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Israel and Judah:

34. Death of the Kingdom of Israel

by David Sielaff, April 2019

Read the April 1, 2019 Commentary “[Forced Exile: Israel’s Exile and Forced Emigration](#)”

Then read the accompanying [Newsletter for April 2019](#)

Israel and Judah: 34

Death of the
Kingdom of
Israel

THE SITUATION: King Pekah of Israel and Rezin, king of Syria, invaded, devastated and seized the wealth of the Kingdom of Judah. The prophet Isaiah told King Ahaz of Judah that Rezin would die and Israel would cease to exist (Isaiah 7:4–8). Hoshea murdered Pekah and usurped his throne (2 Kings 15:30). Hoshea was the last king of Israel, an independent kingdom for 240+ years. In this article, we focus on the northern Kingdom of Israel, their sins, the many reasons for God’s severe judgment, which He now fully inflicts upon them — eliminating them from the kingdoms of men.

The text covered in this article is all of 2 Kings chapter 17 and 18:9–12, with no corresponding information in Second Chronicles. There is much detailed information in those 44 total verses. Again, the text is from the *Concordant Version of the Old Testament*.

Situation Review of the Kingdom of Israel

A synopsis of the last two kings of Israel is given in “[Israel and Judah: 31. Prophets, Writings, and Kings](#)”:

“... Pekah son of Remaliah conspired against him [against King Pekaniah] and smote him in the citadel of the king’s house in Samaria ... He put [Pekaniah] to death and reigned in his stead. In the fifty-second year of Azariah [Uzziah] (king of Judah), Pekah son of Remaliah became king over Israel in Samaria for twenty years.

In the days of Pekah king of Israel, Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria came and took Ijon, Abelbeth-maacah, Janoah, Kedesh, Hazor, Gilead and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali; and he deported them to Assyria.^a

^a These were tribal territories in the Kingdom of Israel. King Ahaz of Judah submitted and became a vassal to Tiglath-pileser, requesting military aid against Rezin of Syria and Pekah of Israel. Assyria attacked and deported Israelite people (2 Kings 15:25–31, 16:5–9). For background on this Assyrian king and coalitions against Assyria see my Commentary, “[Tiglathpileser](#).”

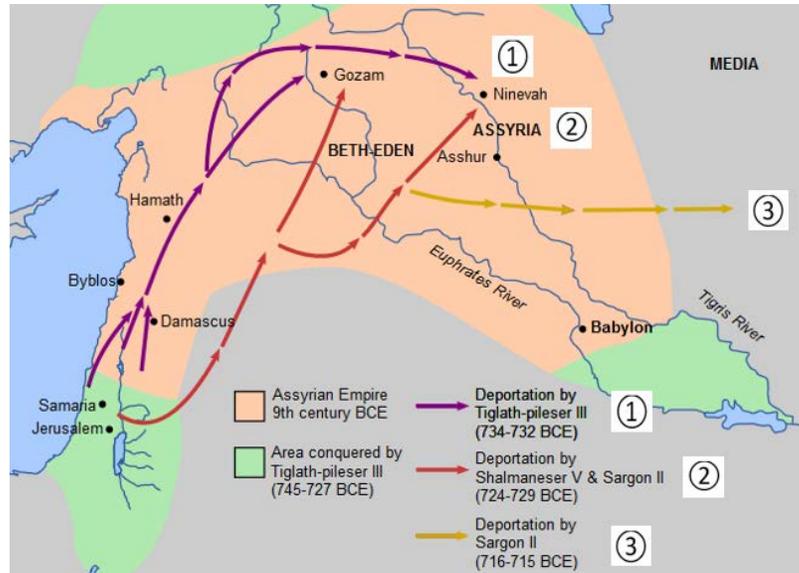
Hoshea son of Elah conspired in a conspiracy against Pekah son of Remaliah and smote him.

He put him to death and reigned in his stead, in the twentieth year of Jotham [king of Judah] son of Azariah [Uzziah].”

• **2 Kings 15:25, 27, 29–30**

Pekah murdered his predecessor (2 Kings 15:25), reigning 20 years. Pekah in turn was murdered by Hoshea, the last king of Israel. During Pekah’s reign, in an unspecified year, Israel was attacked by Tiglath-pileser who captured and deported the first group of people from Israelite lands east of the Jordan River. He sent them to Assyria. This well-planned policy was enacted by Assyrian kings for over a generation.^b

Assyria was a deadly threat to Israel yet Hoshea, conspired against his king Pekah, continued to rebel against YHWH, and chose to become a vassal of Shalmaneser, King of Assyria. Then he made the mistake to conspire against the mightiest empire of the time. Things did not work out well ...



Deportation of Israelites (and Jews) by Assyria

TEXT: The Fall of the Kingdom of Israel

2 Kings 17:1–6

¹ In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah, Hoshea son of Elah became king in Samaria over Israel for nine years. ² He did what was evil in the eyes of Yahweh, but not as the kings of Israel who were before him.

³ It was against him that Shalmaneser king of Assyria marched up. Hoshea became his servant and rendered tributary presents to him.

⁴ Yet the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea, since [1] he had sent messengers to So king of Egypt and [2] had not brought up tributary presents to the king of Assyria as he had done year by year.

Hence the king of Assyria put him under restraint and bound him in a house of detention. ⁵ Then the king of Assyria marched up against the whole land; he came up to Samaria and besieged it for three years. ⁶ In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria seized Samaria and deported Israel to Assyria. He made them dwell [1] in Halah, and [2] at the Habor, [3] the Stream of Gozan, and [4] in the cities of the Medes.

[end text]

2 Kings 17:1. Hoshea, whose name ironically means “salvation,” was the last king of the northern Kingdom of Israel, which the Assyrians eliminated from among the kingdoms of men. This punishment to Hoshea and the people was done with the permission of YHWH.

Verse 2. We are told that Hoshea was not quite as bad as his predecessors, but that did not excuse the evils he did, nor was he in anyway righteous.

