

# **Getting Into The Promised Land Without Falling Asleep In Leviticus**

## **11. The Divided Kingdoms The Southern Kingdom – Judah – The Kings**

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**A Teaching Commentary  
of the Old Testament**

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# 1 The Kings of the South

The following chart summarizes the kings of the south. Following the chart is a short history, giving the high points of each.

Name	Length of Reign	When He Took the Throne	Starting Age	Spiritual Quality
Rehoboam	17 yr	Death of Solomon	41	bad
Abijah	3 yr	18th year of Jeroboam		bad
Asa	41 yr	20th year of Jeroboam		good
Jehoshaphat	25 yr	4th year of Ahab	35	good
Jehoram	8 yr	5th year of Joram	32	bad
Ahaziah	1 yr	11th or 12th year of Jehoram	22	bad
Athaliah	7 yr	1st year of Jehu		bad
Joash	40 yr	7th year of Jehu	7	good then turned bad
Amaziah	29 yr	2nd year of Jehoash	25	good
Azariah (also called Uzziah)	52 yr	27th year of Jeroboam II	16	good
Jotham	16 yr	2nd year of Pekah	25	good
Ahaz	16 yr	17th year of Pekah	20	bad
Hezekiah	29 yr	3rd year of Hoshea	25	good
Manasseh	55 yr		12	bad
Amon	2 yr		22	bad
Josiah	31 yr		8	good
Jehoahaz	3 mo		23	bad
Jehoiakim	11 yr		25	bad
Jehoiachin	3 mo		18	bad
Zedekiah	11 yr		21	bad

## 2 Rehoboam

1 Kings 14:21-31, 2 Chronicles 11:5-12:16

- Rehoboam became king at the death of his father, Solomon.
- He was forty-one when he became king and reigned for seventeen years, spanning around 922-913 BC.
- He was evil in God's eyes.
- Rehoboam's foolish treatment of the people triggered the split of the nation. The tribe of Judah was the only tribe that gave Rehoboam full support as king. The territory of Benjamin was on the border between Judah and the other northern tribes. There were border skirmishes between Israel and Judah for control of Benjamin but ultimately Benjamin became part of the Southern Kingdom. When Jeroboam instituted his own religious system and appointed priests from other tribes, many of the Levites from the north migrated to Judah and took up residence there because they had been rejected as God's priests in the north. There were other people from the north who followed the Levites because they did not want to be part of the apostate religious system of the north.
- During the reign of Rehoboam, Judah and Israel were at war much of the time.
- Rehoboam built up the cities of the south militarily.
- In spite of the fact that Judah had a purer religious system than did Israel, idolatry sprang up in the nation under the reign of Rehoboam. There were Asherah poles constructed. There were male shrine prostitutes in the land.
- Because of Judah's unfaithfulness, God allowed Shishak of Egypt to attack Judah. They were able to capture the fortified cities of the south. (Extra-Biblical sources indicate that Israel sought an alliance with Egypt against Judah, bringing Shishak into the picture.) God allowed Judah to be subjected to Shishak because he wanted Judah to know what it was like to have to follow another leader besides God.

Shishak plundered much of Judah. The text says that he took the treasures of the temple and the royal palace. Rehoboam had new bronze artifacts made for the temple to replace the gold ones. Nobody knows for sure, but it is highly possible that this is when the Ark of the Covenant was lost. That may have been one of the articles that Shishak took from the temple. That is why Indiana Jones went looking for it in Egypt. Note that the presence of the ark is not really mentioned again until the time of Josiah, and that reference is a bit vague.

When this trouble came on Judah, Rehoboam humbled himself and turned back to God. God did not allow him or the nation to be completely destroyed. God firmly planted him as king of Judah.

- Rehoboam died a natural death and was succeeded by his son, Abijah.

### 3 Abijah

1 Kings 15:1-8, 2 Chronicles 13:1-14:1

- Abijah became king in the eighteenth year of Jeroboam of Israel.
- He reigned for three years, spanning around 913-910 BC.
- He was evil in God's eyes, allowing the idolatry that existed under Rehoboam to continue.
- Under his reign, the nation was engaged in war against Israel. He challenged the political and religious apostasy of Jeroboam and God defended him militarily for it.
- He died a natural death and was succeeded by his son, Asa.

