

Divided Monarchy: Northern and Southern Kingdom

By Anthony Wanjohi

1.0 Introduction

The Divided Kingdom and Kingdom of Judah Alone periods in the Bible are an essential but often neglected study, (Pfeiffer, 1967). A basic knowledge of these periods of Jewish history is necessary to an understanding of the prophets of the Old Testament and their message.

All dates of the reigns of the kings of Judah and Israel are from Tetley, (2005). *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, new rev. ed. (Tetley, 2005). Thiele has interpreted the confusing chronological data in Kings and Chronicles meticulously, noting the various methods used by the recorders of the events. Thus some brief notes regarding the chronology of the kings of Judah and Israel are included in the end notes (Tetley, 2005). There are many factors in determining the chronology set forth in the scriptures, and a comprehensive explanation is too intricate and involved to be included in this study. As noted above the Hebrew year does not correspond to our calendar year; ascension year and non-ascension year methods were used at different times in both kingdoms; in addition, the regnal years were calculated from Nisan-to-Nisan (springtime, March/April) in Israel, while the Tishri-to-Tishri year (fall, September/October) was used in Judah. Nevertheless, the records of the kings of Judah and Israel were kept with great accuracy and precision by those recorders of Hebrew history, and every reign in each kingdom is in the order of the sequence with which the rulers ascended the throne, (Tetley, 2005).

2.0 Kings of the Division Era

JEROBOAM (930-909 BC): Jeroboam reigned for 22 years after Solomon's death. Son of Nebat; was one of King Solomon's officials in charge of laborers, but rebelled against Solomon when the prophet Ahijah told him that God was going to tear the kingdom out of Solomon's hands.

NADAB (909-908 BC): Son of Jeroboam; reigned only 2 years. He continued to do all the evil that his father had begun. Nadab was murdered by Baasha while besieging a Philistine town.

BAASHA (908-886 BC): Baasha reigned for 24 years. Son of Ahijah (of the tribe of Issachar, not the prophet Ahijah), Baasha became the first self-appointed king of Israel.

ELAH (886-885 BC): Son of Baasha; reigned only 2 years. Elah continued to worship idols as his father had done, and led Israel into greater sin. He was murdered while getting drunk at a friend's house by Zimri, who then became king..

ZIMRI (885 BC): He had been one of Elah's officials, in charge of his chariots he reined for only 7 days.

OMRI (885-874 BC): Omri had been the commander of the Israelite army when he was proclaimed king. After Zimri burned the palace down, Omri established the city of Samaria as the new capital of Israel, He co-reigned with Tibni for about five years, then Tibni died and Omri had sole reign for about 7 more years; so Omri reigned for a total of 12 years. Early in his reign, Omri sought to strengthen his ties to Phoenicia, perhaps to assist him in overthrowing Tibni (Tetley, 2005).

TIBNI (885-880 BC) Tibni, the son of Ginath, never had sole reign; he co-reigned with Omri for about 5 years until he died. It is not clear whether his death was from natural causes or the result of the military struggle for control of the kingdom, (Tetley, 2005).

Son of Omri: Ahab reigned 22 years and did more evil than all before him. Married Jezebel, daughter of the king of the Sidonians, who introduced Baal worship, a practice totally condemned by the prophets Elijah and Elisha (Tetley, 2005).

AHAZIAH - 853-852: Son of Ahab; reigned for 2 years. Ahaziah did all the evils of his father and mother, and worshipped Baal, (Tetley, 2005).

JORAM also called JEHORAM: c.852-841 BC: He reigned for 12 years. He did evil, although not as much as his parents had done, because he got rid of the sacred Baal-stone in the temple his father had made, (Tetley, 2005).

JEHU - 841-814 BC: Not the prophet Jehu, this Jehu was the son of Jehoshaphat, who was the son of Nimshi, not the Jehoshaphat who had been king of Judah. Jehu was a commander in Joram's army, and was anointed by God to become king of Israel, and to destroy the house of Ahab because of his wickedness (Tetley, 2005).

JEHOAHAZ - 814-798 BC: Son of Jehu; reigned 17 years. At the time Jehoahaz became king, Israel was beginning its decline under the forces of Aram {Syria}. Jehoahaz did evil in the eyes of the Lord, leading the people in wickedness as Jeroboam had done, (Tetley, 2005)

JEHOASH: - 798-782 BC: Son of Jehoahaz; reigned 16 years. He continued in all the evils of his fathers. Jehoash was challenged by Amaziah, king of Judah, whose victory over the Edomites went to his head and made him arrogant, (Tetley, 2005).

JEROBOAM II: - 793-753 BC: This son of Jehoash reigned 41 years. He continued to commit all the sins of his fathers, and was rebuked by the prophets Hosea and Amos, (Tetley, 2005).