Verse 3. “**Came up against**” means that the Assyrian army invaded Israel. When the Assyrian army arrived in the land of Israel, King Hoshea submitted himself and his kingdom and become a vassal of Shalmaneser.

^b A similar policy of exiling the best and the brightest of the survivors was used later by Nebuchadnezzar when he marched the people of Judea into exile to Babylonia for 70 years.

Hoshea promised to send regular tribute to Assyria. To not pay tribute when required was a serious cause for war. Shalmaneser ruled only 5 or 6 years.

When the kingdom of Israel, a regional military power, became Shalmaneser's servant, any alliance against Assyria was immediately weakened. Israel "made a deal" to be a vassal to Assyria (just as Ahaz of Judah became Assyria's vassal when attacked by Syria and Israel years earlier).

All the kingdoms in the region from Egypt to Syria were threatened by the bullying, the attacks, and the horrors committed by the armies of Assyria, which had a diplomatic approach toward other kingdoms of "submit, do as we say, or we will destroy you." At that time in history, Assyria had the power to follow through on its threats. No kingdoms or alliances of kingdoms were powerful enough to successfully resist Assyrian military might. Of course, the kingdoms in the region did not understand that at the time. After all, past alliances resisted and even fought off Assyrian attacks and now Egypt sent envoys promising military support to the alliance of kingdoms.

Assyrian Invasions of Israel and Judah in the 8th century (the 700s) BC

Assyrian Kings	Israelite Kings	Bible Texts	Result
Tiglath-Pileser III (Pul)	Menehem	2 Kings 15:19–20	Israel invaded. King Menehem of Israel bribed him to return to Assyria. Likely became Assyria's vassal.
Tiglath-Pileser III (Pul)	Pekah	2 Kings 15:29; 1 Chronicles 5:26; Isaiah 9:1–2	Israel invaded east of the Jordan River; first <u>deportation</u> of Israelites to Assyria. Israel became Assyria's vassal
Shalmaneser V	Hoshea	2 Kings 17:3, 18:9	Israel invaded, forced Israel to be his vassal.
Sargon II	Hoshea	2 Kings 17:5–6; Isaiah 7:18–25, 20:1	Israel invaded, conquered and dismantled the kingdom; 27,000+ Israelite survivors were <u>deported</u> to Assyria.
Sennacherib, son of Sargon II	Hezekiah (king of Judah)	2 Kings 18:13, 19:16, 20, 36; 2 Chronicles 32:1–2, 9–10, 22; Isaiah 36:1, 37:17, 21, 37	Judah invaded, cities captured, including the fortress of Lachish, Jerusalem besieged. Assyrian army killed by YHWH's miracle.

The three largest Phoenician kingdoms: Tyre, Sidon, and Byblos and several of the kingdoms in the lands of Syria and eastern Anatolia (eastern Turkey today) participated in the military alliance to oppose Assyrian aggression.^c Other kingdoms submitted to Assyria as their overlord.

Enter King Sargon of Assyria, Destroyer of the Kingdom of Israel

Between verse 3 and verse 4 there was a change of ruler in Assyria, though the reader of the Bible would not realize it. Assyrian inscriptions (quoted below) tell us a new king ruled in Assyria, and he completed the destruction of Israel and the siege of Samaria, not Shalmaneser.

The new Assyrian king was Sargon II who ruled 17 years. The writer of 2 Kings 17 apparently did not think it important to indicate who the king of Assyria was when Israel was invaded. Sargon is mentioned once in Scripture by the prophet Isaiah: "**In the year the tartan^d came to Ashdod, when Sargon king of Assyria sent**

^c However, some kingdoms did not join the alliance. Judah sought Assyria's help and became Assyria's vassal, its "servant" to defend against coordinated attack from the kingdoms of Syria and Israel. God told Ahaz of Judah that YHWH would help defeat and eliminate the threat from the two attackers, but Ahaz chose to seek help from Assyria (2 Kings 16:7). "[Israel and Judah: 33. Isaiah and the Death of Ahaz.](#)"

^d Note that Isaiah's prophecy is not dated to the reigns of Hoshea of Israel or to Hezekiah of Judah. Isaiah dates his reception of this prophecy from God to the conquest of the Philistine important city of Ashdod by an Assyrian commander of Sargon. It is not

him, he fought against Ashdod and seized it” (Isaiah 20:1). In the 8th century, Ashdod was the gateway to Egypt. If Ashdod was taken then the road to the riches of Egypt was open. That was exactly what Sargon did.

Note that these historical narratives have no mention of any prophets, yet YHWH’s prophets were warning Israel for decades.^e Their warnings from YHWH through His prophets had only minimal effect.

Verse 4. Hoshea violated that agreement to be a subordinate vassal to Assyria. It was not a wise decision. Hoshea made two mistakes. **First**, he conspired with Egypt and other kingdoms to plot against Assyria, which had an excellent intelligence service. The conspiracy was discovered. **Second**, Hoshea was so certain of Egyptian help and the support of other kingdoms, that he held back payment of the tribute to Assyria when it was due. He probably used the wealth of the tribute to prepare for war. Neither of the two mistakes paid off.

Assyria did not tolerate such double-dealing. Hoshea was seized and held captive before the siege began; we are not given details. Hoshea does not seem to be present at the Israelite capital of Samaria when the 3-year siege began, but we know he reigned 9 years total according to verse 17:1 above.

The Assyrian King Sargon invaded Israel with the intent to dismantle the kingdom — all according to God’s purpose. This 3-year siege indicates that Samaria was well fortified, provisioned, and defended to withstand a 3-year siege. The Assyrian army was the best in the world at the time in siege operations. It was probably hoped by the people of Israel that Egypt or other kingdoms would come to the rescue. They depended on hope rather than YHWH.

