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# 2 KINGS 1-25; 2 CHRONICLES 21-36

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## Study Guide

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### OUTLINE: 2 KINGS 1-25

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- I. Elijah and Elisha (1:1 – 13:25)
  - a. Elijah opposes Ba'al worship (1:1-18)
  - b. Transition to Elisha (2:1-25)
  - c. Elisha's ministry (3:1 – 8:29)
  - d. Jehu's rebellion (9:1-36)
  - e. Athaliah and Jehoash (10:1 – 12:21)
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- II. Kings of Israel and Judah (14:1 – 17:41)
  - a. Various kings (14:1 – 15:38)
  - b. The destruction of Israel (16:1 – 17:41)
- III. Kings of Judah (18:1 – 25:30)
  - a. Righteous Hezekiah (18:1 – 20:21)
  - b. Wicked Manasseh and Amon (21:1-26)
  - c. Righteous Josiah (22:1 – 23:25)
    - d. Josiah's sons (23:31 – 24:20)
  - e. The destruction of Judah (25:1-30)

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### OUTLINE: 2 CHRONICLES 21-36

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- I. Kings of Judah (21:1 – 36:21)
  - a. Jehoram (21:1-20)
  - b. Ahaziah and Jehu (22:1-9)
  - c. Athaliah (22:10 – 23:21)
  - d. Joash (24:1-27)
  - e. Amaziah (25:1-28)
  - f. Uzziah (26:1-23)
  - g. Jotham (27:1-9)
  - h. Ahaz (28:1-27)
  - i. Hezekiah (29:1 – 32:33)
  - j. Manasseh (33:1-20)
  - k. Amon (33:21-25)
  - l. Josiah (34:1 – 35:27)
  - m. Jehoahaz (36:1-4)
  - n. Jehoiakim (36:5-8)
  - o. Jehoiachin (36:9-10)
  - p. Zedekiah (36:11-21)
- II. The proclamation of Cyrus (36:22-23)

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## INTRODUCTION

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In these chapters, the focus will be on 2 Kings (scripture references with just numbers are from that book), though the parallel accounts in 2 Chronicles are profitably studied and referenced. There are a number of differences between the two accounts in Kings and Chronicles. Some of these are easily explained as point of view—2 Chronicles focuses heavily on the kings of Israel, while Kings provides stories from both kingdoms, and 2 Chronicles was written much later and intended to provide information that the editors deemed 'missing' from the Kings stories. Other differences

are details of separate events or greater details on the same event in one version or the other. Another group is due to the audience, with kings being written shortly after the Babylonian exile it describes and Chronicles coming after the return of the Jew to Jerusalem—making it perhaps the final book of the Old Testament written. Finally, there are some that are simply contradictions—different scribes writing conflicting information, perhaps intentionally or perhaps by mistake. Most of these are relatively insignificant things doctrinally

speaking, such as numbers or years or names in a genealogy list.

A fundamental difference is in the purposes of the books. Kings tries to answer the question, ‘Why did God allow his chosen people to be destroyed and carried away captive by the Assyrians and Babylonians?’ The audience was people in exile wondering how the Lord could seemingly ignore his promises. 2 Kings shows how the wickedness of the kings and the people violated the covenant, so God had to fulfill the punishment previously decreed as a result. While other kingdoms declared that their god had lost power or status after such a dramatic defeat, the exiled Jews managed to hold on to their faith through these explanations. Judgment was rendered on each king, putting them down as either wicked or good, depending on if the editors felt that king contributed to the wickedness that led to the downfall or not.

Chronicles, on the other hand, was written to those who had returned from exile and were struggling to

create a life back in their former lands. Was God still with them? Was the covenant still in force? The book carries the theme that the promises made to the Davidic line are indeed still part of God’s plan and tries to give hope that faith and patience will demonstrate those blessings. It is less judgmental on individual kings, less focused on their evil deeds, and more interested in showing how the line of David was miraculously preserved down to and through the Babylonian captivity. Because it was also focused on the house of David, there is far less information about the kings of the northern kingdom of Israel.

While Latter-day Saints generally live in good situations around the world at this time, we do know that things will get more challenging as we get nearer to the Second Coming. When those challenges come—or others we deal with individually prior to that time—we do well to remember the messages of Kings and Chronicles and strive to have faith in the covenants and promises of God, even in dark times.

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## ELIJAH AND ELISHA (1:1 – 13:25)

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### INTRODUCTION

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The books of Kings recount the adventures of two prophets in detail—Elijah and Elisha. For this reason, these books are considered part of the Former Prophets in the Hebrew Bible. Christians generally follow the Greek organization, putting these in a collection of historical books. Unlike 1 and 2 Samuel, the break between 1 and 2 Kings doesn’t fall in a natural place in the story, but seems to have been selected mostly for convenience, to keep the book of roughly equal size. Thus 2 Kings starts in the middle of the story of Elijah, Elisha, Ahaziah, and Jehoshaphat. The stories of Elijah and Elisha are interwoven in the middle of the accounts of the kings of Israel and Judah, with both of them getting a large amount of coverage in what is otherwise a recitation of royal activities.

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### ELIJAH OPPOSES BA’AL WORSHIP (1:1-18)

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1:1 **Moab rebelled against Israel.** Ahab is best known for his in the Bible for his confrontations with Elijah, but in non-Biblical sources, he was a strong military leader with chariots and horsemen powerful enough to be a leader in a coalition that took on the Assyrian army (Ahab’s encounter being the first one with the Assyrians, who would about 125 years later take Israel captive). With his military strength, he had initially put Moab under conquest and made them pay tribute to Israel. Now, with his death, Moab rebelled against that vassal situation, testing the strength of Ahab’s son, Ahaziah (see 3:4 below).

1:2 **Ahaziah fell down through a lattice.** Upper rooms (on roofs) often had lattice walls that would block some of the sun but still allow air to flow through. Ahaziah must have broken through one of these walls somehow and fallen down to the ground level of the palace, injuring him severely.

1:4 **enquire of Baal-zebul.** Ahaziah sent messengers to Ekron, a town of the Philistines, to ask of his fate from their god Ba'al-zebul. This was a local manifestation of Ba'al, which name means 'lord of the flies,' perhaps implying power of disease-bearing flies. Other scholars think this is a pun and that the real name was Ba'al-Zebul, 'exalted lord.' Either way, the name carried down to New Testament times where it became Beelzebub, another name for Satan (compare Matthew 10:25; 12:24; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15).

1:8 **It is Elijah the Tishbite.** Ahaziah's messengers were stopped by Elijah at the command of the Lord and sent back with the message that the king was going to die. When the messengers described the man who had stopped them—"an hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather"—the king immediately knew who it was, and Elijah's words angered him.

1:13 **a captain of the third fifty with his fifty.** Ahaziah sent a military group of fifty to take Elijah but the prophet called down fire from heaven and consumed them. This was repeated with a second group. The third captain was humble and pled with the prophet not to be consumed, and following the prompting of an angel, Elijah went with him. It's clear from Elijah's response that the first two groups came challenging his authority and position: "If I be a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven" (1:10). Thus the fire was a validation of his calling—he spoke for YHWH but used Ba'al's sign and power to establish it, showing the Jehovah's power over Ba'al.