### 4 Asa

1 Kings 15:9-24, 2 Chronicles 14:2-16:14

- Asa became king in the twentieth year of Jeroboam of Israel.
- He reigned for forty-one years, spanning around 910-869 BC.
- Overall, Asa was good in the sight of God. There were problems at the end.
- Asa was zealous in ridding Judah of idolatry. He got rid of the male shrine prostitutes and the Asherah poles. He even deposed his own grandmother as queen mother because she had made an Asherah pole. This activity earned him favor with God and with men. There were a number of people from the tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim who were impressed with his zeal and they migrated to Judah, wanting to be aligned with Asa.
- Early in his reign, Asa had to deal with an invasion by the Cushites. Asa appealed to God for defense. God defeated the Cushites and Asa's men plundered their land.
- Later in his reign, the king of Aram (Syria) and Baasha, king of Israel formed an alliance and attacked Judah. Rather than turn to God for defense as he had done before, Asa went to the king of Aram and convinced him to reverse his alliance. Aram and Judah then attacked Israel. Although they were successful militarily, God was angry at Asa for this. God had earlier demonstrated that he was the only protection that Asa needed. The text also says that later in life Asa experienced a foot disease and sought relief only from physicians, not from God. The zeal that he had for the Lord in his youth seems to have faded in his later years.
- Asa died a natural death and was succeeded by his son, Jehoshaphat.

### 5 Jehoshaphat

1 Kings 22:41-50, 2 Chronicles 17:1-21:3

- Jehoshaphat became king in the fourth year of Ahab of Israel.
- He was thirty-five when he became king and he reigned for twenty-five years, spanning around 872-848 BC. He was coregent for a time with his father, Asa.

- Jehoshaphat was good in the sight of God, in spite of the fact that he was closely allied with Ahab in Israel.
- Jehoshaphat continued with the reforms started by his father, Asa. He ridded the land of the male prostitutes. His faithfulness to God won him the favor of the people. People in Judah brought him gifts and he became wealthy. He was very strong militarily. People from surrounding nations recognized his strength and brought him gifts as well. Judah did not have to engage in warfare during the time of Jehoshaphat.
- Jehoshaphat reformed the judicial system in Judah. He appointed judges throughout the land and gave them strict instructions to consult the Lord before rendering judgments. We have already seen through the prophets of the north that God had very little patience for a corrupt court system. Bribery leads to oppression of the poor. Jehoshaphat wanted to do away with any vestige of that in Judah.
- There was a time when the Moabites and the Ammonites banded together to attack Judah. A very large army was assembled against Judah. Jehoshaphat declared a fast and prayed to God for deliverance. God assured Jehoshaphat that all he had to do was to stand and that God would fight the battle. He instructed Jehoshaphat to march to a certain location the next day, but assured him that they would not have to do battle.

The soldiers of Judah did as instructed. In the meantime, God laid ambush to the Moabites and Ammonites. We are not exactly sure how this took place. It seems that the invading troops began to fight among themselves. The Moabites and Ammonites probably killed each other. When the soldiers of Judah arrived at the scene, they found masses of dead bodies and they did not have to fight. All that was left for them to do was to collect the spoils of war. It took three days to gather all of the plunder so they could take it back to Jerusalem.

- Jehoshaphat formed an alliance with Ahaziah of Israel to build a fleet of trading ships. God was angry with him for having a treaty with Ahaziah and God destroyed the ships. Other interactions that Jehoshaphat had with Israel are discussed under the sections on Ahab and on Elijah and Elisha.
- Jehoshaphat died a natural death and was succeeded by his son, Jehoram.

## 6 Jehoram

2 Kings 8:16-24, 2 Chronicles 21:4-20

- Jehoram became king in the fifth year of Joram of Israel.
- He was thirty-two when he became king and he reigned for eight years, spanning 848-841 BC.
- Jehoram was evil in the sight of God. He married a daughter of Ahab and followed the practices of Ahab rather than those of his father, Jehoshaphat.
- One of Jehoram's first official acts as king was to put his brothers to death. He also had some princes in Israel executed.
- Jehoram built high places in Judah and forced the nation into idolatry.

- Because of Jehoram's unfaithfulness, God allowed neighboring nations to attack and harass Judah during his reign.
- A prophet was sent by God to pronounce judgment over Jehoram for his evil. His acts were denounced and he was promised that his wives and children would be struck with a heavy blow and that he himself would die from a bowel disease. Shortly after this, the nation was invaded. The palace was plundered and much was taken away, including all of Jehoram's wives and all but one of his children. Only his youngest son, Ahaziah, remained. Shortly after this, Jehoram contracted a bowel disease that eventually killed him (slowly and painfully). He was succeeded by his son Ahaziah.

