Lesson 10: The Divided Kingdom

God predicted the division of Israel to Jeroboam through Ahijah the prophet.
- Rehoboam’s unwillingness to reduce Solomon’s heavy tax burden and conscription resulted in the secession of the 10 northern tribes. They made Jeroboam the first king, as Ahijah had predicted.
- The Unified Kingdom of Israel was now split, with the 10 tribes in the north, referred to as Israel, and the tribes of Judah and Benjamin in the south, referred to as Judah.

ISRAEL (The Northern Kingdom)

JEROBOAM (931-910) 1 Kings 12:25 – 14:20

Jeroboam took over as first ruler of the new 10-tribe nation of Israel.
- The initial capital was established at Shechem (1 Kings 12:25).
- Jeroboam eventually established his permanent capital at Tirzah (1 Kings 14:17; 15:21), thought to be modern Tell el-Farah, about six miles northeast of Shechem.

Jeroboam sinned in the sight of God by establishing cult worship for the people (1 Kings 12:26-33). He established worship centers at Dan in the north and Bethel in the south. He erected gold calves at each center.
- God sent a messenger to rebuke Jeroboam. Called “a man of God,” the messenger came north from Judah, spoke against the Bethel altar, and predicted that a prince of the House of David, Josiah, would one day burn the bones of Jeroboam’s priests upon that very altar. (1 Kings 13:1-3; 2 Kings 23: 15-16).

Jeroboam was not able to maintain all of the land that he had received when he became king.
- The region around Damascus was lost. This is known from the fact that, when Rezon (Damascus king) died, he left Damascus as capital of an independent Aramean state. Rezon was likely the Hezion of 1 Kings 15:18, who is listed on the votive stele of Benhadad I.
  o The votive basalt stele of Benhadad I was found in Bredsh, a village north of Aleppo.

- Another area lost was in the southwest where the Philistines reclaimed territory around Gibbethon.
- In the east Moab was lost. The Moabite Stone records her reconquest by Omri, Israel’s sixth king.
- Jeroboam also suffered invasion into Israel by Shishak (fig. 1), king of Egypt, who had earlier given asylum to Jeroboam when he fled from Solomon.
  o The name of the Egyptian king to whom Jeroboam fled, Pharaoh Shishak, has also been found on an inscription, which lists the cities

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he conquered during his invasion of Israel. This confirms the Bible in 1 Kings 14:25-26:

1 Kings 14:25 Now it happened in the fifth year of King Rehoboam, that Shishak the king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem.
1 Kings 14:26 He took away the treasures of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the king’s house, and he took everything, even taking all the shields of gold which Solomon had made.

1 Kings 14:25-26 (NASB)

In 1903 during excavations at Megiddo a jasper seal (fig. 2) was found with the following inscription:
- “Shema servant of Jeroboam”
- The seal belonged to a servant of either Jeroboam I (first king of Israel), or Jeroboam II who ruled from 782-753 BC at the time of Jonah the prophet.

NADAB (910-909) – 1 Kings 15:25-31

Nadab succeeded his father, reigning at Tirzah for two years. The only biblical record we have is his siege of Gibbethon, in Philistine territory, which his father lost.
- During this siege Nadab was assassinated by Baasha (1 Kings 15:27-28), probably one of his generals, who then ruled.

BAASHA (909-886) – 1 Kings 15:32 – 16:7; 2 Chronicles 16:1-6

Baasha ruled for 24 years. Little is recorded of his reign except that he continued in conflict with Judah.
- Baasha attempted to fortify Ramah, four miles north of Jerusalem.
- Asa, king of Judah, retaliated by persuading Benhadad I (c. 896-874), king of the Aramean city of Damascus, to attack Baasha’s northern cities. Benhadad attacked and Baasha had to cease his efforts at Ramah to protect his own land.

ELAH & ZIMRI (886-885) – 1 Kings 16:8-22

Elah succeeded his father Baasha and ruled two years.
- Elah also wanted the Philistine city of Gibbethon and sent his general, Omri, to lay siege to it. While Omri was there, Zimri, another general, assassinated Elah and proclaimed himself king.
- When Omri, still at Gibbethon, learned of the assassination he had himself declared king by his army and returned to Tirzah where he successfully put down Zimri’s rebellion.

OMRI (885-874) – 1 Kings 16:23-28

Omri began a dynasty that would last three generations, but pressures from enemies were ever present.
- The Aramean state to the north was rising in power. The Aramean king, Benhadad I, left a stele near Aleppo which shows that he was able to extend his power as far north as Syria by 850 BC.
- In addition to the threat of Aramean, a greater danger was rising in the east. Assyria was becoming a world power under Ashur-nasir-pal II (883-859). With him the period of Assyrian empire is said to

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have begun. He marched his army across the Euphrates and occupied land as far west as Byblos, Sidon, and Tyre on the Mediterranean.

Omri was a strong ruler. Testimony of this is provided by Assyrian rulers, living a century later, who still referred to Israel as the “Land of Omri.”
- Adad-nirari III (810-782), Tiglath-pileser III (745-727), and Sargon II (721-705) all make references to Omri in various inscriptions and relief’s.

Omri built a new capital for Israel, the city of Samaria, which would continue as capital until Israel’s fall to the Assyrians in 722 BC.
- Samaria proved to be an almost impregnable stronghold. Excavation has revealed excellent workmanship with walls some 24 feet thick.
- Omri must have secured a Phoenician alliance as implied by the marriage of his son Ahab to the Phoenician princess, Jezebel. It is likely that he made a treaty with her father, King Ethbaal.