1:17 **Jehoram reigned in his stead.** Ahaziah's son, Jehoram, took the throne with his father died of his injuries. There is also a king of Judah about this same time named Jehoram (also called Joram), mentioned here in this same verse. To help keep them straight, refer to the list of kings in the Bible Dictionary, "Chronology" (pages 637-639)

### TRANSITION TO ELISHA (2:1-25)

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2:1 **Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal.** There are multiple Gilgals in the Old Testament; for this story, two are possibilities—one near Jericho and one several miles north of Bethel. The latter is the better candidate as the journey takes them first to Bethel

(2:2) then to Jericho (2:4) before crossing the Jordan; if it were the eastern Gilgal they would simply be making a loop. Along the way, Elijah three times invited Elisha ('God is salvation') to stay behind but Elisha showed his faithfulness to his mentor and teacher by an oath: "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee" (2:2).

2:8 **Elijah took his mantle.** A "mantle" was a coat or cloak, the outer garment worn to keep warm, protect from the elements, and even sleep on as a bedroll. This story makes the passing of the physical mantle into a symbolic act that represents a transfer of prophetic or leadership authority. Today in the Church, we use the same language from this story to represent the power that comes with a new calling, though there is no physical object involved.

2:8 **divided hither and thither.** Elijah's authority was demonstrated by his causing the waters of the Jordan River to dry up, just as Moses and Joshua had done before him.

2:9 **let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.** Under Israelite inheritance practices, the oldest son got a double portion, due to his responsibility to care for other members of the family. So if there were four sons, the estate would be divided into five portions with the oldest getting two of the five. So Elisha's request was to be the inheritor of the spirit of Elijah's ministry. Scholars have noted that the number of miracles recorded for Elisha is about double that of Elijah, which could be a reflection of this request.

2:11 **chariot of fire, and horses of fire.** The text does not say that Elijah rode in the chariot. Rather, it says the purpose of the chariots and horses of fire was to separate the two men as it "parted them both asunder." Elijah then went up in a "whirlwind" which means a tempest or storm. This is also reflected in Elisha's response where he cries out in exasperation about the chariot and horses, because they were stopping him from getting to his "father" (2:12), Elijah. Elijah was translated in order to be able to pass the sealing keys on to Peter, James, and John during Jesus' mortal ministry (see Matthew 17).

2:21 **cast the salt in there.** After returning to Jericho, the men there asked for Elisha's help because their water was bad. Elisha spread salt into

the water and that made it good, which adds to the miracle because salt normally makes water bad for drinking. There is still a water source in Jericho known as Elisha's spring or fountain.

2:23 **Go up, thou bald head.** Being mocked by youth (the KJV translation calling them "little children" is not correct, as the word implies youth or even young adults), Elisha cursed them. The incident with the bear was separate, though the youth may have lost protection as a result of the curse. Elisha can't be blamed for the results of the mocking attitudes of his persecutors, who probably strayed too near (or even harassed) two mothers and their cubs.

### ELISHA'S MINISTRY (3:1 – 8:29)

3:1 **Jehoram the son of Ahab began to reign.** After the death of his brother, Jehoram took command.

3:4 **Mesha king of Moab.** This king is known from a stele (below, in the Louvre in Paris) discovered in 1868 at Dhiban, Jordan, and recounts the victory of Mesha, king of Moab, against the house of Omri, king of Israel, and his son (in this case, grandson, Jehoram). The stele is dated to about 840 B.C. and



ties to the rebellion of Moab in this chapter, though the chapter tells that Israel was victorious (a contradiction with the stele).

4:1 **my husband is dead.** A woman who was a wife of one of "the sons of the prophets" (the men who were apparently disciples of Elijah and Elisha) lost her husband. She apparently had a debt that she could no longer pay without her husband, and the creditor had come to take her two sons as debt slaves to work and pay off the debt. Elisha told her to borrow pots from all her neighbors and fill them from her single pot of [olive] oil. She was able to miraculously do this and sell the large amount of oil to pay her debt and support her family for a while.

4:8 **to Shunem, where was a great woman.** Shunem was located toward the east end of the Jezreel valley about a dozen miles southwest of the Sea of Galilee. A wealthy woman (a better translation of "great") lived there with her husband, and noticed that Elisha passed through town often. She determined to build a small addition to their house where the prophet could stay when he was in the area. Elisha showed his gratitude by blessing her to have a child, which she had been unable to do. This woman and her family figure prominently in Elisha's story.

4:19 **My head, my head.** Many years later, the young man born to the Shunammite woman was working in the fields with his father and others when his head severely hurt. They carried him back but he died in his mother's arms. She laid him on Elisha's bed and quickly went to Mount Carmel to find the prophet, and fell at his feet. Elisha was surprised because "the Lord hath hid it from me" (4:27). She explained about her son and Elisha went back with her, sending his servant Gehazi ('valley of vision') ahead to try his staff first. Gehazi was unsuccessful (perhaps due to his self-focus demonstrated later in the story) so when Elisha arrived, he prayed, then lay on the child, mouth on mouth, eyes on eyes, and hands on hands. He did this twice, and the second time the child sneezed and awoke, and Elisha returned him to his mother.

4:40 **there is death in the pot.** Someone made soup ('pottage' in KJV) with some wild ingredients that caused people to be sick. Elisha added some meal (flour) to the soup and that made it edible.

5:1 **Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria.** Syria (or better, Aram) was mostly an enemy of Israel over the years, and during one such battle a military leader named Naaman ('pleasantness') took a young girl as a slave for his household. When he contracted leprosy (some kind of skin disease, probably not what we know as leprosy—Hansen's disease), this young girl told him about a prophet in Israel who could cure him. Not knowing how to contact this prophet, Naaman send a message and gift to the king, who thought it was an excuse to fight. But Elisha heard about the request somehow and sent for Naaman. When Naaman came, Elisha sent a messenger—his servant, Gehazi—telling Naaman to wash seven times in the Jordan River. Naaman was incensed at this request—the rivers in Damascus were far better than the muddy Jordan. But another servant asked the probing question, "If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it?" (5:13). So Naaman humbled himself and washed seven times as requested and was healed of his disease. He offered a great reward to Elisha but Elisha refused it.

*Why must we be obedient to a prophet's counsel even if we do not understand it or it may appear insignificant?*

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5:22 **My master hath sent me.** After Naaman left, Elisha's servant, Gehazi, considered the great wealth that had been offered and coveted it. So he went after Naaman and lied, saying that Elisha changed his mind and wanted some of the gift to help some of his disciples, which Naaman gave him. Gehazi hid it in the house. But when he saw Elisha, the prophet asked him where he had been. Gehazi lied again and said nowhere, but Elisha knew by the Spirit what had happened. He told Gehazi that he would be

punished with the very disease that Naaman had been healed of.

6:6 **the iron did swim.** Elisha's miracles ranged from the amazing (raising the dead) to the mundane, such as this one. A man chopping wood to help build a house for the Elisha's disciples lost his borrowed axe head in the water. This was a great loss of a very expensive item. Elisha was able to take stick and toss it on the water, which caused the axe to float and be retrieved.

6:12 **the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber.** The Syrian (Aramian) king was frustrated by his inability to gain victory over Israel. One of his advisors attributed it to Elisha, who seemed to know their secret plans. Do they found out where he was and sent an army after him. When the people of Dothan awoke in the morning, they saw that they were surrounded by a Syrian army. Elisha's servant (Gehazi's replacement?) was afraid, but Elisha gave his now famous response: "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them" (6:16). Elisha prayed and his servant was then able to see that they were also surrounded by chariots and horses of fire.