Verses 5–6. In three descriptive sentences we are told of events that took 3 years to accomplish. The siege of the capital city of Samaria must have been horrific. After the city was conquered in Hoshea’s 9th and last year of rule, deportation of survivors occurred. It must have taken years to organize and choose which people were valuable enough to be spared death for exile, and then have the captives travel to the areas within the Assyrian empire.^f We are told exactly where the people of Israel were sent. Here is a sequence of events:

1. YHWH prophesied through the prophets Hosea and Amos decades before the last four kings of Israel ruled (Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah, and Hoshea, 2 Kings 15:16–31), about Syria (Amos 1:3–5), and about the destruction of the Kingdom of Israel.
2. The eastern portion of Israel was conquered by Assyria, its population captured and deported (2 Kings 15:29:

“In the days of Pekah king of Israel, Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria came and took Ijon, Abelbeth-maacah, Janoah, Kedesh, Hazor, Gilead and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali; and he deported them to Assyria.”

The lands listed as conquered by Assyria are all east of the Jordan River.

3. Later, King Ahaz of Judah, did not trust YHWH, but he turned and begged Tiglath-pileser to intervene against the kingdoms of Syria and Israel who together attacked and devastated Judah (2 Kings 16:7). Syria led an alliance against Assyria.



Sargon, King of Assyria, Khorsabad sculpture, McClintock and Strong, *Cyclopedia*

clear if “**tartan**” was a title (as in “commander” or “general”) or a name; English translations vary on this point. In 2 Kings 18:17 “**tartan**” was mentioned again, as I will discuss next in “Israel and Judah: 35.” Sargon of Assyria, ruler of the people God chose as His servant to destroy Israel (Isaiah 7:18–25), is mentioned only once while his subordinate is mentioned twice.

^e Dr. Martin’s articles “[The Book of Hosea](#)” and “[The Book of Amos](#)” explain their prophecies and influence in this time.

^f Read “[Who Are the Northern Ten Tribes of Israel Today?](#)” and “[Just Who Is an Israelite Today?](#)” by Dr. Ernest L. Martin.

4. Syria was attacked by Assyria, its kingdom destroyed, and surviving Syrians taken prisoner and exiled to the land of Kir in Mesopotamia (2 Kings 16:9).
5. Twenty years after the first deportation of Israelites (#2. Above), YHWH fulfilled his prophesied punishment of Israel (under King Hoshea) for sins. Assyria, as God’s agent, attacked and conquered Israel. The survivors were also exiled to Assyria (2 Kings 17:5–6 above). Well-known Assyrian records reinforce the scriptural record and affirm prophetic fulfillment.

Confirmation of Assyrian Records

Two inscribed clay prisms were uncovered in 1952–53 in the ancient Assyrian city of Numrud. They tell the Assyrian side of the conspiracy and the resulting invasion and conquest of Israel. One short clay artifact gives this account:

“I besieged and conquered Samarina [Samaria]. I took as booty 27,290 people who lived there. I gathered 50 chariots from them. I taught the rest (of the deportees) their skills. I set my eunuch over them, and I imposed upon them the (same) tribute as the previous king (i.e. Shalmaneser V) [imposed on Hoshea].”

• *Hallo and Younger, Context of Scripture, vol 2, 296*^g

Another longer clay artifact gives even more detail confirming the biblical account:

“[The inhabitants of Sa]merina, who agreed [and plotted] with a king [hostile to] me,^h not to do service and not to bring tribute [to Aššur] and who did battle, I fought against them with the power of the great gods, my lords. I counted as spoil 27,280 people, together with their chariots, and gods, in which they trusted.

I formed a unit with 200 of [their] chariots for my royal force. I settled the rest of them in the midst of Assyria. I repopulated Samerina more than before. I brought into it people from countries conquered by my hands. I appointed my eunuch as governor over them. And I counted them as Assyrians.

I caused the awe-inspiring splendor of Aššur, my lord, to overwhelm the people of the land of Egypt and the Arabians; and at the mention of my name their hearts palpitated, (and) their arms collapsed. I opened the sealed [borders (?)] of Egypt, and I mingled together the people of Assyria and Egypt. I made them trade [with each other].

• *Hallo and Younger, Context of Scripture, vol 2, 295–296*

After 3 years of combat and siege of their capital city the Kingdom of Israel was subdued and the capital city of Samaria was captured but not destroyed. It says the city was repopulated **“more than before.”** Assyria took some 27,200+ Israelites captive. These were survivors, whether just from the siege or from the larger war, we cannot tell. Many, many died in combat or the slaughter after combat. Others died from execution, famine, and later perhaps from plague.

In both inscriptions there is mention of chariot teams (one says 50, others say 200) taken into the Assyrian military service. The Assyrians admired the Israelite chariot system (trained horses, chariots, and trained 4-

^g Information in [brackets] are in the original. William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger, *Context of Scripture*, Vol. 2, *Monumental Inscriptions from the Biblical World* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2000), 296. For an analysis of Assyrian spying against its enemies, see Peter Dubovsky, *Hezekiah and the Assyrian Spies: Reconstruction of the Neo-Assyrian Intelligence Services and its Significance for 2 Kings 18–19* (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 2006). When God destroyed the Assyrian empire in the late 600s BC, the nations of the region were overjoyed. Read my August 2013 Commentary, [“Hatred of Assyria: the Nations Were Glad.”](#) It tells how hated the Assyrian kingdom was in the Middle East, and how happy the nations were when Assyria itself was destroyed. The instruments of God’s judgment are also judged.

^h This statement on the inscription confirms Scripture. Second Kings 17:4 says **“So of Egypt,”** which gives the name of the king and the land he ruled. The Assyrian inscription does not identify the king with whom Israel and other kingdoms plotted, but the last part of the inscription, not quoted here, several nations are named as part of the alliance against Assyria.

man crew) as useful in their army. They thought highly of Israelite chariots and charioteers. What these inscriptions say is the Assyrians took the charioteers into their army as military specialists.

God's Chosen People Receive His Ultimate Punishment

Remember, the kingdoms of Judah and Israel were comprised of God's people chosen through the lineage of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to be an example to the nations, a kingdom of priests set apart from the nations, for the purpose of teaching them about YHWH (Exodus 19:6; Leviticus 20:26; Isaiah 61:6;).

