



LESSON 15 THE FALL OF ISRAEL

Israel		Judah	
Jeroboam	931–910	Rehoboam	931–913
Nadab	910–909	Abijah	913–911
Baasha	909–886	Asa	911–870
Elah	886–885		
Zimri	885		
Omri	885–874		
Ahab	874–853	Jehoshaphat	873–848
Ahaziah	853–852		
Joram	852–841	Jehoram	848–841
Jehu	841–814	Ahaziah	841
		Athaliah	841–835
Jehoahaz	814–798	Joash	835–796
Jehoash	798–782	Amaziah	796–767
Jeroboam II	793–753	Uzziah	792–740
Zechariah	753		
Shallum	752		
Menahem	752–742	Jotham	750–731
Pekahiah	742–740		
Pekah	752–732	Ahaz	735–715
Hoshea	732–722	Hezekiah	729–686
		Manasseh	696–642
		Amon	642–640
		Josiah	640–609
		Jehoahaz	609
		Jehoiakim	608–598
		Jehoiachin	598–597
		Zedekiah	597–586

Isaiah and Micah were prophets of the Lord sent primarily to the kingdom of Judah, but both had messages from the Lord for the northern kingdom of Israel... messages of impending judgment. The Lord proclaimed through Micah that “I will make Samaria a heap of ruins in the open country, Planting places for a vineyard. I will pour her stones down into the valley And will lay bare her foundations. All of her idols will be smashed, All of her earnings will be burned with fire And all of her images I will make desolate, For she collected them from a harlot’s earnings, And to the earnings of a harlot they will return.” (Micah 1.6-7 NASB95). Furthermore, the Lord declared that Assyria would be His instrument of Divine justice: “Now therefore, behold, the Lord is about to bring on them the strong and abundant waters of the Euphrates, Even the king of Assyria and all his glory; And it will rise up over all its channels and go over all its banks.” (Isaiah 1.7 NASB95)

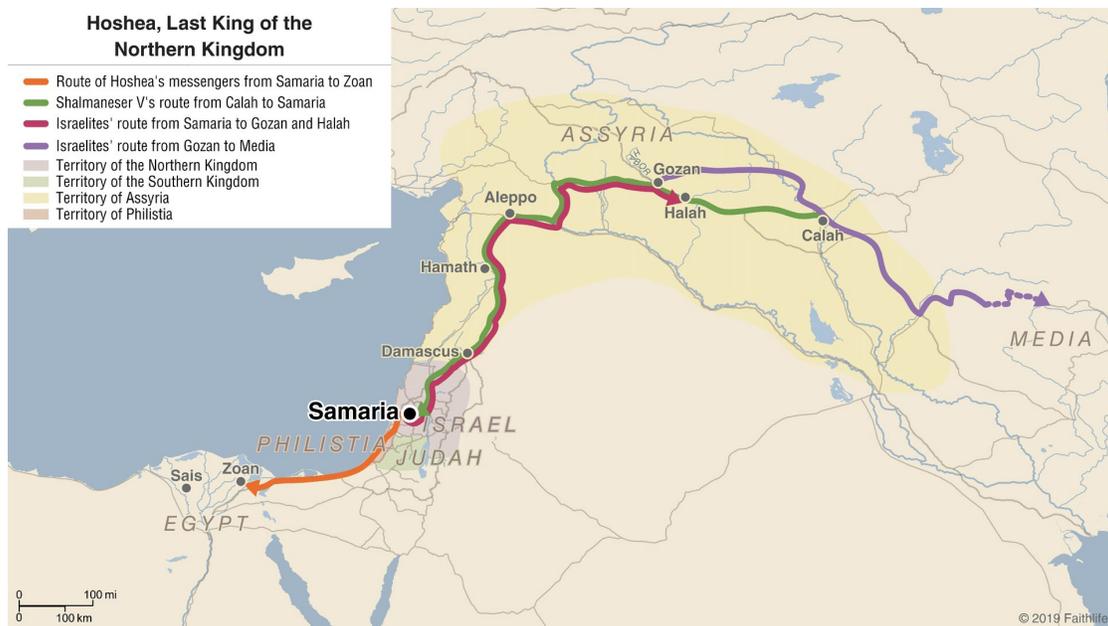
Israel had been heading for this judgment ever since the reign of Jeroboam, whose apostate worship “became a sin” for the people (1Kings 13.30). This lesson will examine how and why Israel fell and also examine the aftermath.