6:18 **he smote them with blindness.** In contrast to his servant being able to see the Lord's army, Elijah prayed that the Lord would make the Syrian army blind. They weren't literally blind but they did not recognize Elisha when he went out and told them (in Jedi Obi-wan Kenobi fashion from *Star Wars*), "This is not the way, neither is this the city." He instead led them to Samaria where he delivered them to the king, who followed Elisha's direction, fed them well, and sent them on their way, never to return and fight again.

6:24 **Ben-hadad king of Syria...besieged Samaria.** There were three kings of Aram named Ben-hadad ('son of Hadad,' a god); this was probably the second one. The one in 2 Kings 13 is Ben-hadad III. This Ben-hadad laid siege to Samaria to the point where the people began to eat their children. A dispute came to the king where two women had agreed to eat their sons, one each day. The first woman kept her agreement but the second woman on the next day would not, and the first wanted the king to force her to keep the bargain. (Compare this to the two

prostitutes who came to Solomon with one dead and one living child!) The king was so upset by this that he tore his clothing and wore sackcloth, mourning for his people. Blaming Elisha for the siege (who was in the city and so caught in it, too), he tried to kill Elisha, but Elisha instead predicted an end to the siege by predicting very low prices for food the very next day (contrasted with 80 shekels for just a donkey’s head or five shekels of silver for about a quart of dove dung in 6:25).

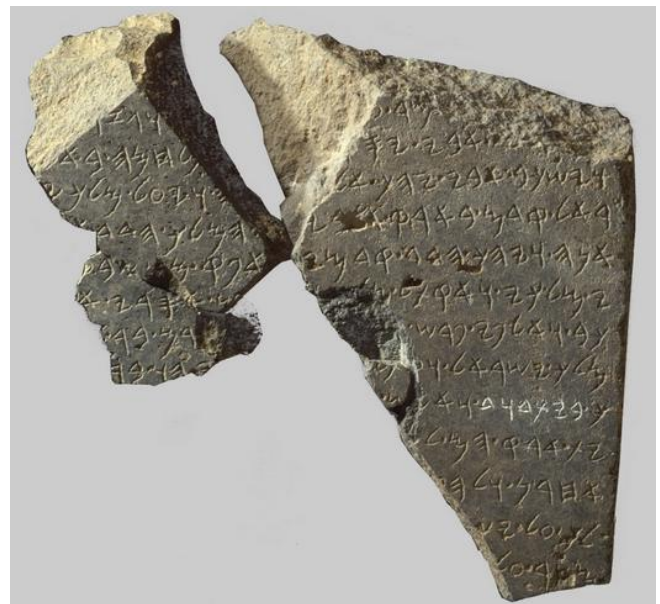
**7:7 they arose and fled in the twilight.** Believing a noise they were hearing was the Hittites coming upon them, the armies of Ben-hadad suddenly fled their siege of Samaria, leaving all behind. Four leprous men investigated the camp and found it empty. Telling the people in the city, everyone came out and raided the tents of the departed army, which caused prices to suddenly fall, just as Elisha had predicted.

**8:1 a famine.** Elisha predicted a seven-year famine and warned his friend, the Shunammite woman, to get out before the famine was too bad. She went among the Philistines. At the end of the famine, she went back but her land had been occupied, so she plead with the king for it back. Fortunately, when she came, Elisha’s servant, Gehazi, was just telling the king how her son had been raised from the dead by Elisha. The king was so impressed that he gave the woman her land back.

**8:7 Elisha came to Damascus.** The Lord had told Elijah to “anoint Hazael to be king over Syria” (1 Kings 19:15) but Elijah did not get that done before he was taken away. So Elisha took that task on in this chapter. Hazael (‘one who sees God’) was an official close to the king and the sick Ben-hadad told him to take a present to Elisha and ask if he would recover. Elisha told Hazael that he would tell the king that he would recover but then also told Hazael that the king would die and that Hazael would be king. (The only JST change in the book of 2 Kings is in 8:10: “And Elisha said unto him, **Thou will go and** say unto him...,” the implication being that Elisha is not telling Hazael to lie but making a prophetic statement that he will lie.) The record doesn’t say that Elisha anointed him but that is probably when it happened, since the Lord had commanded it. Hazael went back to the king and murdered him by covering his face

with a thick cloth so he couldn’t breathe, then took his place as king.

Hazael’s reign is recorded not just in the Bible but also in Assyrian records. There he is called “the son of nobody,” reflecting on his lack of royal blood, the record simply indicating that the previous king “perished” (Zondervan, 3:145). He also erected a memorial (stela) at Dan in northern Israel after his battles, claiming that he killed both Joram of Israel and Ahaziah of Judah (the Bible says that Jehu killed them both—see 9:2 below). This Tel Dan Stela is famous for its mention of “the house of David” (highlighted in white below).



*Considering the stories of Elijah and Elisha, what is the relationship between miracles and faith? How does a person qualify to perform miracles in the name of the Lord?*

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## JEHU'S REBELLION (9:1-36)

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9:2 **look out there Jehu.** The other unfinished task from Elijah was to anoint Jehu king of Israel (1 Kings 19:16). Elisha sent one of his disciples with oil and instructions to secretly anoint Jehu the next king of Israel. Jehu was a military leader in the king's service, stationed at Ramoth-gilead (east of the Jordan). The young man went there and did the task, telling Jehu that he would "smite the house of Ahab thy master" (9:7). Jehu's men declared him king after his anointing. Then Jehu went to Jezreel where the king was recovering from wounds received in battle. Jezebel was also there, as was the king of Israel, Ahaziah. Jehu battled against them both and shot Jerhorem the son of Ahab with an arrow, then had others chase down Ahaziah and kill him near Megiddo.

9:30 **she painted her face, and tired her head.**

Knowing what had befallen Jehoram and Ahaziah, Jezebel prepared herself for Jehu's return by putting on makeup and adorning her hair. When Jehu came in the gate, she saw him from the window and called out, "Had Zimri peace, who slew his master?" referring to the seven-day king that Omri, her father-in-law, had overthrown (1 Kings 16:8-20). Jehu called into the palace, asking who was on his side. When heads poked out the windows, he told them to throw Jezebel down, which they did, killing her. He had the horses trample on her body, then they all went in to celebrate their victory. Later, Jehu sent someone to collect her body, but they only found her skull, hands, and feet, fulfilling the prophesy of Elijah that she would be eaten by dogs at Jezreel (1 Kings 21:23).



Jehu is also attested in Assyrian records, on the

Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III (above, in the British Museum in London). The obelisk itself is about seven feet high with four sides; Jehu's image, bowing to the Assyrian king, is one of twenty panels, five on each side. The inscription says Jehu is offering tribute of silver, gold, a staff, and javelins.

## ATHALIAH AND JEHOASH (10:1 - 12:21)

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10:11 **Jehu slew all that remained of the house of Ahab.** As prophesied, Ahab's seed was thoroughly destroyed by Jehu so that none were left. He also killed relatives of Ahaziah, king of Judah (who he had killed in battle already) who came to visit. Then he killed the priests of Ba'al by tricking them to come for a pretend feast, so he got credit for that good deed, but he was generally a wicked man.

11:1 **Athaliah, the mother of Ahaziah...destroyed all the seed royal.** When she heard of Ahaziah's death, his mother Athaliah had all the other children of the previous king, Joram, killed. But she missed one who was almost a baby, whose mother hid him in the temple for six years. Finally the high priest, Jehoiada, brought him out of hiding and anointed him rightful king in the temple, then had the soldiers track down Athaliah and kill her. The new king, Jehoash, was all of seven years old.