“For you are a people holy to Yahweh your Elohim; Yahweh your Elohim has chosen you to become His, a special people from all the peoples who are on the surface of the ground.”

• *Deuteronomy 7:6*

“As for you, you shall become Mine, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak to the sons of Israel.”

• *Exodus 19:6*

The apostle Peter wrote to Israelites who were believers in Christ's resurrection:

“[Y]ou, also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, into a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, most acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ...

Yet you are a chosen race, a 'royal priesthood,' a 'holy nation,' a procured people, so that you should be recounting the virtues of Him Who calls you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”

• *1 Peter 2:5, 9*

They failed to live up to God's expectations. Even worse, they actively rebelled against YHWH. He therefore raised up the Gentiles led by Assyria to punish Israel. Below is the final legal case God made against the people of the northern Kingdom of Israel just before He destroyed and dismantled their unity.

God did not desire to destroy the kingdom and have so many people die. He did so because of the accumulation of sins and evils they committed. The author of Second Kings presents a litany of Israel's sins and evils.

Toward the end of his life, Moses warned the tribes of Israel to obey YHWH and His laws. He did so just before they entered the land God promised to them, Moses told them YHWH would put them out of the land He promised to them for the age — unless they obeyed Him. The final punishments would be these:

“Thus you will remain few in adult males, whereas you would have become as the stars of the heavens for multitude, for you did not hearken to the voice of Yahweh your Elohim.

So it will come to be, just as Yahweh was elated over you to bring you good and to let you increase, so Yahweh shall be elated over you to destroy you and to exterminate you, so that you will be torn out from the ground where you are entering to tenant it.

And [the remaining few] Yahweh will scatter you among all the peoples from one end of the earth unto the other end of the earth. There you will serve other elohim, those of wood and stone which you have not known, neither you nor your fathers.

And among those nations you shall neither find respite, nor shall there be a resting place for the sole of your foot, and Yahweh will give to you there a disturbed heart, a failure of the eyes and pining [sorrow] of the soul.”

• *Deuteronomy 28:62–65*

The prophets Hosea and Amos repeatedly warned the northern kingdom of Israel to change their ways and repent.ⁱ YHWH sent prophets, foremost being Elijah and Elisha to demonstrate God's love and willingness to bless the people if they would turn and obey Him.

ⁱ Again, see the articles [“The Book of Hosea”](#) and [“The Book of Amos.”](#)

The author of 2 Kings chapter 17 wrote after Israel had been punished, the kingdom dismantled, and the people deported to Assyria and beyond. He gave a final list of sins the people of Israel committed. According to the text, he also, in his initial writing, wrote before the people of the southern kingdom of Judah were destroyed and deported to Babylon some 120 years after Israel was destroyed and deported. Read the list below to understand how their idolatrous actions forced God to enact His ultimate punishment.

TEXT: YHWH's Legal Charges and the Sins of the Kingdom of Israel

2 Kings 17:7–17

⁷ This came to pass because the sons of Israel had sinned against Yahweh their Elohim Who had brought them up from the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. They had feared other elohim ⁸ and had walked in the statutes of the nations whom Yahweh had evicted from before the sons of Israel and in the statutes that the kings of Israel had practiced.

- [1] ⁹ The sons of Israel surreptitiously did things against Yahweh their Elohim that were not proper.
- [2] They built for themselves high-places in all their cities, from the tower of field-keepers to the city fortress.
- [3] ¹⁰ They set up for themselves monuments and Asherah poles on every lofty hill and under every flourishing tree.
- [4] ¹¹ There they were fuming incense on all the high-places like the nations whom Yahweh had deported from before them. They did evil things to provoke Yahweh to vexation.
- [5] ¹² They were serving the idol clods of which Yahweh had said to them, **“You must not do this thing.”** ¹³ Yahweh testified [warned] against Israel and against Judah by means of every prophet and every vision seer, saying,

“Turn back from your evil ways, and keep My instructions and My statutes, according to all the law that I enjoined on [commanded, instructed] your fathers and that I sent to you by means of My servants the prophets.”
- [6] ¹⁴ Yet they did not hearken, and they stiffened the scruffs of their necks more than the scruff of their fathers who did not believe in Yahweh their Elohim.
- [7] ¹⁵ They rejected [a.] His statutes and [b.] His covenant that He had contracted with their fathers, and [c.] His testimonies with which He had testified against them.
- [8] They went after the idols of vanity of which they were vain, thus following the nations [Gentiles] who were round about them, concerning whom Yahweh had enjoined them, by no means to act like them.
- [9] ¹⁶ They forsook all instructions of Yahweh their Elohim; [10] they made molten images for themselves — two calves — and [11] made an Asherah pole, and [12] they bowed themselves down to all the host of the heavens, and [13] they served Baal.
- [14] ¹⁷ They caused their sons and their daughters to pass through fire and
- [15] [they] divined by divinations;
- [16] they practiced augury and
- [17] sold themselves to do what was evil in the eyes of Yahweh [why?] to provoke Him to vexation.

[end text]

Caution: do not confuse the small *italic bold* verse numbers with the **[bold numbers]** in brackets.

2 Kings 17:7–8. **“This came to pass ...”** refers to the destruction of the kingdom of Israel and the deportation of the survivors told briefly in verses 5–6 above.

These verses are a prologue to a long list of sins and crimes that were charged by YHWH against the people of the kingdom of Israel. The charges are being reviewed so the people of Israel will know their sins. It is also an example to the people of Judah what will happen to them if they continue on their sinful ways. At the same time, YHWH is informing His divine council in heaven to witness the charges.

These sins are numbered according to my preference, anyone can combine or separate some of these evils and sins according to how you believe the text should be read.

Verse 9. Point [1], the Israelites thought that they were effectively “hiding” their sins. They must have known that they were not hiding them from YHWH, but they did not care about Him. YHWH begins by announcing that all their hidden sins (murder, sexual sins, bribery, false witness, etc.), though not public, were known to God and they offended Him greatly. So, the first item is that the people, not just their kings and leaders, tried to hide their evils and sins **“that were not proper.”** They hid them from each other. They also perhaps thought they were hiding them from God, as Ezekiel wrote long after Israel was deported.