The Moabite (Mesha) Stone (fig. 3)

This monument was found by a German missionary in 1898, lying on the ground near the Arnon River in the Biblical city of Dibon. Recorded on the stone are victories over the Israelites by Mesha, king of Moab
- Written by Mesha, king of Moab (2 Kings 3:4), it states that “Omri, king of Israel” had conquered Moab in the days of Mesha’s father. Mesha goes on to say that under the direction of his god Chemosh he was able to throw off the tribute that Omri had imposed.
- What we are able to determine from the Moabite Stone is that Omri was at some point capable of defeating Moab.

The following is a translation of the text taken from the Mesha stone:

| Line 1 | I Mesha, son of Chemosh, Mesha’s king, the |
| Line 2 | Dibonite. My father governed Moab for 30 years, then I reigned |
| Line 3 | after my father. I made a high place for Chemosh in Qarhoh, |
| Line 5 | As for Omri king of Israel, he oppressed Moab for many years, for Chemosh was furious with his |
| Line 6 | country. And his son followed in his footsteps, and he also said: “I will cast down Moab.” In my days, he spoke, |
| Line 8 | And he lived in it during his time and in the days of his sons; 40 years; yet Chemosh |
| Line 18 | hearths of YHWH, dragging them before Chemosh. And Israel’s king built |
| Line 31 | [.....] sheep of the land. While the house of David inhabited Horonaim. |

Fig. 3 The Moabite (Mesha) Stone
Lines 1-3 mention King Mesha, a Dibonite who ruled over Moab. He worshiped a Moabite god called Chemosh, whom he attributes his victories to.

- The Bible in 2 Kings 3:4 verifies Mesha was the king of Moab during their revolt against Israel.
  2Kgs 3:4 (NASB) Now Mesha king of Moab was a sheep breeder, and used to pay the king of Israel 100,000 lambs and the wool of 100,000 rams.

- The bible also states in Numbers 21:29-30, that Dibon was a city in the land of Moab and mentions their god, Chemosh.
  Nu 21:29-30 (NASB) “Woe to you, O Moab! You are ruined, O people of Chemosh! He has given his sons as fugitives, And his daughters into captivity, To an Amorite king, Sihon. But we have cast them down, Heshbon is ruined as far as Dibon, Then we have laid waste even to Nophah, Which reaches to Medeba.”

Lines 5-6 state that Omri was king of Israel and that he was succeeded by his son.

- The Bible confirms this in 1 Kings 16:23 & 28:
  1Kgs 16:23 (NASB) In the thirty-first year of Asa king of Judah, Omri became king over Israel and reigned twelve years; he reigned six years at Tirzah.
  1Kgs 16:28 (NASB) So Omri slept with his fathers and was buried in Samaria; and Ahab his son became king in his place.

Line 8 says that Omri and his sons ruled for 40 years.

- The Bible says the same thing starting in 1 Kings 16:23. Omri ruled for 12 years, six of those years he co-reigned with Tibni, and for six years he ruled as king of Israel from 880-874 BC, his son Ahab took over and ruled 22 years from 874-853 BC (1 Kings 16:29), then Ahab’s son Ahaziah ruled two years from 853-852 BC (1 Kings 22:51), Ahab’s last son Joram ruled 10 years from 852-841 BC, a total of 40 years. Joram was killed by Jehu in his eleventh year as king (2 Kings 9:14-29).

Line 18 makes a reference to the altar hearths of YHWH.

- “YHWH” is the Hebrew word for God (Yahweh), spelled just as it is used in the Bible.

Line 31 says, “And the House of David inhabited Horonaim.”

- Here is found one of the first references outside of the bible to King David and his descendants, who were from the tribe of Judah.
- Mesha also makes a distinction between the men of Israel and the House of David. This is exactly how the Bible states Israel was divided as a kingdom during this time.
- Jehoshaphat was king of Judah from the House of David, while Joram was the king of Israel (853 - 841), according to 2 Kings 3.
- The town of Horonaim is also mentioned in Jeremiah 48:3-7.

**AHAB (874-853)** – 1 Kings 16:28-34; 20:1 – 22:40

King Ahab and Queen Jezebel did evil in the sight of God more than all before them (1 Kings 16:30). The main reason for this accusation is that they introduced Jezebel’s native religion, the cult of Baal to Israel.

- Excavation at Samaria has revealed that Ahab built an impressive casemate wall around the royal quarter of the city. This was a double wall divided into rooms by partitions. To the north the outer wall was about six feet thick, the inner about four feet, and the space between about 23 feet thick.
- Archaeologists from Harvard digging at Samaria have also found a palace that Ahab built which

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contained within it a room where ivories were stored. This room is mentioned in the bible in 1 Kings 22:39 which says:

1 KINGS 22:39 Now the rest of the acts of Ahab and all that he did and the ivory house which he built and all the cities which he built, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?

1 Kings 22:39 (NASB)

- God spoke against these houses in Amos 3:15:

AMOS 3:15 “I will also smite the winter house together with the summer house; The houses of ivory will also perish And the great houses will come to an end,” Declares the LORD.

Amos 3:15 (NASB)

Ahab was an effective military leader.
- On two occasions he defeated Aramean forces in accordance with predictions of “a prophet” of God (1 Kings 20:1-34). He would have fought both Benhadad I and Benhadad II.
- In 853 BC Ahab and Benhadad II (Aramean) joined in a northern coalition to stop Shalmaneser’s (Assyria) army at Qarqar on the Orontes River.
  - Ahab is mentioned in Assyrian records. In an inscription that accounts a battle known as Qarqar (fig. 4), between Ahab and King Shalmaneser III of Assyria, Shalmaneser records the size of Ahab’s army that fought against him. It mentions the following: “2,000 chariots and 10,000 men of Ahab king of Israel.”