12:2 **Jehoiada the priest instructed him.** Tutored by the high priest himself, the new king, Jehoash, lead the way in ousting Ba'al worship and in repairing the temple, which had become quite run-down by this time. However, Hazael, the king that had been anointed by Elisha in Syria (Aram), fought against Judah and forced them to pay tribute, including the gold and things from the temple. In the end, servants of the king slew Jehoash.

## ELISHA'S DEATH (13:1-25)

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13:1 **Jehoahaz the son of Jehu began to reign.** When Jehu died, his son, Jehoahaz took the throne. His was a position of vassalage to both Syria (Aram) under Hazael and his son Ben-hadad III. At some point, "the Lord gave Israel a savior" (13:5), an unnamed leader who rescued them from being under tribute, but the people were still poor after the heavy financial burden they had been bearing.

13:14 ***Elisha had fallen sick***. The prophet was sick from an unknown disease. The king of Israel, Joash, wept over him. While on his deathbed, Elisha had the king shoot an arrow out the window, representing deliverance from the Syrians. Then he had the king smack the arrows on the ground. The king “smote thrice, and stayed” (13:18) and Elisha moaned the small number, saying that was how many times he would smite Syria. Then “Elisha died, and they buried him” (13:19). As his body was being laid to rest, another dead man was put in the same tomb, but when his body touched Elisha’s, “he revived, and stood up on his feet” (13:21). Even in death Elisha was performing miracles.

## KINGS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH (14:1 – 17:41)

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### VARIOUS KINGS (14:1 – 15:38)

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Several kings are briefly mentioned in these chapters, moving us quickly to the end of the nation of Israel. They are:

- **Amaziah**, king of Judah, who did right but still did not removed the high places (14:2-20). He and Jehoash, king of Israel, fought each other, with Israel being victorious (14:8-14).
- **Azariah**, king of Judah, who replaced his father at the age of sixteen (14:21).
- **Jeroboam**, king of Israel and son of Joash, reigned a long forty-one years. Jonah was a prophet during this time (14:23-27).
- **Zachariah**, son of Jeroboam, king of Israel (14:29), reigned only six month before he was killed by Shallum (15:8-10).
- **Azariah**, son of Amaziah, king of Judah, became a leper (15:1-7). During his reign is when Isaiah the prophet began his ministry (Isaiah 1:1, where his name is spelled “Uzziah”).
- **Shallum**, king of Israel, killed his predecessor and reigned only one month, killed by Menahem (15:13).
- **Menahem**, king of Israel, reigned ten years but was put under tribute by the Assyrian

Tiglath-pileasar III (15:17-21). That relationship is also recorded in Assyrian records, saying that in 738 B.C., “Menahem of Samaria” paid tribute to Tiglath-pileasar III.

- **Pekahiah**, son of Menahem, king of Israel, reigned two years, killed by Pekah (15:23-26).
- **Pekah**, king of Israel, killed Pekahiah to get the throne and reigned twenty years and lost land to Tiglath-Pileasar III (15:27-29).
- **Hoshea**, king of Israel, killed Pekah and took his place (15:30).
- **Jotham**, son of Azariah, king of Judah, reigned sixteen years, built the “higher gate” of the temple (15:32-38).

## THE DESTRUCTION OF ISRAEL (16:1 – 17:41)

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16:1 ***Ahaz the son of Jotham king of Judah***. Much information is given about Ahaz (also called Jehoahaz) in chapter 16, though he was an evil king. He “made his son to pass through the fire” (16:3), meaning he sacrificed his son to Molech. During his time, Rezin of Syria (Aram) and Pekah, king of Israel, joined together to attack Judah but were not successful because Ahaz appealed for help to Tiglath-pileasar III, the Assyrian king. He paid Tiglath Pileasar a large tribute for this privilege, which is also recorded in Assyrian records found at Calah and dating to 729 B.C. This event is also captured in Isaiah 7. After their deliverance from Rezin and Pekah, Ahaz offered sacrifice on an altar he had built that replicated one he saw in Damascus.

17:3 ***Against him came up Shalmaneser king of Assyria***. Hoshea was king over Israel when Assyrian defeated Israel and put them under severe tribute. But after some time, Hoshea decided to rebel against Assyria, based on the promise of support from Egypt (the “So” king mentioned is probably Osorkon IV, the last pharaoh of Dynasty 22). So Shalmaneser came to took Hoshea captive and put him in prison—Egypt’s support failed to materialize.

17:6 ***Assyria took Samaria***. Though not mentioned here, a new king had arisen in Assyria. It was Sargon II who conquered Israel and carried many of them away, following the Assyrian practice of deportation



and repopulation. This is attested in a royal inscription of Sargon II dated to 720 B.C. (the conquest was in 722 B.C., started by Shalmaneser but finished by Sargon II). The Israelites were taken to cities in three different locations—just north of Ninevah (“Halah”), near the Turkish-Syrian border (“Habor”), and south on the Euphrates River (“the cities of the Medes”). These people are known as the Ten Lost Tribes.

17:16 **they left all the commandments of the Lord.** Verses 16-18 provide a summary judgment of why Israel was carried away: they worshipped the calves, Asherah (“groves”), Ba’al, and “all the host of heaven.” They sacrificed their own children, used “divination and enchantments,” and “sold themselves” to evil practices, angering the Lord.

17:24 **Assyria brought men from Babylon.** Just as the Israelites were deported elsewhere, other conquered people were brought to the land of Israel from several lands. These new settlers eventually intermarried with the locals who were left, and adopted a version of the local religion, creating a group called by later Jews the Samaritans, referring to their former capital city. Because of their mixed heritage and worship away from Jerusalem, Jews of Jesus’ day considered the Samaritans unclean and degenerate.

*If we are to learn from history, what is the most important lesson that you derive from the account of the fall of Israel? How does that lesson apply to our day?*

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**KINGS OF JUDAH (18:1 – 25:30)**

**RIGHTEOUS HEZEKIAH (18:1 – 20:21)**

18:1 **Hezeiah.** To illustrate the differences in Kings and Chronicles, consider this comparison of Hezekiah’s reign, where there are 104 verses unique to 2 Kings, 100 verses unique to 2 Chronicles, and just 18 verses that overlap with similar content:

<u>2 Kings</u> .....	<u>2 Chronicles</u>
18:1-3.....	29:1-2
.....	29:3; 30:27
18:4.....	31:1
.....	31:2-21
18:5-8.....	.....
17:3-41.....	.....
18:13.....	32:1
18:14-16.....	.....
.....	32:2-8
18:17.....	32:9
18:18.....	.....
18:19.....	32:10
18:20-21.....	.....
18:22.....	32:11-12
18:23-33.....	.....
18:34-35.....	32:13-14
.....	32:15-19
18:36; 19:14.....	.....
19:15.....	32:20
19:16-34.....	.....
19:35-37.....	32:21
.....	32:22-29
20:1.....	32:24
20:2-19.....	.....
.....	32:30-31
20:20-21.....	32:32-33

18:4 **He removed the high places.** Other kings before this time had been labeled “right” but Hezekiah is the first one to remove the non-YHWH places of worship, and exception noted with the others (e.g., Jehoshaphat in 12:2). His efforts were no doubt very sincere and perhaps even effective in the short term, but the archaeological record indicates that they were ultimately unsuccessful as the number of idols found among ruins of this time shows that a large number of the kingdom of Israel and Judah worshipped other gods. Still, the king is to be applauded for braking down the idols and cutting down the statues of Asherah (“the groves”).