“Then He said to me: Do you see, son of humanity, what the elders of the house of Israel are doing in darkness, each man in the chambers of his fancy? For they are saying, ‘Yahweh is not seeing us; Yahweh has forsaken the land.’”

• *Ezekiel 8:12*

YHWH did not forsake Israel without reason, He did so because of their sins against Him.

Point [2] in this list was the first public sin they did **“in all their cities,”** not just a few places. (Remember most “cities” were actually large villages.) “High places” were forbidden by God as told to Israel by Moses:

“If by this you should not hearken to Me, and you go contrary to Me, then I will go contrary to you in fury. And I Myself, indeed, will discipline you sevenfold for your sins.”

You will eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters shall you eat.

I will exterminate your high-places, cut down your incense stands and lay your corpses upon the corpses of your idol clods; thus My soul will loathe you.

I will turn your cities into a desert and make your grand sanctuary desolate; I shall not smell your fragrant odor. I Myself will make the land so desolate that your enemies, the ones dwelling in it, will be appalled over it.

And you shall winnow among the nations, and I will unsheathe a sword after you so that your land will become a desolation and your cities become a desert.”

• *Leviticus 26:27–33*

Verse 10. Point [3] was the sin that the people set up pagan monuments or shrines seemingly everywhere. No one knows exactly what an “Asherah” was or what it looked like, but it was made of wood. Asherah had prophets, like Baal had prophets (1 Kings 18:19), and her rituals were sexual in nature (2 Kings 23:7; Ezekiel 23:42). The images of it, or her, were made of wood (Judges 6:26) and burning was a common way to destroy them (Deuteronomy 7:5, 12:3).

Some say it is a term for a pagan consort for a pagan god named “El,” not to be confused with YHWH who is also sometimes referred to as “El,” singular. The plural Elohim is also used with singular verbs. Yes, it is somewhat confusing, but it is linguistically logical.

Verse 11. Point [4], **“incense”** was one of the other things YHWH objected to as sinful in Leviticus 16:30.

Verse 12. Point [5], the **“idol clods”** of the people and priests were clay doll-like figurines that represented the pagan gods. The idols were not the “gods” themselves but they represented the gods and they helped focused the mind to think about, pray to, and worship the living entity behind the idol. (Read what the apostle Paul said about other gods in 1 Corinthians 8:6.)

Verse 13. No biblical prophecy is being quoted, but YHWH gave Solomon a similar message:

“But if you should turn away, yea turn away from following Me, you or your sons, and should not keep My instructions and My statutes that I have set before you, so that you go and serve other

elohim and bow down to them, then

I will cut Israel off the surface of the ground that I have given to them, and I shall cast out from My face this house that I have sanctified for My Name; and Israel will become a proverb and a byword among all the peoples.”

• *1 Kings 9:6–7*

Verse 14. Point [6], Moses said the Israelite people were stiff-necked people in Exodus 33:3, 5, 34:9 and Deuteronomy 9:6, 13, 10:16, 31:27. The prophet Asaph in the time of King David wrote in Psalm 78:7–8 his retrospective of Israel’s troubled history with YHWH. King Hezekiah said the same in 2 Chronicles 30:8. The prophet Isaiah reiterated what Hezekiah said in Isaiah 48:4. Levites who returned from Babylon repeated the thought in their review of all Israel’s relationship with YHWH up to their time in Nehemiah 9:16–17. Finally, Stephen called his fellow Israelites just before he was stoned to death: **“Stiff-necked and uncircumcised in your hearts and ears, you are ever clashing with the holy spirit! As your fathers, you also!”** (Acts 7:51).

Verse 15. Point [7], the Israelites rejected YHWH’s instructions, their covenant agreement with Him, and His many admonitions through His prophets and seers for them to correct their sinful behavior. Point [8], the idols satisfied nothing but their own vanity, following the religious rituals and traditions of the pagan nations. This was forbidden by YHWH as Moses wrote in Deuteronomy 7:17, 12:2–4, 28–32).

Verse 16. The issues of this verse all seem to revolve around the institutional national temples of Baal, the actual chief god of the Israelite people. Keep in mind, YHWH was worshipped in the northern Kingdom of Israel, but other gods were honored also. There was no official temple to YHWH in the northern kingdom. YHWH was worshipped in the pagan temples.

Point [9] specifies that they stopped obeying any instructions from YHWH even though He rescued Israel many times through miracles and information to their kings through His prophets. No matter what He did, the kings, the rulers and the people did not obey.

Point [10], the idols and images were made from metal for their national temples of the pagan god Baal in the religious cities of Bethel and Dan (1 Kings 12:29; 2 Kings 10:29). Each temple had a full staff of priests.

The **“asherah”** of Point [11] is mentioned and discussed above in verse 10, Point [3] above.

Point [12] indicates that they worshipped **“the host of the heavens.”** This can mean different things, depending on the context. It could refer to some form of astrology which is forbidden by God. It could refer to worship of the physical celestial bodies such as the sun, moon, planets, and stars, that were also forbidden by God. The host and hosts of heaven can also mean the multitudes of beings in heaven who come to earth to do the bidding of YHWH or to oppose Him to do evil (Deuteronomy 4:19, 17:3; 1 Kings 22:10; 2 Kings 17:16, 21:3, 5, 23:4–5; 2 Chronicles 18:18, 33:3, 5, Nehemiah 9:6; Isaiah 34:4; Jeremiah 8:2, 19:13, 33:22; Daniel 8:10; Zephaniah 1:5; and Acts 7:42). Often it means the army of God.

Point [13], their serving or worshipping Baal goes back to the golden calf before Mt. Sinai.

Verse 17. Point [14] is the worst of all. They sacrificed their own children to a demon posing as a powerful god. Yet the Israelites foolishly deny the truth about their God and your God when their fathers and grand-fathers experienced His salvation of their kingdom time after time. There is one God, YHWH:

“For great is Yahweh and praised exceedingly; Fear inspiring is He over all elohim. For all the elohim of the peoples are useless idols; As for Yahweh, He has made the heavens.”