- Ahab again fought with Benhadad II, this time at Ramoth-gilead (identified with Tell-Ramith, 28 miles east of the Jordan and 15 miles south of the Sea of Galilee) and was killed, thus fulfilling a prediction by the prophet Micaiah (1 Kings 22:13-39).
  - Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, had allied himself with Ahab and was almost killed.

King Ahab married one of the most wicked woman in scripture, Jezebel. Her father was known as king Ethbaal, a dictator who took the throne of Sidon by force. He did so by assassinating his brothers. His name means, I am with Baal.
- The Oriental Institute of Chicago, during excavations near Samaria, found the ruins of a temple built to Ashertoreth that stood during the reign of King Ahab. Near the site were found jars that contained the remains of infants who had been sacrificed in this temple.
- This find verifies that Baal & Asherah worship were common in Samaria at the time of Jezebel. 1 Kings 18:19 mentions that Jezebel surrounded herself with the prophets of Baal and of Asherah.
- A seal has been found which once belonged to Jezebel (fig. 5). The seal is inscribed with the letters “JZBL”. According to the bible, Jezebel was quite at home with sealing documents with a seal. 1 Kings 21:8 says:

\[\text{1 Ki 21:8}: \text{So she wrote letters in Ahab’s name and sealed them with his seal, and sent letters to the elders and to the nobles who were living with Naboth in his city.}\]

1 Kings 21:8 (NASB)

ELIJAH – 1 Kings 17-19; 21; 2 Kings 1:1 – 2:11

During the reign of Ahab, one of Israel’s outstanding prophets ministered (1 Kings 17-19; 21; 2 Kings 1:1-2:11). This was Elijah who came from Gilead across the Jordan and dressed simply in camel’s hair clothing. He demonstrated outstanding courage and faith in opposing Jezebel’s introduction of the Baal cult.

AHAZIAH (853-852) – 2 Kings 1:2-18

Two sons of Ahab succeeded him: first Ahaziah, then Jehoram. Ahaziah ruled only two years and died without sons to succeed him, thus giving opportunity for the second son, Jehoram. Ahaziah died from wounds received in a fall. Two other matters from his reign are recorded.

- One is that Mesha, king of Moab, revolted against the heavy tribute imposed by Jehoram’s grandfather, Omri. Results of this uprising were experienced later in Jehoram’s rule as well.
- The other is that he entered into a joint maritime venture with Jehoshaphat, king of Judah. The ships built were all destroyed, even before their maiden voyage. The destruction was in accordance with the prophet Eliezer’s prediction, which pronounced God’s displeasure at this second instance of Jehoshaphat aligning himself with the wicked kings of Israel.

JEHORAM (852-841) – 2 Kings 3

Jehoram ruled longer than his brother, a total of 12 years.

- Moab’s king, Mesha, refused to send the tribute imposed earlier by Omri. Jehoram took steps to force continued tribute with the help of Jehoshaphat.
- Mesha was able to save his country from destruction through the sacrifice of his eldest son, which affected the full withdrawal of Israel/Judah forces. The exact connection between this sacrifice and the withdrawal is not made clear, but it is possible that the army of an apostate Israel feared the intervention of Chemosh in response to this supreme sacrifice.
- The biblical account supports Mesha’s boast on the Moabite Stone that deliverance from Israel’s dominance was achieved in his day.

Contact between Israel and the Arameans continued from the reign of Baasha through most of Israel’s history. These particular contacts during the rule of Jehoram were significant from the biblical point of view because they involved the prophet Elisha.

- There were many conflicts between Israel and Aram of which Elisha provided assistance.
- A final conflict with the Arameans led to Jehoram’s death. Like Ahab his father, he met the Arameans in battle at Ramoth-gilead with help in the encounter from the king of Judah, Ahaziah. Jehoram was seriously wounded and returned to Jezreel, alternate capital of Omri rulers, to recover.
- Later, Ahaziah, who had returned to Judah after the battle came to Jezreel to visit him and ended up

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being caught in a wave of destruction launched by Jehu, which resulted in the death of both kings.

**JEHU (841-814)** - 2 Kings 9:11 - 10:36; 13; 14:16-29

Jehu killed Omri’s descendant’s, as God had foretold through Elijah (1 Kings 19:15-17; 21:21-24). Elisha sent one of the “company of the prophets” to anoint Jehu as king in Jehoram’s place and to instruct him regarding the purging (2 Kings 9:1-10). Jehu, Jehoram’s military captain still at Ramoth-gilead, accepted the honor and moved quickly across the Jordan to Jezreel to carry out the instructions.

- King Jehoram himself, still recovering from wounds, was killed first.
- Ahaziah, Judah’s king who was visiting, fled for his life from Jezreel, but was later caught and killed by pursuers sent by Jehu.
- Jehu rode into Jezreel and ordered the attendants of Jezebel to throw her from an upper window from which she was looking. They readily complied, and dogs ate her flesh as Elijah had predicted before (1 Kings 21:23).
- At Jehu’s insistence Ahab’s 70 sons were then killed by Samaria’s leaders. Their heads were delivered to Jehu at Jezreel.
- After this Jehu left for Samaria, and on the way met and killed 42 relatives of Ahaziah coming to visit the two kings, not knowing they were already dead.
- Lastly, Jehu called all the prophets and priests of Baal to their temple in Samaria, as if to extend favor to them, but then sent 80 of his men into the temple to kill them to the last man.

This was a thorough blood purging.

Jehu experienced pressure from foreign powers. This came mainly from the Arameans, led by Hazael, in fulfillment of God’s prediction through Elijah (1 Kings 19:15-17).

- The fulfillment was first begun when Elisha went north to Damascus to anoint Hazael (fig. 6) as the Aramean king (2 Kings 8:7-15). Elisha wept when he did so, he knew the havoc this man would bring on Israel.

