. 18:13-19:34; 2 Chron. 32:9-19	The invasion and challenge
2 Kgs. 19:35-37; 2 Chron. 32:20-21	Deliverance and return of Sennacherib to Assyria
2 Chron. 32:22-23	Surrounding nations bring "choice presents" to Hezekiah, who is "highly exalted" among the nations
2 Kgs. 20:1-11; 2 Chron. 32:24	Hezekiah's illness, sign, and recovery
2 Chron. 32:25-30	Hezekiah proud, then penitent; God gave him "very great wealth"
2 Kgs. 20:12-19; 2 Chron. 32:31	Envoys from Merodach-baladan

One problem with this view is that Merodach-baladan is not actually on the throne in Babylon in 701. However, he always considered himself the valid king of Babylon, and he had been king for many years. Therefore, it is not surprising that he would be referred to as "king" in 2 Kgs. 20:12, much like we today refer to "President Clinton" or "President Carter" while they still live even though they are no longer president. Moreover, this situation is not unlike referring to Tirhakah as king before he becomes "king." This would seem to be a small problem with the view compared with all the problems it solves.

Isaiah seems to criticize Hezekiah for the tour he gives the envoys of Merodach-baladan. However, it is easy to understand Hezekiah's actions.

"The annals of Sargon and Sennacherib, with their many references to Merodach-baladan and boasts of conquests over him, his city, his people, and his allies, give the impression that he was indeed a very powerful king. We can well understand how Hezekiah could have been greatly impressed by stories that Merodach-baladan's emissaries must have told."<sup>320</sup>

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<sup>320</sup> W. S. LaSor, "Merodach-baladan," *ISBE*, III:326.

## Appendix 6

### The Prayer of Manasseh

2 Chron. 33:13 states that while in captivity Manasseh prayed to God, who then brought him back to Jerusalem to complete his reign. 2 Chron. 33:18-19 states that this prayer was recorded in "the records of the kings of Israel" and in "the records of Hozai."<sup>321</sup>

The Prayer of Manasseh is strictly anonymous. It was possibly composed by a pious Jew between ca. 250 and 150 B.C.,<sup>322</sup> either of Palestinian or Alexandrian origin. However, since the books referred to in 2 Chron. 33:18-19 are no longer extant, it is impossible to be certain of any correspondence to Manasseh's actual prayer recorded in those books.

"Had the Prayer reflected the situation of Manasseh to any great degree, it would certainly have made more specific reference to the apostasy and human sacrifice of which he was guilty. By contrast, only the most general transgressions are confessed."<sup>323</sup>

Nevertheless, the apocryphal Prayer of Manasseh may very well preserve a few remnants of Manasseh's prayer for it captures a true spirit of repentance.

"It is easy to understand that the Chronicler's story of Manasseh's repentance and prayer and deliverance from captivity must have produced upon the minds of devout Jews a profound impression. The record of his idolatry and of his persecution of the servants of Jehovah had stamped his name with infamy in the annals of Judah. But side by side with his wickedness were commemorated the unusual length of the king's reign and the quiet peacefulness of his end. The Chronicler's story of the repentance and conversion of Manasseh provided the explanation of a seemingly unintelligible anomaly. Henceforth his name was associated by Jewish tradition not only with the grossest acts of idolatry ever perpetrated by a king of Judah, but also with the most famous instance of Divine forgiveness towards a repentant sinner. What more remarkable example could be found of the long-suffering compassion of the Almighty and of His readiness to hear and to answer the supplication of a contrite penitent?"<sup>324</sup>

Here is the Prayer of Manasseh:

1 O Lord Almighty, which art in heaven,  
Thou God of our fathers,

<sup>321</sup> *Hazai* (חזאי) is difficult. *BDB* suggests that it is a scribal error for the plural מִיִּזְוֵה "seers"; the LXX also has "seers." If this is correct, then the reference would be to a book compiled by some prophets.

<sup>322</sup> R. K. Harrison, "Manasseh, Prayer of," *ISBE*, III:236. The oldest extant manuscript is from the 3rd century, A.D.

<sup>323</sup> R. K. Harrison, "Manasseh, Prayer of," *ISBE*, III:236.

<sup>324</sup> R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, vol 1: *Apocrypha* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1913), 612.

Of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob,  
 And of their righteous seed;  
 2 Thou who hast made the heaven and the earth,  
 With all the array thereof:  
 3 Who hast bound the sea by the word of thy command;  
 4 Who hast shut up the Deep, and sealed it  
 With thy terrible and glorious Name;  
 5 Whom all things do dread; yea, they tremble before thy power:  
 For the majesty of thy glory cannot be borne,  
 And the anger of thy threatening against sinners is unendurable:  
 6 Infinite and unsearchable is thy merciful promise;  
 7 For thou art the Lord Most High, of great compassion,  
 long-suffering and abundant in mercy, and repentest thee  
 for the evils of men.  
 Thou, O Lord, according to thy great goodness hast promised repentance  
 and forgiveness to them that have sinned against thee; and in the  
 multitude of thy mercies hast appointed repentance unto sinners,  
 that they may be saved.  
 8 Thou, therefore, O Lord, that art the God of the righteous, hast not  
 appointed repentance unto the righteous, unto Abraham, and Isaac  
 and Jacob, which have not sinned against thee:  
 But thou hast appointed repentance unto me that am a sinner;  
 For the sins I have sinned are more in number than the sands of the sea.  
 9 For my transgressions were multiplied, O Lord:  
 My transgressions were multiplied,  
 And I am not worthy to behold and see the height of heaven by reason of  
 the multitude of mine iniquities.  
 And now, O Lord, I am justly punished and deservedly afflicted;  
 For lo! I am in captivity.  
 10 Bowed down with many an iron chain,  
 So that I cannot lift up mine head by reason of my sins,  
 Neither have I any respite;  
 Because I provoked thy wrath, and did that which was evil in thy  
 sight.  
 I did not do thy will, neither kept I thy commandments:  
 I set up abominations, and multiplied detestable things.  
 11 And now I bow the knee of mine heart, beseeching thee of thy gracious  
 goodness.  
 12 I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned,  
 And I acknowledge mine iniquities.  
 13 But, I humbly beseech thee,  
 Forgive me, O Lord, forgive me,  
 And destroy me not with mine iniquities.  
 Neither, in thy continual anger against me,  
 Lay up evil in store for me:  
 Nor pass thou sentence against me,  
 When I am in the lowest parts of the earth.  
 For thou, O Lord, art the God of them that repent;  
 14 And in me thou wilt show forth \*all\* thy goodness;  
 For thou wilt save me, unworthy that I am,  
 According to thy great mercy.  
 15 And I will praise thee for ever all the days of my life:  
 For all the host of heaven doth sing thy praise,  
 And thine is the glory for ever and ever. Amen.