• *1 Chronicles 16:25–26 and Psalm 96:4–5*

“The house that I am building shall be great, for our Elohim is greater than all the elohim.”

• *2 Chronicles 2:5*

“For Yahweh is the great El, And the great King over all the elohim.”

• *Psalm 95:3*

“For I myself know that Yahweh is great, And our Lord [Adonai] is greater than all elohim.”

• *Psalm 135:5*

In fact he is the God of gods (Deuteronomy 10:17; Joshua 22:22; Psalm 136:2; and Daniel 2:47, 11:36).

Point [15], “**divinations**” is the means of learning information, usually about the future, with the help of supernatural powers, that Scripture calls *spirits* or *demons* (*devils* in the King James Version).

Point [16], “**augury**” is the practice of divining signs from natural events, such as flights of birds, a typical Roman practice.

Point [17], Israelites “**sold themselves**”? This may mean they did everything to try to learn about the future — everything except obeying YHWH and enquiring of Him through His prophets. Hosea and Isaiah wrote several decades before Samaria’s destruction. They predicted what would happen:

“**My people will be stilled** [destroyed] **because of lack of knowledge; Seeing that you reject knowledge, I shall reject you from serving as priest for Me; And since you are forgetting the law of your Elohim, I also shall forget your sons.**”

• Hosea 4:6

“**For I desire kindness and not sacrifice, and knowledge of Elohim rather than ascent offerings.**”

• Hosea 6:6

“**Therefore, My people are deported for lack of knowledge, And its abundance are men of famine, And its throng are glazed with thirst.**”

• Isaiah 5:13

Disobeying, they sought knowledge from evil sources, offending their Creator.

TEXT: The Result of YHWH’s Judgments Against Israel

2 Kings 17:18–23^j

¹⁸ So Yahweh showed Himself exceedingly angered with Israel and **put them away, out of His presence**. None remained but the tribe of Judah by itself alone. ¹⁹ Even Judah did not keep the instructions of Yahweh their Elohim and walked in the statutes that Israel had practiced.

²⁰ So **Yahweh rejected all the seed of Israel; He humbled them and gave them into the hand of robbers until He had flung them away, out of His presence**.

²¹ When **He tore Israel off the house of David**, they made Jeroboam son of Nebat king. Jeroboam caused Israel to founder in following Yahweh, and **he caused them to sin** with a great sin, ²² the sons of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam that he had done.

They did not withdraw from it, ²³ until **Yahweh put Israel away, out of His presence**, just as He had spoken by means of all His servants the prophets. So **Israel was deported from its own ground to Assyria** until this day. [end text]

2 Kings 17:18. YHWH was angry, righteously angry. It caused Him to put Israel out of the land He promised them because of their disobedience. All of the northern kingdom was destroyed, killed off, or exiled. Some of those who honored YHWH went south to Judah. Some presumably went to Egypt or across the sea to other lands, which also fulfilled YHWH’s statement of being “**out of His presence.**”

Verse 19. The tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi were part of the Kingdom of Judah. Collectively they were called “Judah.” They also failed to keep the “instructions of YHWH” and did the same evil practices as the people of Israel.

Verse 20. YHWH rejected Israel and flung them away. He was disgusted with all the people of Israel.

Verses 21–22. YHWH tore Israel into two kingdoms. By so doing, He caused them to sin. The writer’s retrospective history about the breakup of the united kingdom under David (and Solomon) into northern and southern kingdoms. Jeroboam led the northern kingdom into sin, and they never changed their ways.

^j The verses of 2 Kings 18:1–8 introduce King Hezekiah of Judah who begins his reign with reform. His reign will be presented in “Israel and Judah: 35.”

Verse 23. “YHWH put Israel away,” again stating, “out of His presence.” All the prophets spoke and wrote of it. Israel did not listen; YHWH deported them with Assyria as His agent.

What Happened in a Deportation?

Scholars know a great deal about the nature of deportation by Assyrians and later by Babylonians. A brief description is given by Dr. Karen Radner:

“For the Assyrian Empire, such a procedure was routine. During the imperial period from the 9th to the 7th century BCE, an extensive, centrally directed resettlement programme saw population groups from all corners of the enormous geographical area under Assyrian control being moved across great distances, to be settled within the provinces making up the “land of Aššur.”

Populations within the boundaries of the Empire were relocated, replacing and being replaced by people who were themselves moved, in complex circular movements that were carefully planned and executed over the course of several years. Populations taken from outside the provincial system, however, were not replaced.”

• Radner, “Resettlement Programme,” 101^k

Who were deported and resettled? What was the criteria? These things are known from Assyrian records:

“People were chosen for resettlement in a considered selection process, often in the aftermath of warfare that had reduced their original home to ruins. How exactly the Assyrian authorities handled the selection is unclear, although palace decorations from the reign of Tiglath-pileser III (r. 744–727 BCE) onwards illustrate proceedings by showing, usually in the context of the capture of enemy cities, pairs of scribes logging people as well as booty.”

• Radner, “Resettlement Programme,” 102

The same process was done by Nebuchadnezzar when Judah and Jerusalem were captured. Daniel and his three associates were part of the elite of Judah brought to the capital city of Babylon. Radner continues:

“... professions and family ties were of key interest to the compilers of this data. Whenever the Assyrian sources specify who was to be relocated, they name the urban elites, craftsmen, scholars and military men. The very best example is the summary of the people taken away from the Egyptian city of Memphis after its capture in 671 BCE according to an inscription of Esarhaddon (r. 680 –669 BCE).”

• Radner, “Resettlement Programme,” 103

This list is from Egypt, but the type of people would be the same from Israel. Note who were taken: royalty and noble family members, chariot crews, archers, shield bearers, incantation priests, dream interpreters, veterinarians, Egyptian scribes, craftsmen, singers, bakers, cooks, brewers, food suppliers, tailors, hunters, leather workers, wheelwrights, shipwrights, and iron smiths (Radner, 103).