   1Ki 19:15  The LORD said to him, “Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus, and when you have arrived, you shall anoint Hazael king over Aram;

   1 Kings 19:15 (NASB)

- Though there is no record of how Hazael brought about this havoc, the extent of it is evidenced. He succeeded in seizing all Transjordan from Israel, including the tribal territories of Manasseh, Gad, and Reuben (Amos 1:3). Then, though it is not directly stated, he also must have made serious inroads into Israel west of the Jordan; for a notation from the time of Jehoahaz, son of Jehu, states that Hazael by then was able to dictate how many horses, chariots, and footmen Israel’s king could have in his army (2 Kings 13:7).

- This same Hazael is mentioned in Assyrian records, evidenced by inscriptions from Shalmaneser III. In one from his 14th year (845 BC), he mentions Hadadezer (Benhadad II) as still king in Damascus, and in another from his 18th year (841) he mentions Hazael. This means that Hazael came to the throne between 845 and 841. An inscription by Shalmaneser III, known as the Black Obelisk states this:

   “I fought against Benhadad and take credit for his downfall. Hazael, the son of a worthless man, then ascended to the throne.”

Fig. 6 King Hazael

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Israel also suffered at the hands of Assyria during Jehu’s rule. In fact, the Assyrian invasion came prior to that of Hazael, and brought even greater harm to Hazael’s land than to Israel. The occasion is known only from Assyrian records left by Shalmaneser III.

- Shalmaneser III was the same man against whom Ahab and Benhadad had combined in a twelve-member coalition at Qarqar a dozen years before. Now, for the sixteenth time, he crossed the Euphrates in military campaign.

- He succeeded in leading his large army all the way to Damascus, effecting damage on the city, though without capturing it, and then went on to force Jehu in Israel to pay heavy tribute. Shalmaneser also lists Tyre and Sidon as paying tribute.

- On his famous Black Obelisk (fig. 7) found at Nimrud in 1846, Shalmaneser lists the tribute and depicts the Israeliite king bowing low in submission while presenting his payment (fig. 8). Though Shalmaneser does not claim to have wrought destruction in Israel, the heavy tribute he demanded was humiliating and economically oppressive. Shalmaneser made one more attack in the general area three years later claiming success once more, but nothing is known of the details. No Assyrian army came again for a generation, which permitted Hazael to regain the strength to inflict the aforementioned harm on Israel.

  o The Black Obelisk is a four-sided limestone pillar standing 6.5 feet high, with five rows of relief’s and explanatory cuneiform inscriptions on all sides. In the second row on one side appears Jehu. The obelisk is in the British Museum.

JEHOAHAZ (814-798) – 2 Kings 13:1-9

Jehoahaz succeeded Jehu his father and reigned 17 years. Little is related regarding his rule, apart from a further degree of subjection to Hazael.

- The only item stated is that he sought help from God against Hazael and was given a “deliverer” (2 Kings 13:5). This “deliverer” must have been the Assyrian emperor, Adad-nirari III (810-783), who came to the throne during Jehoahaz’s reign. He did serve as “deliverer” to Israel in that he attacked and crushed Damascus in 803 BC, thus bringing relief to Israel from the Aramean oppression.
- See the text left by Adad-nirari III (fig. 9). By the time of this attack, Benhadad III, son and successor of Hazael, had ascended the throne in Damascus.

JEHOASH (798-782) - 2 Kings 13:10-25; 14:15-16

At Jehoahaz’s death, his son Jehoash assumed the throne. During his rule Israel took steps toward recovery.

- Soon after assuming office Jehoash was promised victory over Damascus by Elisha.
- Succeeding years saw Jehoash experiencing the fulfillment of this prediction, enabling him to recover all of the cities Damascus had taken earlier from Israel (2 Kings 13:25).
- Jehoash also became strong enough to withstand an attack by Amaziah, king of Judah (2 Kings 14:8-14).
- Jehoash also appointed his son, Jeroboam II, as co-ruler. Jeroboam II became coregent when Jehoash had ruled only five of his 16 years.

JEROBOAM II (793-753) - 2 Kings 14:23-29

Jeroboam II was the third successive descendant of Jehu to occupy the throne, and he proved to be one of Israel’s most capable rulers.

- No description of Jeroboam’s battles in accomplishing so much is given, but the end achievement is clear: Jeroboam was able to establish roughly the same boundaries on the east and north that had existed in the empire days of David and Solomon. It is stated that he placed Israel’s northern limit at the “entering of Hamath” (2 Kings 14:25 KJV), the same phrase that describes Solomon’s northern boundary (1 Kings 8:65).
- It is also stated that “he recovered for Israel both Damascus and Hamath” that had belonged “to Judah” (2 Kings 14:28).
- Still further, by gaining control over Damascus, he must have also recovered all Transjordan, which Hazael had seized.

ZECHARIAH (753) - 2 Kings 15:8-12

Jeroboam’s son, Zechariah, succeeded him, the fourth successive descendant of Jehu to sit on the throne. He did not rule long, within six months of assuming the throne he was assassinated by his successor, Shallum.

- Nothing else is indicated regarding Zechariah except that he continued Jeroboam I’s false worship at Dan and Bethel.

SHALLUM (752) - 2 Kings 15:13-15

Shallum killed Zechariah and set himself up as ruler, thus instituting Israel’s sixth ruling family. He reigned only one month, however, when Menahem, possibly as military leader under Zechariah, retaliated by killing him. Nothing further is recorded regarding Shallum.

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MENAHEM (752-742) - 2 Kings 15:16-22

Menahem now set himself up as Israel’s ruler, thus instituting Israel’s seventh ruling family. He ruled for a total of 10 years. During Menahem’s rule, the power of Assyria was once again exerted.