Hoshea and the fall of Israel (2Kings 17.1-6)

In a previous lesson we noted how Israel began paying tribute to Assyria in the days of Menahem (2Kings 15.19). Assyria likely would have been content with allowing Israel to govern its own affairs, so long as the Israelite king remained loyal to his Assyrian overlord and sent the required tribute.

However, when Pekah seized control of the throne he rebelled against Assyria. Tiglath-pileser III invaded, seizing territory and making Israel a vassal state. Hoshea took the opportunity to assassinate Pekah, likely with the Assyrian king's blessing (2Kings 15.29-30). However, Hosea did not remain loyal, withholding tribute at some point only to have Shalmaneser V march against him and exact tribute once again (2Kings 17.3).

However, Hoshea rebelled once more, turning to So king of Egypt for assistance (2Kings 17.4). We've not discussed Egypt much in our study, for this once mighty power had been in turmoil as several dynasties vied for control. "The Pharaoh in question may have been Osorkon IV, the last pharaoh of the Dynasty 22 (730–715 B.C., with "So" being an abbreviation of Osorkon)" (ZIBBC). Assyria had enough and would tolerate no more disloyalty from Israel! Hoshea was imprisoned and then a siege was placed on Samaria. The capital held out for 3 years, but no help came from Egypt... and certainly not from the Lord she had forsaken. Samaria ultimately fell and the inhabitants of the land were carried away into exile (2Kings 17.5-6). The year was 722 B.C., just a little over 200 years from when Jeroboam's dynasty was founded following the death of Solomon in 931 B.C.



Assyria deported populations "to stamp out feelings of nationalism and thus inhibit tendencies toward rebellion and independence" (Eugene Merrill, Kingdom of Priests, page 413). This process began when Samaria fell to Shalmaneser V, but would continue for years to come. "When it fell, Sargon II claims that 27, 290 were taken captive. Many others already had been deported by Tiglath-Pileser and Shalmaneser... The prophet Isaiah had predicted that the process of deportation would take place over a sixty-five-year period beginning in 734 B.C. (Isaiah 7:8). That is what happened, for the task of moving the people continued from 734 to 669 B.C., exactly sixty-five years as Isaiah had

promised. The Assyrian king Esarhaddon (681–669 B.C.), grandson of Sargon II, completed the task. This fact can be noted in Ezra 4:2, where the Samaritan population (a mixed race with the Jewish people because of the policy of deportation) attempted to hinder the work of Governor Zerubbabel and High Priest Joshua in rebuilding the Jerusalem temple. They did so because they were unable to participate in its building, persisting in their claim by saying, ‘We ... have been sacrificing to [Yahweh] since the time of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us here.’” (Walter Kaiser, *History of Israel*, pages 364-365). The captives of Israel were settled in Halah and Habor (near Haran) and the cities of the Medes (modern day Iran).

Why Israel fell (2Kings 17.7-23)

More attention is given to why Israel fell than to how she fell. A theological reason had to be given to explain why God's people were now conquered by a foreign power. “It was not that Yahweh had been helpless or unable to come to the rescue of Israel, but that they had been so disloyal to Yahweh's sovereignty that the threatened judgment known from the days of the Law of Moses had finally to be fulfilled, or else Yahweh himself would no longer be trustworthy in any of His promises” (Walter Kaiser, *History of Israel*, page 365). Disloyalty is the theme of this passage: disloyalty to the Lord, disloyalty to the covenant He made with the nation.

The passage begins by noting Israel's treachery in forsaking the Lord who had blessed them, for God “had brought them up from the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt” (2Kings 17.7 NASB95). This harkens back to God's message to Israel when He first established His covenant with them, a covenant based on His gracious deliverance of Israel out of bondage (Exodus 19.4). However, that covenant required the people to obey the Lord, keep His covenant... and forsake all other gods (Exodus 19.5; 20.2-6). Israel wantonly violated the terms of the covenant. Much attention is paid in the passage to the litany of false gods the people worshipped:

- » They worshipped on the high places rather than at the place where the Lord designated (vs. 9). That worship could have been directed toward Jehovah, idols or both (syncretism).
- » They set up sacred pillars and Asherim, features of Canaanite religion (vs. 10; Exodus 34.13).
- » They worshipped the “host of heaven” (vs. 16). “The worship of the starry hosts, along with sorcery (v. 17), has not been introduced to us thus far in the narrative—both will appear in the account of Manasseh's reign (21:3–6). In biblical theology God created and controls the celestial bodies, but he is not in them and they are not divine. Deuteronomy 4:19–20 therefore commands: ‘When you raise your eyes to heaven, when you see the sun,

the moon, the stars, all the array of heaven, do not be tempted to worship them and serve them.' ... In the ancient Near East more generally, however, the stars and the planets were identified with specific gods and goddesses and worshiped as such, and their movements were carefully studied for astrological reasons. The sun was worshiped in Mesopotamia as Shamash, the moon as Sin, and the planet Venus as Ishtar (the goddess of love and sexuality)." (ZIBBC)

- » They served Baal (vs. 16). As we've noted in our study, Baal enjoyed government sponsorship during the reigns of Ahab and his sons. Jehu may have put an end to national recognition of this false god, but that did not keep the people from serving Baal.
- » They sacrificed their sons and daughters (vs. 17), a reference to the worship of Molech.
- » And of course, they worshipped the golden calves of Jeroboam (vss. 16, 21-23).

The Lord sent prophets to the people, seeking to repair the covenant (vs. 13), but "they did not listen, but stiffened their neck..." (vs. 14). In forsaking their glorious and holy God the text states, "They worshiped worthless idols, so they became worthless" (2Kings 17.15 NLT). A people who should have been God's special treasure (Exodus 19.5-6) had become worthless and vain; the Lord's anger against them was justified! And in His anger, He "removed them from His sight" (vs. 18). While Judah is mentioned as being spared, the writer notes that the tribe of David was also guilty of breaking the covenant (vs. 19). Future lessons will note their continued departure from the Lord and subsequent punishment.

Before we move on we should note the irony we've seen so far in the chapter. In vss. 1-6 we read how Israel was taken into exile by the Assyrians. This was inflicted upon the nation because Israel had been unfaithful to her covenant with the Assyrians, and such disloyalty merited swift and sure punishment. But vss. 7-23 show that it was Israel's breaking of another, greater covenant which resulted in her removal from the land: Israel had broken covenant with the Lord!

Resettlement in the land (2Kings 17.24-41)

Just as Assyria had resettled Israel to other places in the empire, so they resettled other conquered peoples to the land of Israel (vs. 24). "The peoples brought to Samaria, on the other hand, originated in such places as Babylon, Cuthah (Tell Ibrahim, twenty miles northeast of Babylon), Avva (Tell Kefr Aya, on the Orontes River in north Syria), Hamath (Hama), and Sepharvaim (near Hamath in upper Syria)." (Eugene Merrill, Kingdom of Priests, page 414).



Great attention is given in this passage to the worship of these resettled people. Since they did not know Jehovah, the Lord sent lions to afflict them (vs. 25, one of the covenant curses see Leviticus 26.21-22). A priest of Bethel (one of Jeroboam's idolatrous sites) was recalled from exile to instruct the people "how they should fear the Lord" (vs. 28). However, the people would not be faithful to Jehovah, rather "they feared the Lord and served their own gods..." (vs. 33). These gods are listed in vss. 30-31: "The only deities in this list who are clearly known from other sources are the West Semitic god Ashima and the Mesopotamian god Nergal, who was an underworld god associated with famine, drought, plague, and death and whose cult was centered in the city of Cuthah. The combination Succoth Benoth alludes at least to the goddess Banitu and possibly also to Sakkut (Ninurta). Nibhaz and Tartak may be Elamite deities, while Adrammelech and Anammelech may be Phoenician and Emarite gods respectively." (ZIBBC)

The passage ends by commenting at length on how this resettled people did not follow the commandments of God, the commands He had given to Israel (vss. 34-41). Perhaps the purpose of this passage isn't simply to point out the unfaithfulness of these heathen peoples, but to show how God's covenant people of Israel had been no better than these people who did not know Jehovah. Regardless, these resettled people would become known as the Samaritans and would figure into the history of God's people following their exile and on into New Testament times.