## 7 Ahaziah

2 Kings 8:25-9:29, 2 Chronicles 22:1-9

- Ahaziah became king in the twelfth year of Joram of Israel.
- He was twenty-two when he became king and he reigned for one year, in 841 BC.
- Ahaziah was evil in the sight of God. His mother was Athaliah, who was the granddaughter of Omri of Israel (presumably the daughter of Ahab). Ahaziah himself was related by marriage to Ahab. He practiced the idolatry of Ahab, as did his father Jehoram.
- When Jehu purged the land of the dynasty of Omri, Ahaziah was one of the ones killed. See the section on Jehu for more details.

## 8 Athaliah

2 Kings 11:1-16, 2 Chronicles 22:10-23:15

- Athaliah was the wife of Jehoram. She was the queen mother when her son, Ahaziah, was killed. The normal succession of the throne would have gone to one of her grandchildren. She had other ideas.
- Athaliah made an attempt to purge the royal family. She ordered that her grandchildren be executed. They all were except for one. Jehosheba, who was the daughter of Jehoram and the sister of Ahaziah, hid her nephew, Joash. Joash was a very young son of Ahaziah at the time of Athaliah's purge. She kept him hidden for six years, spanning 841-835 BC.
- During those six years, Athaliah assumed the throne of Judah. She was about as bad as they get.

## 9 Joash

2 Kings 11:1-12:21, 2 Chronicles 22:10-24:27

- Joash became king in the seventh year of Jehu of Israel.
- He was seven years old when he became king and he reigned for forty years, spanning around 835-796 BC.
- Joash started out to be a very righteous king in the sight of God, but ended on a bad note.

- Joash had been hidden when his grandmother, Athaliah, began her purge of the royal family. He was hidden for six years. When the time was right, those who had been keeping him brought him to the temple and had a ceremony to declare him king. Athaliah heard that something was going on in the temple and came to see what it was. When she saw Joash standing there, she figured out what was happening and cried "Treason!"

The people did not seem too concerned about her reaction to the event (one gets the impression that they did not consider her to be "Grandmother of the Year.") The priest ordered that she be seized, removed from the temple, and executed. Following the execution of Athaliah, the people smashed the altars to Baal and killed the priest of Baal.

At seven years old, Joash was now king. Being only seven and being an orphan, he was kept by the priests. A priest named Jehoida seems to have been his primary guardian. This paved the way for religious reform in the nation. Early on, Joash would have been unable to make true policy decisions for the nation, so the government would have been run by his guardians. Furthermore, as Joash grew, he would have looked to these same people for advice as he began to assume power. For a time, the nation's political leaders were the priests.

- Joash is best remembered for his leadership in repairing the temple. It had been over one hundred years since it was built by Solomon. Furthermore, Athaliah had abused the temple during her reign and had left it in a state of disrepair. Joash wanted to put it back into order. He led a major rebuilding project and put it back into good condition.
- Joash was a righteous king as long as Jehoida lived. After Jehoida's death, Joash fell into some bad company. He fell into idolatry and built Asherah poles. Jehoida had a son named Zechariah, who was a prophet. Zechariah came and prophesied against Joash's unfaithfulness. Joash had him killed. Because of all this, God sent a small army of Arameans to harass Judah. Even though they were a small army, they were able to inflict a great deal of harm on the country. Joash had to send them plunder in order to get them to withdraw. He himself was injured in battle. While he was recovering, some of his officials assassinated him in retaliation for his treatment of Zechariah, Jehoida's son.
- He was succeeded by his son, Amaziah.

## 10 Amaziah

2 Kings 14:1-22, 2 Chronicles 25:1-28

- Amaziah became king in the second year of Jehoash of Israel.
- He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years, spanning around 796-767 BC.
- Overall, he was good in the sight of God, but it was half-hearted.
- One of his first official acts was to execute the men who had assassinated his father.
- He engaged in war with the Edomites and soundly defeated them. He brought back plunder from Edom, which included some Edomite idols. Unfortunately, after the idols were brought to Judah, the people began to worship them. This angered God.

- Amaziah challenged Jehoash of Israel to a war. God was angry with Amaziah for his idolatry and would not defend him. Jehoash invaded Judah and defeated them. Jehoash tore down part of the wall of Jerusalem and plundered the temple.
- Amaziah was killed by some of his own officials. He was succeeded by his son, who is alternately known as Azariah or Uzziah.