- Tiglath-pileser III (745-727) had now come to the throne and restored Assyria’s empire. He had achieved success first to the south (in Babylonia) and also the north (against the Urartu) before crossing the Euphrates and coming west.
- Tiglath-pileser III (fig. 10) was successful and instituted policies that differed from those of previous rulers. Former kings had been satisfied merely with nominal control and a reception of tribute, but this approach had resulted in constant revolt. Tiglath-pileser III incorporated conquered land as Assyrian provinces and deported native leaders who might instigate revolution.
- His campaign of 743 BC reached all the way to Israel and involved Menahem. Tiglath-pileser III was not yet able to incorporate the area as a province, but he did exact tribute from Menahem. In doing so Menahem became a vassal to the Assyrian ruler (2 Kings 15:19-20).

PEKAHIAH (742-740) & PEKAH (752-732) - 2 Kings 15:23-31

At Menahem’s death his son Pekahiah succeeded him. He ruled only two years when Pekah, one of his military leaders, assassinated him at the palace in Samaria and set himself up as king, thus instituting Israel’s eighth ruling family.

- In Pekah’s sixth year of sole rule, 734 BC, Tiglath-pileser III returned to the west to put down this rebellious alliance. He had come at the request of Ahaz, king of Judah, who had been besieged in Jerusalem by Pekah and Rezin (2 Chron. 28:5-8; Isa. 7:1-2). The two allies had hoped to force Ahaz to join their rebellion. Instead, Ahaz asked for aid from the Assyrian ruler.
- Tiglath-pileser III complied by conducting his campaigns of 734-732. He first moved down the Mediterranean coast as far as Philistia and conquered cities there, especially Gaza. Later he marched into Israel destroying cities all across Galilee and taking many people captive (2 Kings 15:29). In 732 he moved against Damascus, capturing the capital city, and executing Rezin the king. Tiglath-pileser III himself did not kill Pekah, because Hoshea, who succeeded Pekah, did it for him.
  - All of these conquests are listed on various inscriptions left by Tiglath-pileser III.

Fig. 10 Tiglath-pileser III
Having slain Pekah, Hoshea assumed rule, thus instituting Israel’s ninth and last royal dynasty. The Bible records how Hoshea came to power in 2 Kings 15:29-30:

2Ki 15:29 In the days of Pekah king of Israel, Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria came and captured Ijon and Abel-beth-maacah and Janoah and Kedesh and Hazor and Gilead and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali; and he carried them captive to Assyria.

2Ki 15:30 And Hoshea the son of Elah made a conspiracy against Pekah the son of Remaliah, and struck him and put him to death and became king in his place, in the twentieth year of Jotham the son of Uzziah.

2 Kings 15:29-30 (NASB)

- This event is confirmed in the annals of the king of Assyria himself, Tiglath-Pileser III (fig. 11), whose writings state the following concerning Hoshea:

  “They had overthrown their king Pekah, Hoshea I placed as ruler over them. From him I received a tribute of 10 talents of gold and 1,000 talents of silver.”

- The Assyrians had taken both the north (Galilee) and Transjordan, incorporating these areas as Assyrian provinces, leaving Hoshea only the hill country west of the Jordan.
- Hoshea himself was a vassal and soon turned in revolt against the Assyrians. The revolt came after Tiglath-Pileser III was succeeded by his son Shalmaneser V (727-722).
- Hoshea made a pact with Egypt, now weak, which was unable to give the assistance Hoshea needed. Allied with Egypt, Hosea refused to pay the required tribute to Assyria.
- In 724, Shalmaneser V marched on Israel (2 Kings 17:3-6). Hoshea went to meet him, now bringing his overdue tribute, but this no longer satisfied the Assyrian king. Hoshea was immediately taken captive and Shalmaneser moved on to Samaria, placing the capital under siege. The siege lasted from 724 to 722 with Samaria falling, bringing the days of Israel as a sovereign nation to a close.
- The Bible states in 2 Kings 17:6:

  2Ki 17:6 In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria and carried Israel away into exile to Assyria, and settled them in Halah and Habor, on the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.

2 Kings 17:6 (NASB)
The captivity of Samaria is also recorded in Assyrian records. During the siege of Samaria, Shalmaneser died and Sargon II became king and continued the siege. An inscription (fig. 12) of Sargon II states the following:

“In the first year of my reign I captured Samaria along with 27,290 captives. The foreigners of lands who had never paid me tribute, I settled in Samaria.”

A seal bearing the name of King Hoshea (fig. 13) has been found. It is inscribed with the following words: “Abdi, Servant of Hoshea”
- The name of the owner of the seal was a man named Abdi, which translated into English is Obadiah, meaning “servant of Yahweh.” He must have served King Hoshea in some fashion.

Israel under Assyria

After Samaria’s fall, an Assyrian governor was placed over the land, thus incorporating all of Israel into Assyria’s provincial system.
- Many Israelites were taken captive by Assyria and in place of these a foreign upper class of people was imported. This manner of mixing populations had also been instituted by Tiglath-pileser III as a means of diminishing chances of rebellion among subjugated peoples.
- The foreigners brought with them their own native ideas of deity and of worship. This influx resulted in a religion, which both the false deities and God were revered (2 Kings 17:29-41).
- This mixing of population resulted also in intermarriage between the Israelites who were left in the land and the new foreign people. The descendants of these marriages came to be called Samaritans.