This process was done not just to punish the deported people more, rather:

“The specialists from conquered regions ... contribute to the economic and cultural development of the Empire. When the topic of resettlement is discussed in the royal inscriptions, they either employ a vocabulary of violence and pillage, fittingly for the context of war, or else the language of horticulture, which likens the deportees to precious trees that are uprooted and replanted in the best possible circumstances by that most conscientious of gardeners, the king of Assyria:

Just like the gardener transfers valuable plants to a nurturing new environment that they in turn will enhance, the wise ruler allocated his people where they best benefitted the Empire. In the case of carefully selected specialists, the Assyrian crown clearly regarded their resettlement as

^k Karen Radner, “The ‘Lost Tribes of Israel’ in the Context of the Resettlement Programme of the Assyrian Empire” in *The Last Days of the Kingdom of Israel*, editors: S. Hasegawa, C. Levin and Karen Radner (Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2019). Dr. Radner’s entire article in the book deals with the process of deportation.

a privilege and an indication of high esteem.

In general, the people selected for resettlement were moved together with their families and their possessions, and the authorities' key objective was clearly to keep them healthy and well supplied during their trek. But the resettlement programme of course brutally divided existing communities according to the needs of the Empire — into those who had to leave and those who were allowed to stay ... This was a highly effective way of minimizing the risk of rebellion against the central authority. But the transplantation of people was certainly also used as a means of punishment ...”

• Radner, “Resettlement Programme,” 104–105

TEXT: Assyria Repopulates the Land of the Former Kingdom of Israel

2 Kings 17:24–41

²⁴ Then the king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, from Cuthah, from Avva, from Hamath and Sepharvaim; he made them dwell in the cities of Samaria instead of the sons of Israel, and they took over Samaria and dwelt in its cities.

²⁵ It came to pass at the start of their dwelling there that they did not fear Yahweh. Hence Yahweh sent lions among them, and they became killers among them. ²⁶ So they complained to the king of Assyria, saying,

“The nations that you deported and made dwell in the cities of Samaria do not know the customs of the elohim of the land. Hence he sent lions among them. And behold, they are putting them to death, since there are none among them knowing the customs of the elohim of the land.”

²⁷ Then the king of Assyria gave instructions, saying,

“Have one of the priests go back there whom you had deported from there; let him go and let him dwell there; let him direct them as to the customs of the elohim of the land.

²⁸ So one of the priests whom they had deported from Samaria came and dwelt in Bethel; he was directing them how they should fear Yahweh.

²⁹ Yet they came to make, nation by nation, each its own elohim, which they let rest in the house of the high-places that the Samaritans had made. So they did, nation by nation, in their cities where they were dwelling.

- ³⁰ As for the men of Babylon, they made Succoth-benoth;
- the men of Cuthah made Nergal;
- the men of Hamath made Ashima.
- ³¹ As for the Avvites, they made Nibhaz and Tartak; and
- the Sepharvites were burning their sons in the fire for Adrammelech and Anammelech, the elohim of Sepharvaim.

³² They came to fear Yahweh; yet they also appointed for themselves priests of the high-places from their outmost ranks. They were officiating for them in the house of the high-places. ³³ It was Yahweh Whom they came to fear, while they were serving their own elohim according to the customs of the nations from where they had deported them. ³⁴ Unto this day they are performing according to their former customs:

None of them are fearing Yahweh properly. None of them are doing according to their statutes and according to their ordinances, or according to the law and according to the instruction that Yahweh enjoined on the sons of Jacob whose name He made Israel.

³⁵ When Yahweh contracted a covenant with them [referring to Israel], He instructed them, saying,

“You shall not fear other elohim; you shall not bow yourselves down to them, nor serve them, nor sacrifice to them, ³⁶ but rather to Yahweh Who brought you up from the land of Egypt with great vigor

and with an outstretched arm:

- Him shall you fear, to
- Him shall you bow yourselves down, and to
- Him shall you sacrifice.

³⁷ As for the statutes and the ordinances, the law and the instruction that He wrote for you, you shall observe to obey all the days; and **you shall not fear other elohim**.

³⁸ And the covenant that I have contracted with you, you shall not forget; and **you shall not fear other elohim**,

³⁹ but rather Yahweh your Elohim shall you fear, and He shall rescue you from the hand of all your enemies.”

⁴⁰ Yet they [Israel] did not hearken, but rather according to their former customs were they performing.

⁴¹ So these nations came to fear Yahweh while they were serving their carvings. Even their sons and their sons' sons, just as their fathers had done, so are they doing until this day. [end text]

2 Kings 17:24. After deporting Israel's people to Assyria, the king of Assyria, Sargon, brought other people to settle in the cities and land of the former northern kingdom of Israel.

Verses 25–26. YHWH sent lions to plague the new inhabitants. They sent a message to the Assyrian king.

Verse 27. The king of Assyria sending a former priest from Israel to them, shows human reasoning, thinking that the new dwellers in the land simply needed to improve their technique of religious practice.

Verse 28. An Israelite priest was sent to Bethel, the site of the former temple of Baal. He must have taught them the Israelite method of worshipping YHWH while worshipping pagan gods. It did not work for Israel, but now it should work with pagans? I do not understand their thinking.

Verse 29. This is the only Old Testament mention of the origin of the Samaritans. For an update on this people who became a nation from several peoples, see Dr. Martin's book [*The People That History Forgot*](#), free online. These people are important in the development of heresy within Christianity during the latter part of the 1st century and thereafter. Mentions of the Samaritans in the New Testament are Matthew 10:5; Luke 9:52, 10:33, 17:16; John 4:9, 4:39–40, 8:48 and Acts 8:25.

Verses 30–31. The people settled in the land of Israel are listed, and the gods they made are named. The names are not explained which tells us these gods were known to the readers and listeners. The first four descriptions are straightforward listing, but the fifth in verse 31 is unique. Human sacrifice was apparently regularly practiced by the Sepharvites who came from Sepharvaim, that some identify as a city near Babylon in Iraq today. The gods they sacrificed to, Adrammelech and Anammelech, perhaps one male and one female, have the word “**melech**” in their names, which is Hebrew for *king*.

