

Tiglathpileser

Commentary for October 1, 2018 — The Threat Behind the Story

Tiglathpileser is the name of an Assyrian king used in Scripture. He was a threat to every person involved in this month's article "Israel and Judah: 32. Jotham and Ahaz of Judah." (Read the "[October 2018 Newsletter](#)" for background.) In fact, in the Near East from Egypt to what is now Turkey to ancient Babylon, everyone at the time of Jotham and Ahaz, kings of Judah and Pekah, king of Israel, worried about Assyria led by Tiglathpileser.¹

While the saga of Israel and Judah seems to concern itself with the rulers, the kingdoms, and the prophets of God that warned them, it is the people of the twelve tribes of Israel that were the focus of YHWH. International trade, politics, and military events only intrude on the history of Israel and Judah when YHWH uses those events to make the point that their utter dependence upon Him should be the primary importance in their lives. Of course, they were unable to control their sins and evils and were forced to respond to events resulting from their actions. The situation is the same for all nations, peoples, and individuals today.

One reason opposition to Assyria was so strong (although everyone wanted to trade with Assyrian merchants) was their extreme cruelty against their enemies. It is a sad situation for your world when the most powerful kingdom ruling other kingdoms uses extreme terror and horror to keep people subservient. In fact, the Book of Nahum was written about God's judgment toward Assyria for being so cruel. See my Commentary "[Hatred of Assyria](#)." It introduces "[The Book of Nahum](#)" article by Dr. Ernest Martin.

Two Coalitions and Assyria, Background

In the saga of Israel and Judah covered thus far, there have been two great coalitions formed, and a third will be examined in future episodes. The first great coalition was a collection of kingdoms arrayed to fight against King David and the army of Israel. The leader of the coalition was Assyria, although its role was hidden. That campaign resulted in a climactic battle fought north of Syria near the upper Euphrates River with David and Israel victorious, resulting in decades of peace. That story was in "[Israel and Judah: 7. Conspiracy and War](#)."

Hundreds of years later another great coalition gathered to fight against Assyria at "[The Battle of Qarqar \(853 BC\)](#)." The coalition was led by Ben-hadad of Damascus, king Ahab of Israel, and eight other participating regional kingdoms and troops from Egypt. All resisted an expanding Assyrian empire. The coalition lost the battle but the victory was so costly to

¹ The meaning of Tiglathpileser's name is uncertain. He is the third ruler of Assyria to use the title, hence Tiglathpileser III is what historians call him today. There are many different spellings from the Assyrian, biblical, and Greek source texts. His name is also spelled in Scripture as Tiglathpiln~~e~~ser and he is referred to as "**Pul**," which may have been his real name. All references to him are in 2 Kings 15:19, 29. 16:7, 10; 1 Chronicles 5:6, 26; 2 Chronicles 28:20; and perhaps Isaiah 66:19.

Assyria that it did not begin another expansion for several decades. The story is told in ["Israel and Judah: 24. Ahab's Death and Jehoshophat."](#)

A Third Coalition Against Assyria

Assyria regained its strength and expanded again to threaten Syria, Israel, Judah and other smaller kingdoms along the coast to Egypt, down the central highlands of Israel, and east of the Jordan River — all three major north-south trade routes.

The greatest Assyrian conqueror was King Tiglathpileser who reigned for 17 years. He never lost a battle or had a major setback when in direct command of troops during the yearly military campaign season. Each campaign was chosen by the current king of Assyria and his counselors, depending on which foreign nations were considered the greatest threats or the richest targets for conquest or plunder.

"Tiglath-pileser III was at war nearly every year he was in power. The Assyrian Empire expanded throughout the ancient Near East under his military leadership. Tiglath-pileser III reorganized the Assyrian army, developed new and more sophisticated weapons, and was an excellent military strategist ..."

• **Robert Jones, "Tiglath-Pileser III"**²

You will learn more about Tiglath-pileser III in this month's article. The story of the coalition's conflict with Tiglathpileser III will be told in the next episode, "Israel and Judah: 33 ..." coming in December 2018, God willing.

"... no fewer than five Hebrew kings are mentioned in his annals, the greatest interest attaches to his history as it has come down to us. These kings are [1] Uzziah or Azariah, and [2] Jehoahaz, that is Ahaz, of Judah; and [3] Menahem, [4] Pekah and [5] Hushes [Hoshea] of Israel."

Along with them are mentioned their contemporaries Rezin of Damascus, Hiram of Tyre, and two queens of Arabia otherwise unknown, Zabibi and Samsi. When he died in 727 BC, he was succeeded by Shalmaneser IV ..."

• **"Tiglath-Pileser," ISBE**³

In the meantime, if you want additional background information link to an article by Peter Dubovský, ["Tiglath-pileser III's Campaign in 734–732 BC: Historical Background of Isa 7; 2 Kgs 15–16 and 2 Chr 27–28."](#) *Biblica* 87, no. 2 (2006): 153–70.

A great deal is known about Tiglathpileser III from historical inscriptions which describe his various military campaigns. Outside the Bible there are many examples of Tiglathpileser's Assyrian royal records, carved inscriptions on various stone and clay monuments, and even letters exist that shed light on biblical accounts that mention Tiglathpileser.

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² Robert Jones, "Tiglath-Pileser III," ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

³ James Orr and Melvin Grove Kyle, eds., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmanns, 1939), BibleWorks, v.10.