Summary

Israel was a nation from 931 to 722 BC.
- Nineteen kings ruled from nine different families. Not one of the 19 was considered good by God, because each followed either the substitute worship at the golden-calf centers, or the more evil cult of Baal. For this reason, God’s blessing was withheld.
- Through Elijah and Elisha, warning was given to the house of Omri concerning the excessive sin of turning to Baal. When no heed was given, punishment was issued, first in the destruction of the Omri family by Jehu, and then in the humiliation of all Israel before the Arameans of Damascus.
- Once again warning came through Amos and Hosea to the house of Jehu during the prosperous days of Jeroboam II, for wickedness related to the material affluence then existent. Nevertheless, again the people would not hear. Thus, a second time God permitted major humiliation in this instance at the hands of Assyria.
- This occasion did not end until Samaria had fallen and Israel ceased to exist as a sovereign power. Israel had been given opportunity to repent, but would not. God’s wrath fell upon her.
UZZIAH (790-739)

Uzziah was 16 years old when he became king, and he reigned 52 years in Jerusalem.

In 1931 in a Russian Orthodox monastery located on the Mount of Olives, a first century AD inscription was discovered bearing the name of King Uzziah (fig. 14). The inscription reads: “Here were brought the bones of Uzziah, King of Judah – do not open.”

- Uzziah was a leper so he was not buried with the other kings, but “near them in a field for burial that belonged to the kings, for people said, ‘he had leprosy’” (2 Chr 26:23).

Other artifacts that testify to Uzziah’s existence are two seals (fig. 15).

- One says: “Abyaw, steward of Uzziah”
- The other says: “Shebnayahu, official to Uzziah”

Another inscription, from the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser, says “Azariah (Uzziah) of Judah” four times.

AHAZ (743-715)

Two clay seals have been found with the name of King Ahaz.

- The first seal, which is located in the Yale University library, reads: “Ushna, an attendant of Ahaz.”
- The second seal is reddish brown in appearance and may contain the actual fingerprint of King Ahaz impressed into its upper left edge. The seal reads: “Ahaz (son of) Jotham, Judah’s king.” Not only is Ahaz mentioned on this seal, but Ahaz’s father, King Jotham is also listed.

Another mention of Ahaz that has been found is taken from an inscription of Tiglath-Pileser III in accounts from his battles against Israel, between 744 and 727 BC, he records the following: “From these I received tribute . . . Ahaz, the king of Judah . . . including gold, silver, iron, fine cloth and many garments made from wool that was dyed in purple.”

- This confirms 2 Kings 16:8 which states:

2Kgs 16:8 Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the LORD and in the treasuries of the king’s house, and sent a present to the king of Assyria.

2 Kings 16:8 (NASB)
HEZEKIAH (728-686)

During the time of Hezekiah was the invasion of Judah by Sennacherib king of Assyria, who eventually laid siege to Jerusalem.

- These events are not only recorded in the Bible, but they are also found in Sennacherib’s account of his invasion of Judah, which was found on a clay prism (fig. 16) now on display at the Oriental Institute Museum of Chicago. It is inscribed with the following words: “Fear of my greatness terrified Hezekiah. He sent to me tribute: 30 talents of gold, 800 talents of silver, precious stones, ivory, and all sorts of gifts, including women from his palace.”

- This confirms the account given in 2 Kings 18:13-15:

  2KI 18:13 Now in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and seized them.
  2KI 18:14 Then Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria at Lachish, saying, “I have done wrong. Withdraw from me; whatever you impose on me I will bear.” So the king of Assyria required of Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold.
  2KI 18:15 Hezekiah gave him all the silver which was found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasuries of the king’s house.

  2 Kings 18:13-15 (NASB)

- Also found on Sennacherib’s prism, he says this of Hezekiah: “As for the king of Judah, Hezekiah, who had not submitted to my authority, I besieged and captured forty-six of his fortified cities, along with many smaller towns, taken in battle with my battering rams . . . I took as plunder 200,150 people, both small and great, male and female, along with a great number of animals including horses, mules, donkeys, camels, oxen, and sheep. As for Hezekiah, I shut him up like a caged bird in his royal city of Jerusalem. I then constructed a series of fortresses around him, and I did not allow anyone to come out of the city gates. His towns which I captured I gave to the kings of Ashod, Ekron, and Gaza.”

- Sennacherib admits he never captured Hezekiah, or the city of Jerusalem.

Why couldn’t the king of Assyria capture Jerusalem as he did with all the other cities of Israel? The answer is given in 2 Kings 19:14-37:

And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it; and Hezekiah went up to the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD. Then Hezekiah prayed before the LORD, and said: “O LORD God of Israel, the One who dwells between the cherubim, You are God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. Incline Your ear, O LORD, and hear; open Your eyes, O LORD, and see; and hear the words of Sennacherib which he has sent to reproach the living God. Truly, LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste the nations and their lands, and have cast their gods into the fire; for they were not gods, but the work of men’s hands; wood and stone. Therefore they destroyed them. Now therefore, O LORD our God, I pray, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You

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are the LORD God, You alone.” Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying, “Thus says the LORD God of Israel: ‘Because you have prayed to Me against Sennacherib king of Assyria, I have heard.’ This is the word which the LORD has spoken concerning him... Whom have you reproached and blasphemed? Against whom have you raised your voice, And lifted up your eyes on high? Against the Holy One of Israel. By your messengers you have reproached the Lord....Because your rage against Me and your tumult Have come up to My ears, Therefore I will put My hook in your nose And My bridle in your lips, And I will turn you back By the way which you came.....Therefore thus says the LORD concerning the king of Assyria: ‘He shall not come into this city, Nor shoot an arrow there, Nor come before it with shield, Nor build a siege mound against it. By the way that he came, By the same shall he return; And he shall not come into this city,’ Says the LORD. ‘For I will defend this city, to save it For My own sake and for My servant David’s sake.’” And it came to pass on a certain night that the angel of the LORD went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand; and when people arose early in the morning, there were the corpses; all dead. So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went away, returned home, and remained at Nineveh. Now it came to pass, as he was worshiping in the temple of Nisroch his god that his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer struck him down with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Ararat. Then Esarhaddon his son reigned in his place.”