18:4 ***Nehushtan***. A relic from the days of Moses was the brass snake that prophet had put on a pole to heal those bitten by the snakes (Numbers 21:4-9). It was never intended to be worshipped but some of the Jews had started doing just that, so Hezekiah called it *nehushtan*, ‘a thing of brass’ (to remove the sense of its holiness or power) and broke it apart.

18:9 ***Shalmaneser king of Assyria***. Verses 9-12 briefly reiterate the account in chapter 17 of the Assyrian conquest of the northern kingdom of Israel in 721 B.C. Not everyone was carried away to the three regions mentioned. Some were left behind and stayed in Israel, but many saw the problems coming and fled south to the neighboring kingdom of Judah.

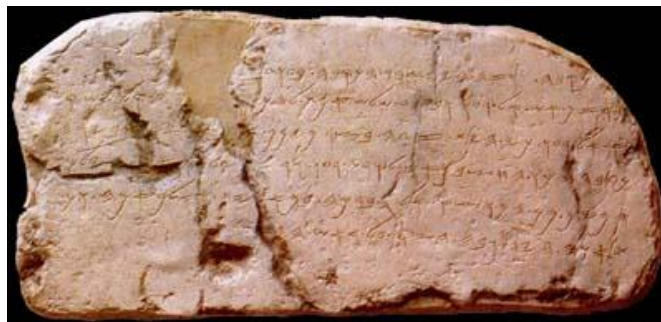
These refugees from the north were supported by Hezekiah’s reforms, which are mentioned in greater detail in 2 Chronicles. He re-opened the temple (2 Chr. 29:3), reinstated the priests and Levites (1 Chr. 29:4-36), and held the first Passover in a long time, inviting those of the northern kingdom to join with Judah in the celebration (2 Chr. 30:1-27). Many came and in some cases stayed, either at this time or later during the Assyrian siege of the northern kingdom. During Hezekiah’s reign, the size of Jerusalem increased about fourfold, with city walls expanding west significantly to allow for the influx of new citizens.

18:13 ***in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah***.

18:7 says Hezekiah had decided to break away from his vassal status with Assyria. In his fourteenth year, seven years after the fall of Israel, thus 714 B.C., a general rebellion in the region occurred, and Hezekiah appears to have joined in. Known as the rebellion of Ashdod because the leader was Azuri, the king of Ashdod, Assyrian records show that the rebellion was defeated. The king mentioned in this verse is a mistake—Sennacherib did not take the throne until 705 B.C. when Sargon II surprisingly died in battle. It should be Sargon II here—the king who had defeated and carried away Israel. With the rebellion defeated, Hezekiah and the others had to accept their vassal status once again (18:14-16).

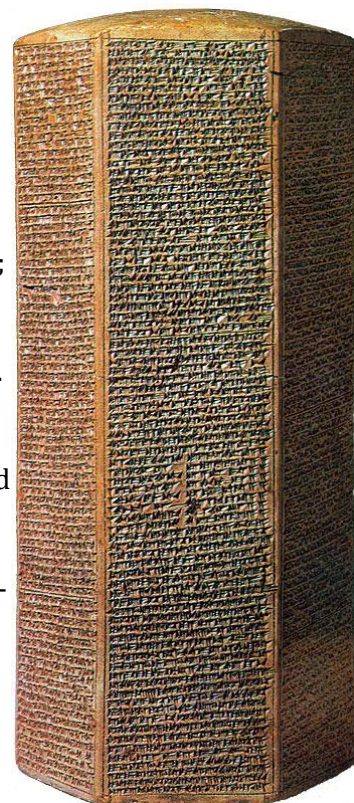
18:17 ***Rab-shaken from Lachish***. Verse 17 jumps several years ahead of 16—to the siege of Jerusalem in 701 B.C. In 705 B.C., Sargon II died. In the transition to Sennacherib, many vassal states

rebelled, including Judah. The large number of rebellions gave Hezekiah a period of freedom as Sennacherib struggled to get his realm under control, but in 701 B.C., Sennacherib brought his armies to Judah and attacked.



Prior to the attack on Jerusalem, Hezekiah and his leaders developed a plan to be able to hold out against the siege. They determined to “stop the waters of the fountains which were without [outside] the city” (2 Chr. 32:3). They fortified the walls of Jerusalem and added to them a secondary wall as extra defense, built towers, and built up a large store of weapons (2 Chr. 32:5). Then they undertook an amazing feat of engineering, digging two tunnels from different directions and meeting in the middle. One came from a pool built at the southern (lower) end of the city inside the walls and the other to the Gihon spring, the main source of water of the city. This tunnel, still visible today, was commemorated with a plaque where the two work forces met (above; the original can be seen in Istanbul, Turkey; see 20:20 and 2 Chr. 32:30). Recent archaeology efforts have discovered evidence for a tower and wall at the well, matching what is described in 2 Chr. 32:3-5.

The Bible doesn’t describe the Assyrian’s conquests but Assyrian records do (especially



Sennacherib's Prism, located in Chicago [above], and its twin, the Taylor Prism, in London). Their army first came through Phoenicia and Philistia (along the coast), then turned inland. Many towns in Judah were conquered and the people exiled, most notably Lachish, which Sennacherib made his headquarters during the campaign. The conquest of that city is well documented from archaeology and portrayed in the Lachish reliefs (originally from Sennacherib's palace at Nineveh, now in the British Museum, London; one panel below). It was from here that the Assyrian three representatives came to talk to the people of Jerusalem.



The three officials are not named but their titles are given: Tartan ('commander'), Rabsaris ('chief eunuch'), and Rab-shakeh ('chief cupbearer,' though could also mean chief of the officers). Rab-shakeh did the talking, perhaps because he somehow spoke Hebrew. They came near the city by the aqueduct that led to a pool and told everyone they should give up because Assyrian was unstoppable and their gods had defeated everyone else, so they would certainly defeat Judah's God, too. The alliance Hezekiah had made with Egypt would fail, they said, and they promised leniency if the people surrendered now. They even claimed that Jehovah had commanded them to attack the city (18:17-25).

Hezekiah's officials asked them to please speak "in the Syrian language" (18:26) so all the people wouldn't understand, but Rab-shakeh said he had come to speak "to the men which sit on the wall"

(18:27). He said again that neither Hezekiah nor the Lord could deliver them from the hand of the Assyrians, and they left (18:28-35).

19:6 ***Be not afraid.*** Isaiah, who was prophet-advisor to Hezekiah, told the king and his leaders, "Be not afraid of the words which thou hast heard" (19:6). He declared that Sennacherib would return to his own land and fall by the sword there (19:6-7). Shortly after, a messenger returned with a letter from Rab-shakeh declaring the certainty of Jerusalem's defeat (19:9-13). They had conquered much of Judah already, plus many other lands in the Near East. Why should Jerusalem be any different?

19:14 ***Hezekiah went up to the house of the Lord.*** Hezekiah took the letter from Rab-shakeh to the temple "and spread it before the Lord" (19:14). He prayed a marvelous, humble prayer, acknowledging his fears and the reality of their situation but asked the Lord's blessing so that all nations might know that YHWH truly was God (19:15-19). Isaiah came saying that the Lord had heard his prayer and would deliver them such that the king of Assyria "shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with a shield, nor cast a bank against it" (19:32).