ZECHARIAH: - 753 BC: Son of Jeroboam II, Zechariah continued to do evil as his ancestors had done. He reigned for only 6 months when he was publicly attacked and murdered by Shallum, a son of Jabesh, who then succeeded him as king, (Tetley, 2005).

SHALLUM - 752 BC: Son of Jabesh; murdered Zechariah to obtain the throne for himself, but reigned for only a month before he was likewise murdered by Menahem, son of Gadi, (Tetley, 2005).

MENAHM - 752-742 BC: Son of Gadi; reigned 10 years. Menahem was probably a military commander,

PEKAHIAH - 742-740 BC: Son of Menahem; reigned for 2 years. Continued to do evil, as his father had done; not once during his reign did he turn away from these sins, (Tetley, 2005).

PEKAH -752-732 BC Son of Remaliah; assassinated Pekahiah to obtain the throne; his total reign was 20 years.

HOSHEA - 732-722 BC Son of Elah; murdered Pekah to obtain the throne, and then reigned 9 years (Tetley, 2005).

3.0 The Politics in the Divided Monarchy

When the children of Israel entered and occupied Canaan, the Promised Land, they were a loose confederation of tribes held together by their common ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, (Philip, 1998). Governed by tribal leaders or judges for a period of time, the tribes eventually united forming a monarchy. Saul, from the tribe of Benjamin, was selected by God and anointed by Samuel, the prophet, priest and judge, to be king.

When Saul disobeyed God's instructions, God chose David, a shepherd youth from the tribe of Judah, to rule the kingdom after the death of Saul. David was an administrator and statesman who organized the religious worship and founded a political dynasty, (Pfeiffer, 1967). He was a poet and musician—"the sweet psalmist of Israel" (II Sam. 23:1) and a skilled harpist. As a soldier

and warrior, he expanded the borders of the kingdom and forged a simple agrarian society into a nation, (Pfeiffer, 1967).

David's son and successor Solomon reigned over an industrial empire stretching from the River Euphrates in the north to the River of Egypt in the south (I Kings 4:21; Pfeiffer, 1967). The peace and prosperity he inherited from his father David enabled him to engage in extensive building projects, the most notable being the temple in Jerusalem. Solomon's fame and wisdom spread abroad, and his wealth and riches exceeded that of all the kings of the earth (II Chron. 9:22). However, in his old age Solomon became idolatrous due to the influence of his many foreign wives, and God determined to rend the kingdom from his son, (Pfeiffer, 1967).

When Rehoboam, Solomon's son, became king, the ten northern tribes revolted establishing the northern kingdom of Israel and appointing Jeroboam, an Ephraimite, as their king. The two southern tribes of Judah and Benjamin, known as the kingdom of Judah, remained loyal to Rehoboam and the Davidic dynasty. The kingdom divided in 931/30 B. C. and lasted slightly more than two hundred years until 723/22 B. C. when the northern kingdom of Israel was taken into captivity by the Assyrians. The kingdom of Judah continued alone for another one hundred thirty some years until they, too, were carried into captivity in 586 B. C. by the Babylonians. The account of the Divided Kingdom period begins in I Kings 11 and II Chronicles 10, ending with the conclusions of II Kings and II Chronicles.

The descendants of David, according to Lewis, (2005), reigned in Judah from the division of the kingdom until the Babylonian captivity with only a brief interruption during the civil unrest that occurred with the purge of the house of Ahab; thus, in Sections I and II each king of Judah is the son of the preceding king unless otherwise identified, (Michael, 2005). In Israel the government was less stable and several dynasties ruled; therefore, in Section I the relationship between a king of Israel and the preceding king is specified, (Lewis, 2005).

The challenge for us today in the study of the Divided Kingdom is to contemplate God's dealings with peoples and nations, (Michael, 2005). God poured forth his blessings on the obedient and righteous, but He sent his judgments upon the disobedient and unrighteous, (Michael, 2005). It is for us, therefore, to determine our course of action, whether we walk in compliance or rebellion to God's word.

3.0 Conclusion

After the death of King Solomon, the united Tribes of Israel split into 2 kingdoms - the southern kingdom of "Judah," with the capital remaining at Jerusalem, and the northern kingdom of

"Israel," with the capital at Samaria. The northern kingdom lasted just over 200 years before they were conquered and taken away into exile by the Assyrians. They never returned, and have become known to history as the "Lost Ten Tribes of Israel." See Ancient Empires - Assyria and The Tigris-Euphrates Valley and Nineveh.

The southern kingdom lasted slightly over 300 years before they were conquered and taken into exile by the Babylonians under King Nebuchadnezzar. Unlike the northern kingdom however, a remnant of the southern kingdom was allowed to return and resettle Jerusalem in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah after the Babylonians were themselves conquered by the Persians under Cyrus the Great. Their descendants are known as the Jews of today.

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