- Sennacherib’s death is also recorded on an Assyrian inscription, which reads: “On the 20th day of Tebet, his sons revolted against him and they killed their father, Sennacherib. On the 18th day of Sivan, Esarhaddon, his son, became king.”

The Pool of Siloam

The pool of Siloam was originally constructed by King Hezekiah as recorded in 2 Kings 20:20:

Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah and all his might, and how he made the pool and the conduit and brought water into the city, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?

2 Kings 20:20 (NASB)

- In John chapter 9 it is recorded that Jesus healed a man who had been blind from birth at the pool of Siloam.

- An inscription was discovered in 1880 at the sight of the pool of Siloam describing how two teams of Jewish tunnelers digging towards one another, finally met to finish the construction of the tunnel. The discovery is known as the Siloam inscription (fig. 17) and can be found at the Istanbul Archaeological Museum in Turkey.

- The inscription reads: “The account of breakthrough is as follows. While the tunnelers were working with their picks, each toward the other, and while there was still 5 feet of rock to go through, the rock split to the south and to the north, and the voices of each were heard calling one to another. And at that moment the laborers broke through striking pick against pick. Then the water began to flow from the spring to the pool for a distance of 1,900 feet. And the height of the tunnel above the heads of the laborers was 160 feet.”

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**JOSIAH (642-609)**

According to the bible, when King Josiah was 26 years old, he ordered that the temple of the Lord be repaired. In order to pay for the work, he sent Shaphan his scribe to instruct Hilkiah the high priest to collect money from the temple to pay for the repairs (2 Kings 22:3-5).

- A seal has been found by archaeologists bearing the name of one of Hilkiah and one of his sons. The seal reads: “Azariah son of Hilkiah.”

**JEREMIAH (627-?)**

In 1975, nearly 250 clay seals were found about 44 miles southwest of Jerusalem. These small lumps of clay that are impressed with a seal, in ancient times served as an official signature for an individual. The clay seals were then attached to documents to identify the sender. Among the seals that were found were the names of four Biblical figures mentioned in Jeremiah chapter 36.

- The first clay seal is impressed with the following inscription: “Berekhyahu son of Neriyahu the scribe.” This is the seal of Baruch son of Neriah who was the scribe to the prophet Jeremiah (fig. 18). Baruch’s full name must have been Berekhyahu. The suffix (yahu) in the ancient Hebrew language is a form of Yahweh (God). The name Baruch means “the blessed.” Berekhyahu means “the blessed of Yahweh.” He is mentioned in Jeremiah 36:1-4:

  *JER 36:1* In the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,
  *JER 36:2* “Take a scroll and write on it all the words which I have spoken to you concerning Israel and concerning Judah, and concerning all the nations, from the day I first spoke to you, from the days of Josiah, even to this day.  
  *JER 36:3* Perhaps the house of Judah will hear all the calamity which I plan to bring on them, in order that every man will turn from his evil way; then I will forgive their iniquity and their sin.”

  *JER 36:4* Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah, and Baruch wrote on a scroll at the dictation of Jeremiah all the words of the LORD which He had spoken to him.  

  Jeremiah 36:1-4 (NASB)

- A second clay seal has been found that was impressed with the name of the scribe Elishama. It reads as follows: “Elishama servant of the king.” According to the Bible, Elishama was a scribe who served the king. He is recorded in Jeremiah 36:10-12:

  *JER 36:10* Then Baruch read from the book the words of Jeremiah in the house of the LORD in the chamber of Gemariah the son of Shaphan the scribe, in the upper court, at the entry of the New Gate of the LORD'S house, to all the people.  
  *JER 36:11* Now when Micaiah the son of Gemariah, the son of Shaphan, had heard all the words of the LORD from the book,  
  *JER 36:12* he went down to the king’s house, into the scribe’s chamber. And behold, all the officials were sitting there—Elishama the scribe, and Delaiah the son of Shemaiah, and Elnathan the son of Achbor, and Gemariah the son of Shaphan, and Zedekiah the son of Hananiah, and all the other officials.  

  Jeremiah 36:10-12 (NASB)

- The previous passage also mentions another scribe, Gemariah the son of Shaphan. His clay seal has also been found. The inscription reads: “Gemariah, son of Shaphan”

- The fourth clay seal that was found is inscribed with the name of king Jehoiakim’s son, Jerahmeel. It reads as follows: “Yerahme’el, son of the king.” He is recorded in Jeremiah 36:26.

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In 1935, a collection of letters written on pottery was unearthed in the biblical city of Lachish (fig. 19). These letters confirm events that occurred during King Zedekiah’s reign. The letters also mention the names of biblical figures, possibly even the prophet Jeremiah.

- The letters were written around 588 BC when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon was waging war against Jerusalem and the fortified cities that Judah used for defense.
- Letter number 1 is nothing more then a list of names, but five of them may refer to biblical figures.
  - The first name listed is Gemariah. There are two Gemariah’s listed in the bible during this time frame. The first is Gemariah son of Hilkiah who is mentioned in Jeremiah 29:3. The second is Gemariah son of Shaphan who is mentioned in Jeremiah 36:10.
  - Another name on the list is Jaazaniah, one of the Judean military officers mentioned in 2 Kings 25:23. A seal has also been found bearing the name Jaazaniah. It is inscribed: “Yaazenyahu (Jaazaniah), Servant of the King.”
  - The third name found in the Lachish letter is Neriah, he was the father of Jeremiah’s scribe, Baruch, mentioned in Jeremiah 36:4, as well as Seriah who is mentioned in Jeremiah 51:59. Seriah’s seal has also been found, it is inscribed with the following words: “Seriahu, son of Neriahu”
  - The fourth name is Mattaniah, who according to the bible was appointed King of Judea by Nebuchadnezzar, who changed his original Hebrew name to Zedekiah, recorded in 2 Kings 24:17.
  - The fifth biblical name on the list is Jeremiah, and may possibly refer to the prophet Jeremiah himself.