Verses 32–34. For whatever reason they “**came to fear YHWH**,” but they showed their misplaced devotion by continuing to worship toward their own idols, perhaps calling them YHWH. They appointed themselves priests from their own population thinking YHWH would approve, but He did not and they feared Him still more. The phrase about fear of YHWH occurs in each of the three verses. The text does not say what caused their fear. Perhaps things happened during some rituals that showed YHWH's displeasure. God is not mocked (Galatians 6:7). It seems there was nothing these people could do to please YHWH. They were not Israelites. They did not worship YHWH only, continuing to bow down to other gods.

Verses 35–39. The topic changes to another historical retrospective of why Israel was punished. The words quote YHWH but they are bits and pieces, not direct quotes from one or two Scriptures.

Verse 36. Fear, bows, and sacrifice must go to YHWH alone, and to no other gods.

Verses 37–38. YHWH commands Israel to “**observe to obey**” everything in His covenant with them. Yet, the standard of obedience was impossibly high. No one obeyed the covenant exactly. The apostle Peter at the conference in Jerusalem (Acts chapter 15) said the Law of God, the Covenant between YHWH was a severe yoke, a burden, that was hard for Israelites to bear. We should not overly criticize the Israelites or the

Samaritans for their lack of knowledge or understanding. God is in charge of what we know:

“And God, the Knower of hearts, testifies to them, giving the holy spirit according as to us also, and in nothing discriminates between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. Why, then, are you now trying God, by placing a yoke on the neck of the [Gentile] disciples which neither our fathers nor we are strong enough to bear?”

• Acts 15:8–10

God did not open the minds of the people of Israel until Christ came the first time, and then not until after His resurrection, and then only for a minority of His chosen people. Nor did He open the minds of the Samaritan Gentiles to learn the truths of God.

They were brought to the land of Samaria by the Assyrians to replace the people of the ten tribes of Israel. The text says they sought out YHWH to worship Him, they **“came to fear YHWH”** (2 Kings 17:32). But their fear was incomplete. If God did not open their minds, it does not matter how hard they try, they cannot find YHWH nor receive His truth. God waited until Philip, Peter, Barnabas, Paul and others received revelation and realized that Gentiles could be grafted into the company of believers, the *ekklesia* of God. This could only be done after Jesus came (as the one Moses promised, John 1:45, 5:46).

The New Covenant was promised by Jeremiah (Jeremiah 31:32), was inaugurated by Jesus at the last supper in the upper room (Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20), and is explained in 1 Corinthians 11:25; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Hebrews chapter 8 and 9:15–28. Remember, both Israelites, Jews and Gentiles are all under sin (Romans 3:9) with no superiority to anyone.

Verse 39. YHWH ceased rescuing Israel when they completely stopped fearing Him.

Verse 40. A summary begins. The Gentiles acted like the people of Israel acted toward YHWH. They worshipped other gods along with Him. They did not worship YHWH exclusively as He demanded.¹

Verse 41. This verse repeats the thoughts of verse 33. The wrong actions by the Samaritans continues to the time the words were written. **“Sons’ sons”** means grandsons of the original replacement people. This may give us a clue to what was meant by **“until this day,”** some 70 or 80 years from the events being reported.

TEXT: Review of the Destruction of the Land of Israel with Pagans

2 Kings 18:9–12^m

⁹ It came to pass in the fourth year of king Hezekiah, that is, the seventh year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, that king Shalmaneser of Assyria marched up against Samaria and besieged on it.

¹⁰ They seized it at the end of three years. In the sixth year of Hezekiah, that is, the ninth year of Hoshea king of Israel, Samaria was seized.

¹¹ Then the king of Assyria deported Israel to Assyria and had them guided to Halah, and to the Habor, the stream of Gozan, and to the cities of the Medes,¹² because they had not hearkened to the voice of Yahweh their Elohim, but had trespassed against His covenant — all that Moses the servant of Yahweh had instructed. They neither hearkened nor did them. **[end text]**

This passage repeats most of 2 Kings 17:1–9, but there are not enough correlations with this narrative of the of the Kingdom of Israel’s destruction to set the passages side-by-side. Therefore I present it separately.

2 Kings 18:9. The author of Second Kings deems it useful to remind his readers and listeners about the events of the northern kingdom’s destruction. Shalmaneser is said to be the one to initiate the siege of the capital, Samaria.

Verse 10. It says, **“They seized it ...”** not that Shalmaneser did so. This is consistent with the idea that

¹ Donald J. Wiseman, *1 and 2 Kings: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 9, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 287.

^m The verses of 2 Kings 18:1–8 introduce King Hezekiah of Judah who begins his reign with reform. His reign will be presented in “Israel and Judah: 35.”

Sargon became king of Assyria before the city was captured. Note that the time is precisely dated to the reign of Hezekiah.

Verses 11–12. The survivors were deported to Assyria and other areas because they did not listen to YHWH but disobeyed His covenant. Yet YHWH has done in our day as He promised in Amos chapter 9:

“I will reverse the captivity of My people Israel, ... And I will plant them on their ground, And not again shall they be plucked up off their ground which I give to them, Says Yahweh your Elohim.”

• *Amos chapter 9:14–15*

Later the prophet Jeremiah reiterated and expanded on the prophetic words of Amos:

“A dispersed flockling is Israel [all the tribes of Israel]; Lions have driven him away; [1] First the king of Assyria devoured him, And after this [2] Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon picked his bones.

‘Therefore,’ thus says Yahweh of hosts, Elohim of Israel: ‘Behold, I shall call to account the king of Babylon and his land, just as I called to account the king of Assyria. I will bring Israel back to his homestead, And he ^[Israel] will graze in Carmel and Bashan, And in mount Ephraim and Gilead his soul shall be surfeited.’”

• *Jeremiah 50:17–19*

Those of the kingdom of Israel as well as those from the kingdom of Judah will be returned to their land by YHWH their God.

David Sielaff, April 2019