## 11 Azariah, also known as Uzziah

2 Kings 15:1-7, 2 Chronicles 26:1-23

- Uzziah became king during the twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam II of Israel.
- He was sixteen years old when he became king and he reigned for fifty-two years, spanning approximately 792-740 BC. During the latter part of his reign, his son, Jotham, was co-regent with him.
- For the majority of his reign, Uzziah was righteous before the Lord.
- Isaiah 6 tells us that Isaiah received his call from God in the year that Uzziah died.
- Because of his faithfulness, Uzziah experienced God's favor. This was particularly apparent in his military success. Uzziah had great success in defeating neighboring nations such as the Philistines. Other nations brought tribute to him. He had a large and well-prepared army. Uzziah had skilled men who invented new forms of weaponry (machines to shoot arrows and hurl large stones). Uzziah built fortifications in Jerusalem and in other areas of the country. He experienced this success because of God's favor. Once he had it, he became arrogant.
- Uzziah's might went to his head. He began to believe that his success was his own achievement. He began to believe that he could do whatever he pleased. Just to prove his point, he entered the temple to burn incense. Uzziah was a descendant of David and thus from the tribe of Judah. Only Levites – specifically descendants of Aaron – could burn incense in the temple. Uzziah knew that. This was an act of arrogance on his part. When he entered the temple, a company of brave priests followed him and challenged him. They told him to leave. His response was anger and he began to rage against them. As he stood there shouting, God inflicted him with leprosy. Now, not only was he ineligible to burn incense, he was unable to enter the temple at all because he was unclean.
- He had leprosy the rest of his life. He had to live in a separate house because of his uncleanness. Because there were things that Uzziah could not do and places he could not go, his son, Jotham began to serve as co-regent. He eventually died and Jotham became king.

## 12 Jotham

2 Kings 15:32-38, 2 Chronicles 27:1-9

- Jotham became king in the second year of Pekah of Israel.
- He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned for sixteen years, spanning approximately 750-735 BC.

- He was good in the sight of God. He did allow sacrifices at the high places to continue, however.
- Jotham experienced a great deal of military success because of his faithfulness to God. He subdued the Ammonites and they paid him tribute. He also engaged in warfare with the Arameans and with Pekah of Israel.
- Jotham was one of the kings that reigned during the ministry of Isaiah. Micah also prophesied during his reign.
- He died and was succeeded by his son, Ahaz.

## 13 Ahaz

2 Kings 16:1-20, 2 Chronicles 28:1-27

- Ahaz became king during the seventeenth year of Pekah of Israel.
- He was twenty years old when he became king and he reigned for sixteen years, spanning approximately 735-715 BC.
- He was not righteous in God's sight. He practiced idolatry and even child sacrifice. He zealously instituted Baal worship in Judah.
- Because of his unfaithfulness, God allowed Judah to experience a great deal of military harassment. They were dealt severe blows by Aram and by Pekah of Israel. Ahaz turned to Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria, for assistance. Ahaz took furnishings from the temple and gave them as gifts to Tiglath-Pileser to try to win his favor. He went to Damascus for a meeting with Tiglath-Pileser. While there, he saw a large altar to an Aramean god that impressed him. He ordered the construction of a similar altar in Jerusalem. He moved articles out of the temple to this new altar and mandated that offerings be made at the new altar rather than at the temple. Essentially he shut down the operation of the temple and replaced it with idolatrous rituals.
- Ahaz's arrangement with Tiglath-Pileser was the source of Israel's problems with Assyria during the time of Pekah. Tiglath-Pileser's son, Shalmaneser later began the final conquest and his grandson, Sargon finally conquered and exiled the Northern Kingdom during the reign of Hoshea (Pekah's successor).
- Much of Isaiah's ministry was intertwined with the life of Ahaz. He was the one to whom Isaiah delivered the famous prophecy, "Behold a virgin shall conceive..." Micah also prophesied during his reign.
- Ahaz died and was succeeded by his son, Hezekiah.

## 14 Hezekiah

2 Kings 18:1-20:21, 2 Chronicles 29:1-32:33

- Hezekiah became king during the third year of Hoshea of Israel.
- He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he ruled for twenty-nine years, spanning approximately 715-686 BC.

- On the whole, Hezekiah was one of the most righteous kings that Judah had. He did more to rid the land of idolatry than any king since David. 2 Kings 18:5-7 says:

He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, just as his father David had done. He removed the high places, smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah poles. He broke into pieces the bronze snake Moses had made [Numbers 21:4-9], for up to that time the Israelites had been burning incense to it. ...

Hezekiah trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel. There was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, either before him or after him. He held fast to the Lord and did not cease to follow him; he kept the commands the Lord had given Moses. And the Lord was with him; he was successful in whatever he undertook. He rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him.