- Another pottery fragment known as letter IV is inscribed with the following words: “I will send for him tomorrow at daylight. And let it be known to my master that we will be looking for the signals from Lachish, according to the instructions which he has given, for no signals from Azekah have been seen.” Lachish and Azekah were two of Judah’s fortresses first mentioned in 2 Chronicles 11:5-12: “So Rehoboam dwelt in Jerusalem, and built cities for defense in Judah. And he built Bethlehem, .... Lachish, Azekah, Zorah, Aijalon, and Hebron, which are in Judah and Benjamin, fortified cities. And he fortified the strongholds, and put captains in them, and stores of food, oil, and wine. Also in every city he put shields and spears, and made them very strong, having Judah and Benjamin on his side.”

- The Lachish letters were written by the commander of Lachish who was under siege. Letter IV seems to indicate that the city of Azekah had fallen. This historic event confirms the biblical account found in Jeremiah 34:6-7 which says: “Then Jeremiah the prophet spoke all these words to Zedekiah king of Judah in Jerusalem, when the king of Babylon’s army fought against Jerusalem and all the cities of Judah that were left, against Lachish and Azekah; for only these fortified cities remained of the cities of Judah.”
Another pottery fragment found at Lachish had the following inscription written on it, which mentions two biblical figures: “The commander of the army, Coniah son of Elnathan, has arrived and will shortly leave for Egypt.” ....”And as for the letter from the servant of the king, Tobiah, which came to Shallum son of Jaddu’a through the prophet, saying ‘Be on your guard!’, your subject has sent it to my lord.”

- The first biblical name found in Letter III is Elnathan. There are references to two men named Elnathan in the bible during this time frame; the first being Elnathan of Jerusalem who was the grandfather of king Jehoiachin, father in law to king Jehoiakim. He is found in 2 Kings 24:8-17:

  "Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months. His mother’s name was Nehushta the daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem.....At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against Jerusalem, and the city was besieged. And he carried Jehoiachin captive to Babylon.... Then the king of Babylon made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin’s uncle, king in his place, and changed his name to Zedekiah.”

- The second Elnathan found in the bible is Elnathan son of Achbor, who was a prince in king Jehoiakim’s household. He is mentioned in Jeremiah 26:22 and Jeremiah 36:12.

- In the second part of letter III is an astonishing statement about a letter, which came to Shallum son of Jaddu’a through the Prophet. Since there was only one major prophet at the time the Lachish letter was written, it seems very likely that this is a reference to the prophet Jeremiah.

JEHOIACHIN (597)

According to the bible, Jehoiachin became king of Judah after the death of his father King Jehoiakim:

2CH 36:9 Jehoiachin was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned three months and ten days in Jerusalem, and he did evil in the sight of the LORD.
2 Chronicles 36:9 (NASB)

- The first archaeological evidence for his reign as king comes from inscriptions discovered in Israel bearing the words: “Eliakim officer Yaukin”
- The words were found stamped on three pottery jar handles. Yaukin is the Aramaic name for Jehoiachin. Evidently these jars once belonged to one of Jehoiachin’s servants.

Another discovery that verifies biblical events surrounding Jehoiachin’s life was found in Babylon.

- Tablets from the royal archives of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon were unearthed in the ruins of that ancient city that contain food rations paid to captives and craftsmen who lived in and around the city. On one of the tablets, “Yaukin, king of the land of Judah” is mentioned along with his five sons listed as royal princes. Below are a few inscriptions found on the tablets (fig. 21):

  10 (sila of oil) to the king of Judah, Yaukin.
  2 1/2 sila (oil) to the offspring of Judah’s king,
  10 sila to Iakuukinu, the king of Judah’s son,
  2 1/2 sila for the five sons of the Judean king

Fig. 20 Babylon Chronicles
- This evidence matches precisely with the biblical text found in 2 Kings 24:10-17 which says:

“At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against Jerusalem, and the city was besieged. And Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came against the city, as his servants were besieging it. Then Jehoiachin king of Judah, his mother, his servants, his princes, and his officers went out to the king of Babylon; and the king of Babylon, in the eighth year of his reign, took him prisoner. And he carried out from there all the treasures of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the king’s house, and he cut in pieces all the articles of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the LORD, as the LORD had said. Also he carried into captivity all Jerusalem: all the captains and all the mighty men of valor, ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths. None remained except the poorest people of the land. And he carried Jehoiachin captive to Babylon. The king’s mother, the king’s wives, his officers, and the mighty of the land he carried into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon. All the valiant men, seven thousand, and craftsmen and smiths, one thousand, all who were strong and fit for war, these the king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon. Then the king of Babylon made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin’s uncle, king in his place, and changed his name to Zedekiah.”

- Archaeology thus indicates that Jehoiachin was treated well by the kings of Babylon whom provided daily food rations for him. This corresponds with the scripture found in 2 Kings 25:27-30:

“Now it came to pass in the thirty-seventh year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, that Evil-Merodach king of Babylon, in the year that he began to reign, released Jehoiachin king of Judah from prison. ‘He spoke kindly to him, and gave him a more prominent seat than those of the kings who were with him in Babylon. So Jehoiachin changed from his prison garments, and he ate bread regularly before the king all the days of his life. And as for his provisions, there was a regular ration given him by the king, a portion for each day, all the days of his life.”

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THE KINGDOMS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH
1 Kgs. 12

- City
- Capital city
- City (uncertain location)
- Mountain peak
- Israel
- Judah
- International roads
- Local roads

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