19:35 ***they were all dead corpses.*** The night Isaiah came to Hezekiah, "the angel of the Lord" smote the Assyrian camp so that many died, and the attack on Jerusalem never happened. As Isaiah had said (19:7), Sennacherib returned home. Twenty years later, in 681, he was assassinated by two of his sons.

20:1 ***thou shalt die, and not live.*** Hezekiah became very ill and Isaiah came to him with the warning to set his house in order because he was going to die. Lying on his death bed, Hezekiah "turned his face to the wall" (20:2) and asked the Lord to remember all the good the king had tried to do. "And Hezekiah wept sore" (20:3). Before Isaiah had even left the area near the palace, the Lord sent him back with a different message. Hezekiah was told he would be healed and would have fifteen more years to live. So Isaiah put a fig poultice on the king's boil and he was soon better. The king did ask for a sign that this would happen, which the Lord supplied by turning back the shadow on the sundial ten degrees.

20:12 **Berodach-baladan**. This incident is probably out of order in the text as Merodach-baladan (the correct name) crowned himself king of Babylon in 722 B.C. but was put into exile by Sennacherib in 710 B.C. After Hezekiah showed them all his wealth, Isaiah came to him and warned him that one day Babylon would come and carry away all those possessions and that Hezekiah's descendants would "be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon" (20:18). This prophecy was fulfilled just over 100 years later with the Babylonian captivity of Judah.

*What role has prayer played in your life during times of stress or distress?*

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### **WICKED MANASSEH AND AMON (21:1-26)**

21:1 **Manasseh...reigned fifty and five years**. Manasseh was Hezekiah's son but nothing like him. Not only did he neglect the Lord but he built altars to other gods in the temple, sacrificed his own son, and supported the use of sorcery, divination, and mediums. He put up an image of Asherah in the temple. Assyrian records show that Manasseh was a loyal vassal and even joined the Assyrian army in their attacks on Egypt. 2 Kings records that prophets came and predicted disaster for Manasseh and Judah as a result. 2 Chronicles adds that he continued the defensive building projects of his father but also that at one point he was carried captive by Assyria to their rebuilt Babylon, where he humbled himself before God and sought the Lord's blessings. When he was returned to Jerusalem, "Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God" (2 Chr. 33:13). So he took away the foreign gods he had put in the temple and repaired the Lord's altar. But the people didn't follow his lead and still sacrificed to other gods (2 Chr. 33:17-18).

21:19 **Amon...reigned two years**. Manasseh's son, Amon, took the throne upon his father's death. He, too, supported idol worship and neglected Jehovah. In this second year, some of his servants "conspired against him, and slew the king in his own house" (21:23).

### **RIGHTEOUS JOSIAH (22:1 – 23:25)**

22:1 **Josiah was eight years old**. When his father Amon was murdered, young Josiah ('healed by Jehovah') was a mere child. No doubt he was tutored by the people mentioned in the text—particularly Shaphan the scribe and Hilkiah the high priest. When he was 16, he turned his heart to YHWH, and by the time he was 20, he was working to purge the kingdom of idolatry (2 Chr. 34:3).

22:8 **I have found the book of the law**. When Josiah was 26, he commissioned the repair of the temple (22:3-7; also 2 Chr. 34:8-13). During that process, a scroll was found somewhere in the temple that no one had apparently seen for a long time. The Hebrew text says, 'the writing of the Torah,' or "a scroll of the Teaching" (JSB). It's not clear what scroll was found but most agree it was probably Deuteronomy because of the comments made about its contents as they read it. When Josiah heard it, "he rent his clothes" (22:11) and told them to "enquire of the Lord...concerning the words of this book" (22:13).

22:14 **Huldah the prophetess**. When Hilkiah the high priest was sent to ask the Lord about the scroll, he went straight to a woman in Jerusalem named Huldah. Called "the prophetess," she lived in the Mishneh area of Jerusalem (mistranslated "college" in 22:14), a part of the westward expansion of the city during Hezekiah's reign and probably inhabited by refugees from the northern kingdom of Israel. So Huldah and her husband, a person with a position in the palace, were perhaps from one of those northern tribes. Her prophetic response to Josiah was direct, harsh, merciful, and the voice of the Lord. She said that destruction was going to happen—that was already determined. But because Josiah's heart was tender and he was humble and sorrowful, he would not see the destruction in his day (22:15-20).

An interesting question is why go to Huldah when there were at least two other prophets in their

midst? Zephaniah began his ministry early in Josiah's reign (Zephaniah 1:1) and Jeremiah had been active beginning in the thirteenth year of Josiah (Jeremiah 1:2). Many have proposed answers but it is impossible to know for sure. The most likely to me is that both men were traveling or otherwise unavailable, so they went to Huldah (who may have been Jeremiah's aunt).

**23:2 he read in their ears all the words of the book.** Like King Benjamin, Josiah gathered his people to the temple. There he read the scroll to them, then "stood by a pillar" (23:3, one of the two pillars in the front of the temple) and led the people to covenant to follow the Lord. The covenant was "to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant which are written in this book" (2 Chr. 34:31).

**23:4 he burned them.** Josiah led a massive cleansing effort, more far-reaching than even Hezekiah had been about 100 years previously. 2 Kings 23:4-14 documents his attempts to completely destroy all idol worship throughout the kingdom. As part of this effort, Josiah also expanded his kingdom into many parts of the north, making him the only southern king since Solomon to rule over some of the former kingdom of Israel.

**23:17 It is the sepulcher of the man of God.** While tearing down altars at Bethel, including the place of worship established by Jerboam when the northern kingdom first broke off from Judah, and burning the bones of false priests from that kingdom, Josiah spotted a marked tomb that said it was the tomb of the man of God, and the others told him of this man's prophecy that Josiah would do these very things (see 1 Kings 13:1-2), so they left it alone.

**23:21 Keep the passover.** Like Hezekiah, Josiah also reinstated the worship calendar which had quit being practiced during the time of Manasseh, Josiah's grandfather. It was the same reign year of the king that they found the book of the law. 2 Chronicles adds that Josiah led the priests to be sanctified and provided the offerings for the Passover.

**23:29 he slew him at Megiddo.** Part of the reason Josiah was able to conduct his reforms and expand his kingdom was that the Assyrian empire was in decline during his reign. The reinstated Babylonian empire was giving battle to Assyria for control of the region. Egypt, under the leadership of Necho, decided that a strong Babylon was a more dangerous enemy than a weakened Assyria, so he joined forces with Assyria to hold the Babylonians off. In the summer of 609 B.C., Necho was moving northward to join with the Assyrian king Ashurballit II (contrary to what 23:29 says), who had fled to Harran (on the eastern border of Turkey today) after losing Assyria's other main cities, such as Nineveh and Ashur. For reasons not stated, Josiah decided to interfere with Necho's march north—perhaps because Assyria had been such a problem for Israel and Judah that Josiah didn't want them supported in any way. Necho passed through Josiah's kingdom on the coastline and through the Jezreel valley. The fuller account in Chronicles includes communications between the two kings. Necho says he is just passing through and has no quarrel with Judah, but Josiah attacked anyway, disguising himself that he could fight directly with Pharaoh. Engaging near Megiddo (the location of the future battle of Armageddon), Josiah was fatally shot by Necho's archers. They put him in a chariot and rushed him to Jerusalem but he did not survive. The record says that "Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah" (2 Chr. 35:24-25).