- Hezekiah was king of Judah at the time of the fall of Israel. Isaiah and Micah ministered during his reign.
- Hezekiah's first major activity was the restoration of the temple. His father, Ahaz, had shut it down and desecrated it during his reign. Hezekiah restored the temple and its furnishings. He reinstated the priests and restarted the sacrificial system. It was a major undertaking because Ahaz had done so much to shut it down. Hezekiah also inspired the people to begin giving to the temple again. For the first time in a long time, the priests had enough on which to live and there was an abundance in the house of God. Hezekiah won great loyalty among the people through these acts. Judah's special relationship with God and the presence of the temple was what made the people unique. It was their reason to exist as a nation. Restoring the temple was restoring the national identity.

It had been a long time since a Passover had been observed. Hezekiah wanted to bring the nation together in a Passover observance. Unfortunately, by the time the temple and the priests were ready, the time for Passover had just passed (it is celebrated the fourteenth day of the first month). He decided to hold a Passover observance in the second month instead. He invited the people of Judah and he also invited the people of Israel to come. Masses of people poured into Jerusalem from Judah and Israel for the observance. There has been nothing like this in Jerusalem since the time of Solomon. Hezekiah restored religious zeal to the nation. After the Passover observance, the masses went and searched out Judah and tore down idolatrous altars.

- 2 Kings 18:8 credits Hezekiah with ultimately defeating the Philistines. One does not hear much about them as a people after this time.
- Ahaz had entangled Judah with Assyria. Hezekiah refused to be subject to Assyria. Because of this, he had to do warfare with Sennacherib, who was now king of Assyria.

The Bible does not tell us exactly how long the fight with Assyria lasted. We do know that Hezekiah fortified the city of Jerusalem in preparation for the battle. He strengthened the city walls. He also built what has come to be known as Hezekiah's tunnel. There was no water supply inside the city of Jerusalem. There were springs outside the city walls. If war broke out and the city was surrounded, nobody would be able to get out to get water. Hezekiah had his men dig a tunnel that ran from inside the city walls to a spring outside of the city. As long as the enemy did not discover the opening of the tunnel, they would have access to water. The tunnel still exists today.

The Assyrians attacked and defeated many of the fortified cities of Judah. Jerusalem was the only remaining target. Sennacherib's armies surrounded the city. They were unable to penetrate the walls. We do not know how long this standoff lasted, but even without penetrating the city walls they inflicted hardship on the people. If they could not get out of the city, they had no access to food, as there was no agriculture inside the city.

Eventually the soldiers delivered a challenge. They called up to the officials on the city walls, speaking in Hebrew so that all the people could hear and understand what they were saying. They encouraged the city to simply surrender to Assyria. They said that none of the other gods of the other cities had been able to save them. Why would Jerusalem think that their God would be able to save them? The heart of what they said was that neither Jerusalem nor Hezekiah nor Jerusalem's God was any match for Sennacherib and Assyria so they should simply surrender.

That was not a smart thing to say. Isaiah brought a message to Hezekiah that God would deliver Jerusalem from Assyria. That night an angel went to the Assyrian camp and killed 185,000 men. The remaining troops withdrew and went home. Shortly after that, Sennacherib himself was assassinated.

- At one point, Hezekiah became ill. Isaiah came to him and told him that he should set his affairs in order because he was going to die. Hezekiah wept bitterly and prayed to God to spare him. God sent Isaiah back to Hezekiah to tell him that God had heard his prayer. God would heal him and add fifteen years to his life. Hezekiah asked for a sign that this word was true. To confirm the prophecy, God reversed the motion of the sun. (We all know that the earth moves around the sun so it is not really the sun's motion that we observe, but to us it looks like the sun is moving.) There was a staircase in the palace and as the day passed, the normal progression of shadows on the stairs was "up." God caused the shadows to go back down ten steps and then continue up the staircase. This was his sign. The only other place in Scripture where we see God altering the normal flow of time is in Joshua Chapter 10 when God made the sun stand still for almost a day to give Joshua and his army time to defeat an enemy.
- The king of Babylon heard about Hezekiah's illness, his deliverance, and the miraculous sign that had been given. He sent envoys to Hezekiah to learn more about it. While they were there, Hezekiah's pride got the better of him. He showed the Babylonians all of his riches and all the treasures in the palace and the temple. After the people left, Isaiah confronted Hezekiah. As a result of his pride, the day would come when all the treasures that Hezekiah had shown them would be carried off to Babylon along with the people of Judah. Hezekiah repented of his pride and thus this did not happen in his lifetime.
- Hezekiah died and was succeeded by his son, Manasseh. Hezekiah made his mark in history as one of the truly great leaders of Judah. It is amazing that such a great man could have come from such a miserable father and could have produced an equally as miserable son.

## 15 Manasseh

2 Kings 21:1-18, 2 Chronicles 33:1-20

- Manasseh was the first man to become king of Judah after the fall of Israel.
- He was twelve years old when he became king and he ruled for fifty-five years, spanning approximately 697-642 BC.

- He was very evil in the sight of the Lord.
- Manasseh rebuilt the pagan altars and the Asherah poles that Hezekiah had destroyed. He worshipped the moon and the stars. He practiced sorcery, divination, witchcraft, and child sacrifice. He was extreme in his evil. He led the nation to practice these same things. The people of Judah became more detestable to God than the people that had been driven out of the land long ago.
- God put up with this behavior for a time. Eventually he delivered a message to the people of Judah that he would wipe them out. He sent the Assyrians to come take Manasseh captive and carry him away. When this happened, he repented and cried out to God for deliverance. God was faithful and allowed him to return to Jerusalem. The experience convinced Manasseh who God was and for the rest of his life he tried to reverse the evil that he had instigated in the land. He made a bit of progress but was unable to turn the nation back to God completely.
- Manasseh died and was succeeded by his son, Amon.

## 16 Amon

2 Kings 21:19-26, 2 Chronicles 33:21-25

- Amon was twenty-two years old when he became king and he reigned for two years, spanning approximately 642-640 BC.
- He was evil in the sight of the Lord. He had all of Manasseh's bad points without the repentance. He tried to revive all of the idol worship that Manasseh had started.
- Amon was assassinated. He was succeeded by his son, Josiah.

## 17 Josiah

2 Kings 22:1-23:30, 2 Chronicles 34:1-36:1

- Josiah was eight years old when he became king and he reigned for thirty-one years, spanning approximately 640-609 BC.
- Josiah was a good king and was righteous in the sight of God.
- Josiah instituted repairs of the temple, as Hezekiah and Joash had done. During the repairs of the temple, the book of the Law was discovered. The implication of this is that long ago it had been forgotten. The people of Judah had been living for years without knowledge of the law of God. Josiah read the book and was greatly grieved. He realized that Judah was under great judgment from God because they had not fulfilled his law. Because of Josiah's sincere grief and his zeal for God, God spared the land from the judgment during his lifetime.

Josiah assembled the elders and the people of Judah and had the law read to them. Like Joshua, he led the people into a covenant renewal. Under Josiah's leadership, there was a massive purge of anything idolatrous in the land. Altars, Asherah poles, high places, temples, and shrines were destroyed. Household idols were seized and destroyed. Pagan priests were executed. There was a zealous return to the law of the Lord.

In the eighteenth year of his reign, Josiah called the nation into a massive Passover celebration. The text says that the nation had not seen a Passover like this since the time of Samuel. Note that his great-grandfather Hezekiah had done a similar thing.

- In 2 Chronicles 35:3, Josiah gave some instructions about putting the temple back in order. He says:

Put the sacred ark in the temple that Solomon son of David king of Israel built. It is not to be carried about on your shoulders.

We have not heard anything about the ark in a very long time. Remember that there is speculation that it was carried off by the Egyptians during the time of Rehoboam. This verse indicates that the ark indeed had been removed from the temple. They were told to put an ark back into the temple. Whether or not it was the original ark of the covenant we do not know. The ark is mentioned repeatedly in the Old Testament up through 1 Kings 8:21 and 1 Chronicles 8:11, which both occurred during the time of Solomon. There is no reference again until this verse in 2 Chronicles 35. The only other references to the ark are in Psalm 132 and Jeremiah 3:16. The Psalm passage, which was probably written during the life of David or Solomon, mentions it in passing. The Jeremiah passage is interesting:

"In those days, when your numbers have increased greatly in the land, declares the Lord, 'men will no longer say, 'The ark of the covenant of the Lord.' It will never enter their minds or be remembered; it will not be missed, nor will another one be made.'"

The passage speaks of a time when people will stop missing or remembering the ark of the covenant. It also opens the door to the possibility that there had been more than one ark ("nor will another one be made.") It is possible that the original ark had been captured long ago and that another one had been crafted. That one may have been taken to Babylon and then a third one may have been crafted. We have no evidence of this, but this particular verse implies that it might have been possible.