*What kept Josiah's efforts going to support correct temple worship and cleanse the kingdom even though he had a prophecy that they would fail?*

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## JOSIAH'S SONS (23:31 – 24:20)

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Three of Josiah's sons and one grandson were kings over the next twenty-two years—though most of it was two kings, Jehoiakim and Zedekiah. These sons were the last kings of Judah.

23:31 **Jehoahaz...reigned three months.** The first son, Jehoahaz ('YHWH has seized,' also called Shallum ['retribution'] in 1 Chr. 3:15) was made king by "the people of the land" (2 Chr. 36:1) after Josiah was killed in his battle with Pharaoh Necho. When Necho came back from his defeat at Harran, he summoned Jehoahaz to Riblah (modern Jusuiah, in Syria just across the Lebanon border) near the Orontes River. The reason is not given, but Necho was displeased with Jehoahaz as king; Necho put him in chains and carried him back to Egypt where he died (23:33-34).

23:34 **Pharaoh-nechoh made Eliakim the son of Josiah king.** Necho replaced Jehoahaz with his brother, Eliakim ('God raises up'). His name was changed (it was a common practice to give kings a new name—a throne name—when they took over) to Jehoiakim ('YHWH raises up'). Necho extracted a heavy tribute from the twenty-five year old Jehoiakim and Judah, who managed to reign for eleven turbulent years (23:36).

24:1 **Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up.** Under Nabopolassar, Babylon defeated Assyria and Egypt at Harran in 609 B.C. (when Josiah was killed). But Egypt still maintained a presence north of Judah and continued to battle Babylon for control of that area until the battle of Carchemish (west of Harran on the northern Euphrates River) in 605 B.C. under the leadership of the crown prince, Nebuchadnezzar ('may Nebo protect the crown'). (compare Jeremiah 46:2). Babylon soundly defeated Egypt and began their own southern expansion. As a result, Jehoiakim switched allegiance from Egypt, to whom he had been paying heavy tribute, to Babylon. Shortly after Carchemish, Nabopolassar died and Nebuchadnezzar became king. The subjection of Judah to Babylon lasted only three years before Jehoiakim decided to rebel, probably around 600 B.C.

24:6 **Jehoiakim slept with his fathers.** After Judah's rebellion against Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar brought first mercenaries (24:2) then his own troops to deal with the problem (24:10-11; 2 Chr. 36:6-7). For reasons not explained, Jehoiakim died, probably as the siege was under way (2 Chr. 36:6 says that Nebuchadnezzar carried him away, but that seems to be confusing him with his son).

24:8 **Jehoiachin was eighteen years old.** With his father dead, Jehoiachin ('YHWH establishes') became king. Kings says he was eighteen while 2 Chronicles (36:9) says he was eight; eighteen is the preferred reading. Taking charge in the middle of the Babylonian siege, he decided surrender was his only real option. The year was 597 B.C. For his willing surrender, Nebuchadnezzar allowed the young Jehoiachin to live and took him into captivity in Babylon, which proved to be more like house arrest (24:15; 25:27-30). Jehoiachin lived for many years and was thus the only surviving descendent of the Davidic king line after the Babylonian captivity.

During this conquest, Nebuchadnezzar plundered the temple and took away many people, including "craftsmen and smiths" (24:13-14). Two of the people probably included in this group were Ezekiel and Daniel.

24:17 **Zedekiah.** Nebuchadnezzar selected another of Josiah's sons and Jehoiachin's uncle, Mattaniah ('gift of YHWH') to be the king, changing his name to Zedekiah ('YHWH is righteous'). He was a young son of Josiah, being twenty-one at this time and thus being about nine when his father died in battle. Zedekiah agreed to be a vassal to Nebuchadnezzar in 597 B.C., which also marks the year of a vision and the call of a prophet named Lehi (1 Nephi 1:4), who would flee Jerusalem shortly after seeing thousands of others taken away by Nebuchadnezzar. Eventually, Zedekiah rebelled against his Babylonian overlord, setting in motion the destruction of his kingdom.

## THE DESTRUCTION OF JUDAH (25:1-30)

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25:2 **the city was besieged.** After several years, Zedekiah made an alliance with Egypt, hoping to throw off the yoke of Babylon. Jeremiah and other prophets counseled against the rebellion and called

on the people to repent (Jeremiah 27-29; 2 Chr. 36:15-16; 1 Nephi 1:4) but they mocked the prophets and pursued their alliance (2 Chr. 36:16). Kings records that “in the ninth year of his [Zedekiah’s] reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth day” (January 588 B.C.), Nebuchadnezzar put Jerusalem under a two-year siege.

Other sources tell us that he also put additional cities under siege, including Lachish and Azekah (Jeremiah 34:6-7). Confirmation of this comes from a collection of twenty-two letters found in the ruins of Lachish that date from this period. The letters were written to the commander at Lachish, Yaosh/Yaush, and detail the final days of that city and of Azekah. Delegations were sent to Egypt to seek help (which came but was defeated); strongholds around Lachish fall (“we cannot see [the fire signals of] Azekah”); and the local leaders are baffled by Jerusalem’s tactics (one letter asks, “Why are you doing this?”).

The siege was lifted briefly when the Egyptian Pharaoh, Apries, came north to help in 588 B.C. But they suffered under the Babylonian’s might and withdrew, leaving Judah on its own. (We’ll cover more details about this when we study Jeremiah.)

25:2 ***famine prevailed in the city***. Food had run out after the long siege. The surrounding cities had all fallen. Finally, Nebuchadnezzar’s army breached the walls and came into the city.

25:4 ***all the men of war fled by night***. When the city was breached, the king and many of the city leaders escaped at night, somehow evading the Babylonians. But the Chaldeans caught up with them and Zedekiah was taken to Riblah where Nebuchadnezzar had set up his headquarters for the campaign. There Zedekiah was forced to watch as all of his sons were killed, then had his own eyes put out, then he was carried to Babylon in chains where he died (25:6-7). Other leaders, such as the high priest, were also taken to Riblah and were killed (25:20-21).

25:9 ***burnt the house of the Lord***. Meanwhile, the Babylonian army destroyed Jerusalem. They looted the city, including the temple and palace, of what was left after the previous siege, then they tore down the walls, burned the temple and the palace, and burned much of the city. Archaeological evidence shows this very destruction layer—burning, Babylonian arrow heads, and more. Thousands were carried away to Babylon and “the poor of the land” (25:12) were left to farm and feed the occupying army.

25:22 ***Gedaliah***. Nebuchadnezzar made Gedaliah the ruler over the remaining people, who counseled to subservience to Babylon. But a handful of people who still wanted to fight against the occupying army killed him, and many fled to Egypt (25:25-26). This matches what is seen in Jeremiah 40-42, in greater detail.

25:27 ***did lift up the head of Jehoiachin***. Josiah’s grandson was still alive in captivity in Babylon. The text notes that in about 574 B.C., he was brought “out of prison” and treated more kindly, given food and an allowance to let him live comfortably the remainder of his life. Thus the line of David was preserved in Babylon.