The ark is a fascinating artifact. It represents the presence and the power of God. It is a link to the life of Moses and Joshua and David and Solomon. According to Hebrews 9:4, it contained the tablets of the Ten Commandments, Aaron's rod that budded, and a jar of manna. It was the place where God met the high priest on the day of atonement. The fact remains that nobody really knows for sure what happened to it. That is probably just as well. If it were found, someone would build "The Church of the Holy Shrine of Here's Where We Found the Ark." They would craft golden statues of Moses to enhance its presence. People would burn candles to it. The sad fact is that people would worship the ark. They need to worship the God that it represents.

- The Babylonians attacked and subdued the Assyrians. The Babylonian king was Nabopolassar, and his son was Nebuchadnezzar. Pharaoh Neco of Egypt came out to help the Assyrians. To do so, he had to pass through Megiddo. Josiah did not want Egypt to come to the aid of Assyria and tried to stop Neco. In the process, Josiah was killed. His son, Jehoahaz, succeeded him. Jeremiah composed laments for him. Josiah was a very good king. 2 Kings 23:25 says:

Neither before nor after Josiah was there a king like him who turned to the Lord as he did – with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength, in accordance with all the Law of Moses.

- Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Jeremiah, and Obadiah were all prophets during the reign of Josiah.
- 1 Chronicles 3:15 identifies the sons of Josiah: Johanan the firstborn, Jehoiakim the second son, Zedekiah the third, Shallum the fourth. According to 2 Kings 23:34, Jehoiakim was also known as Eliakim. Jeremiah 22:11 implies that Shallum was another name for Jehoahaz (it says that Shallum succeeded his father Josiah as king). Three of Josiah's sons, Jehoahaz (Shallum), Jehoiakim (Eliakim), and Zedekiah, plus Josiah's grandson Jehoiachin followed him as king.

## 18 Jehoahaz

2 Kings 23:31-35, 2 Chronicles 36:2-4

- Jehoahaz was twenty-three when he became king and he reigned for three months, in 609 BC.
- In those three months, he managed to gain a reputation as an evil king in God's sight, participating in the sins of his forefathers (i.e. idolatry).
- On his way back from battle, Neco of Egypt deposed Jehoahaz as king and put his brother, Eliakim in his place. Neco changed Eliakim's name to Jehoiakim. Jehoahaz was carried off to Egypt in captivity and there he died.

## 19 Jehoiakim

2 Kings 23:36-24:7, 2 Chronicles 36:5-8

- Jehoakim was twenty-five years old when he became king and he reigned for eleven years, spanning approximately 609-598 BC. We do not know why Jehoahaz was chosen as the original successor for Josiah since Eliakim (Jehoiakim) was older.
- Jehoiakim was evil in God's sight, as were his forefathers (i.e. he participated in idolatry).
- When Neco put Jehoiakim in charge, he made him pay tribute. Jehoiakim taxed the people to raise the money for the tribute.
- Nebuchadnezzar, who was now king of Babylon, attacked Judah during Jehoiakim's reign. He made Jehoiakim a Babylonian vassal rather than an Egyptian vassal. Jehoiakim remained subject to Babylon for three years, but then rebelled. Nebuchadnezzar came back and came down hard on Judah. 2 Kings indicates that Jehoiakim was killed. 2 Chronicles says that he was placed in chains to be taken to Babylon. It would seem that Jehoiakim was captured in battle, taken to Babylon in chains, then subsequently killed. His son Jehoiachin succeeded him as king.

## 20 Jehoiachin

2 Kings 24:8-17, 2 Chronicles 36:9-10

- Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became king and he reigned for three months and ten days, in 598-597 BC.

- He was evil in God's sight.
- When he became king, Judah was still under attack by Babylon. In a very short time (three months and ten days) he surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar took him in chains to Babylon.
- Nebuchadnezzar took articles from the temple and put them in his own temple in Babylon. Note that this may have been the time that the Ark of the Covenant was finally lost (rather than during the time of Rehoboam). He also deported soldiers, craftsmen, etc. to Babylon at this time. The Babylonian exile had started.
- When Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin captive, he put Jehoiachin's uncle, Zedekiah (another son of Josiah), in his place as king of Judah.
- After the fall of Judah, in the thirty-seventh year of the exile, Jehoiachin was released from prison in Babylon. He was treated well by the king of Babylon and lived out his life peacefully and comfortably in exile.

## 21 Zedekiah

2 Kings 24:18-25:1, 2 Chronicles 36:11-14

- Zedekiah was twenty-one when he became king and he reigned for eleven years, Spanning approximately 597-586 BC.
- He was evil in the sight of God.
- In his ninth year, Zedekiah rebelled against Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar's army besieged Jerusalem. They surrounded the city for almost two years. Famine in the city became terrible. Finally the soldiers in Jerusalem broke through the city walls and tried to escape. Zedekiah fled. He was captured. As punishment, he was forced to witness the execution of his sons and then his eyes were put out. His final image, engraved forever on his mind, was that of his own sons dying. He was taken in chains to Babylon.

## 22 The Fall of the Southern Kingdom

2 Kings 25:1-30, 2 Chronicles 36:15-23

This last siege would be Jerusalem's last for quite a while. After the soldiers fled, the Babylonians ransacked the city. They tore down any buildings of value. They burned the palace. They destroyed Solomon's temple. This all occurred in 586 BC.

The people of Judah were taken captive and carried off to Babylon. There they were resettled in Jewish communities. As opposed to the way Israel was treated by Assyria, the Jews remained Jews in Babylon. They kept their culture and their religion. They no longer had their temple. It was in Babylon that synagogues became a part of Jewish life. This was where they gathered together to study the law.

The Babylonians left the poor and the weak behind in Judah to care for the land. They set up a man named Gedaliah to be governor of those left behind. Gedaliah encouraged the people to cooperate with the Babylonians and to settle down in the land so that they could have peace. Gedaliah was later assassinated. When this happened, the people who were left behind feared the consequences. Large numbers of those who remained in Judah fled and settled in Egypt.

Jeremiah was one of those. It was this community in Egypt that later translated the Old Testament writings into Greek (which was the common language years later), producing what is known as the Septuagint.

Why did it all have to happen? Why the pain and suffering? Why the destruction of the temple? 2 Kings 23:26-27 says:

Nevertheless, the Lord did not turn away from the heat of his fierce anger, which burned against Judah because of all that Manasseh had done to provoke him to anger. So the Lord said, "I will remove Judah also from my presence as I removed Israel, and I will reject Jerusalem, the city I chose, and this temple, about which I said, 'There shall my Name be.'"

The Jews were God's chosen people. The temple was his chosen residence. The Jews were chosen to bear witness for him to the rest of the world. They had turned their back on that responsibility and had embraced false gods. The temple had been defiled and had been used as a place of worship for the false gods. God is a jealous God and does not have to put up with that.

All of the promises that he gave to the nation had been conditional on the faithfulness of the people. He had been patient with them for hundreds of years. The time for patience had passed.

Manasseh was not singularly responsible for the fall. His behavior was a very good example of what caused the fall. Kings led the nation into unfaithfulness. The nation had been unfaithful in everything from idol worship to the observance of Sabbath years.

2 Chronicles 36:15-23 sums up the fall:

The Lord, the God of their fathers, sent word to them through his messengers again and again, because he had pity on his people and on his dwelling place. But they mocked God's messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the Lord was aroused against his people and there was no remedy. He brought up against them the king of the Babylonians, who killed their young men with the sword in the sanctuary, and spared neither young man nor young woman, old man or aged. God handed all of them over to Nebuchadnezzar. He carried to Babylon all the articles from the temple of God, both large and small, and the treasures of the Lord's temple and the treasures of the king and his officials. They set fire to God's temple and broke down the wall of Jerusalem; they burned all the palaces and destroyed everything of value there.

He carried into exile to Babylon the remnant, who escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and his sons until the kingdom of Persia came to power. The land enjoyed its Sabbath rests; all the time of its desolation it rested, until the seventy years were completed in fulfillment of the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah.

In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and to put it in writing:

"This is what Cyrus king of Persia says:

'The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Anyone of his people among you – may the Lord his God be with him, and let him go up.'"

So it was not all bad news. Things must have looked quite bleak to the Jews. They had no more kingdom. Their temple was gone. But in fact, they are seeing the same thing that their ancestors had encountered since the time of the Judges. The pattern had repeated so often in their history. The people became unfaithful. God withdrew his protection and his presence. Enemies oppressed them. God preserved a faithful remnant. The remnant cried out to God for help. He rescued and restored them. This same cycle was happening again.

God dealt severely with this unfaithful people. Yet he preserved a remnant unto himself. Around seventy years later, he allowed them to return and to begin rebuilding.

Note that the closing of 2 Chronicles is almost verbatim the opening of the book of Ezra. It is supposed that the same author wrote 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah.

The Southern Kingdom has fallen. Babylonian exile is in force. God did not stop working among his people just because they had been exiled. The prophets did not stop writing (Ezekiel, Daniel, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi have yet to speak). God's plan of salvation was still on track.

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