*How does this account of the last days of Judah increase your appreciation for the story of Lehi in the Book of Mormon?*

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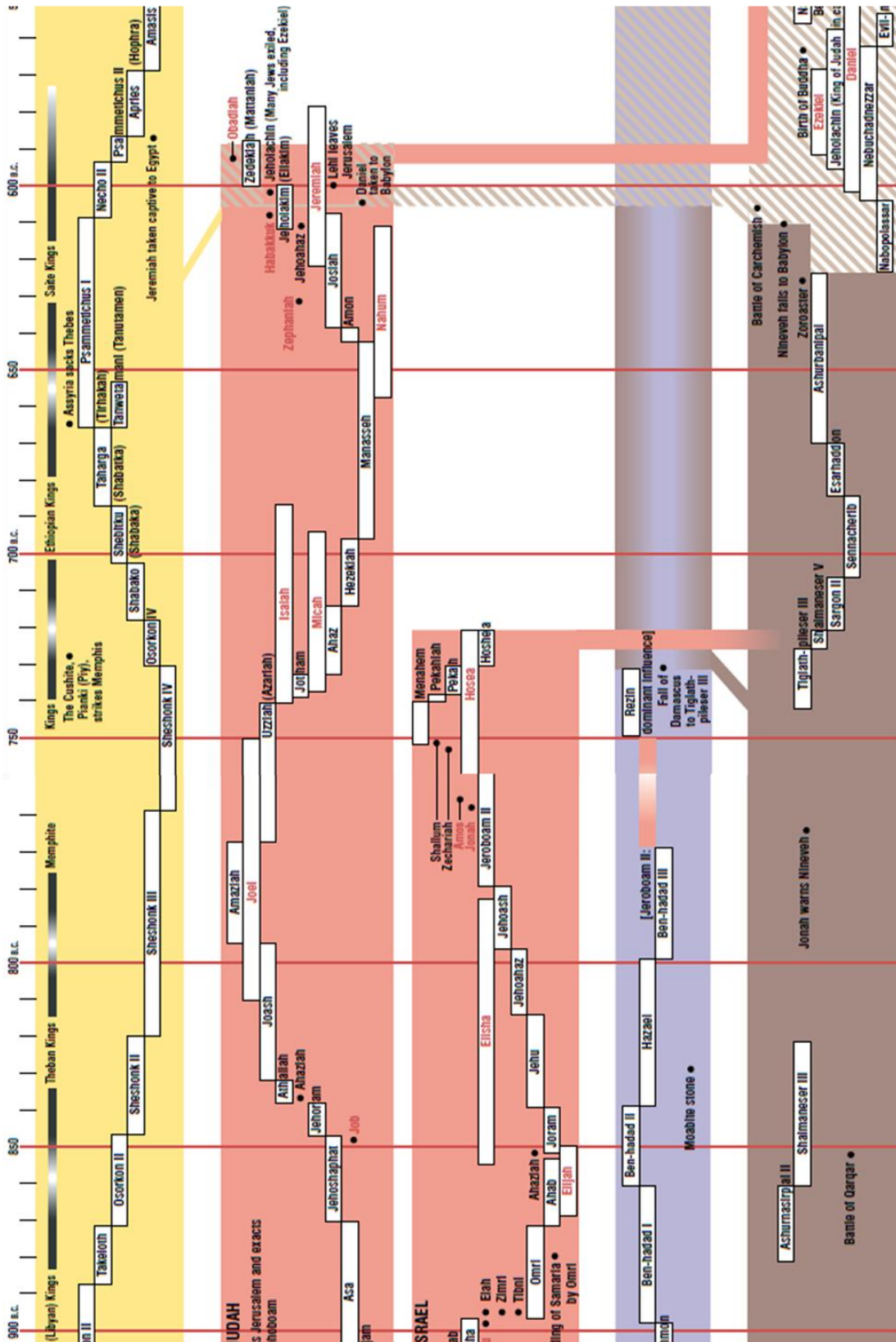
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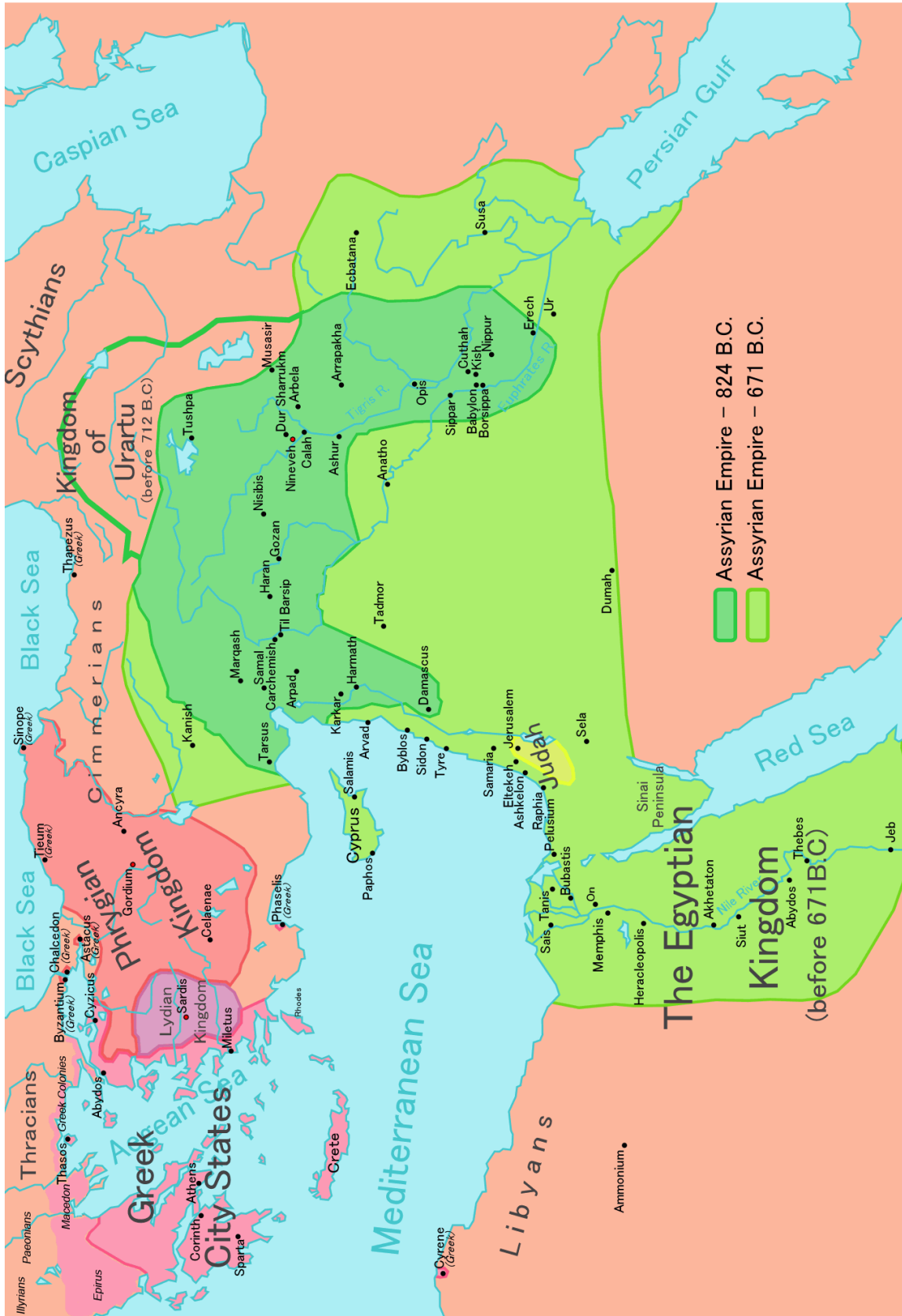
# APPENDIX

Old Testament Chronology, from Student Manual, 2.





Map of the Assyrian Empire:



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