

Going Deeper

KINGS, DIVISION AND EXILE



The Early Kings

Samuel, the son of an Ephraimite man and an apparently barren woman who cried to God for a child, judged Israel for many years, serving God faithfully from childhood ([1Sam1:28, 2:11](#)).

Samuel took over from Eli when he died on hearing of the death of his two sons and the capture by the Philistines of the Ark of the Covenant ([1Sam4:17,18](#)).

The people badgered Samuel to set a king over them so that they would be "like all the other nations". Samuel warned them of the consequences, especially of the taxation which would follow ([1Sam8:11-18](#)).

Nevertheless the people insisted and God led a young man called Saul to Samuel. Samuel anointed Saul ([1Sam10:1](#)) who initially had some success, along with his son Jonathan, in pushing back the Philistines.

Saul however failed God in three important ways:-

he presumed to offer sacrifice to God, the function of a priest ([1Sam13:9](#))

he kept some of the plunder he was instructed to destroy ([1Sam15:9](#))

he consulted a medium, the witch of Endor ([1Sam27:7,8](#)).

After the second of these disobedient acts, God commanded Samuel to anoint another in Saul's place ([1Sam15:10 & 16:1](#)).

God led Samuel to a shepherd boy, David, whom he anointed ([1Sam16:13](#)). David famously killed the Philistine champion Goliath of Gath by using a slingshot pebble and then hacking off his head ([1Sam17:49-51](#)). He was also called upon to play music for Saul when he was troubled: Saul was a tortured man who was plagued by evil spirits. David married Saul's daughter, Michah, although when Saul exiled David she was given to another.

From chapter 18 much of the book of 1 Samuel is concerned with the interplay between Saul and David and ends with Saul's suicide after losing in battle to the Philistines ([1Sam31:4 & 1Chr10:4](#)). He had ruled the kingdom for 40 years ([Ac13:21](#)).

Jonathan was killed during that battle along with Saul's other sons Abinadab and Malki-Shua and the tribe of Judah anointed David king ([2Sam2:4](#)).

The other tribes led by Abner the army commander did not accept this action and appointed Saul's son Ishbosheth to rule over them ([2Sam2:8,9](#)). This led to some civil war and eventually to Ishbosheth's murder by two of his commanders, which David avenged by executing the two men. David was then accepted by the other tribes ([2Sam5:3, 1Chr11:1](#)) and ruled over a united kingdom for 33 years, having ruled Judah for 7 ([1Chr11:3](#)).

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David's friendship with Jonathan was very deep. Jonathan both pleaded with Saul on David's behalf and helped David to escape when his life was threatened. He recognised David's anointing. After David came to the throne of Israel he remembered this loyalty and protected Jonathan's lame son, Mephibosheth ([2Sam9](#)) although he ultimately proved less loyal than his servant Ziba ([2Sam16](#)).

David planned to build a temple for God at Jerusalem, which he had finally taken from its inhabitants the Jebusites, probably entering through the water supply. God told him that he could not do this because there was too much blood on his hands. David did, however, begin to save for the building ([1Chr22,29](#)) and also brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem ([1Chr13-16](#)). David was militarily successful and built alliances around Israel to increase its economic power. God promised David that his throne would never fail ([2Sam7:16](#)), a promise which will be fulfilled when Jesus returns as He is of David's line (Matt1 & Luke2 both identify David as one of Jesus' ancestors, along with Abraham).

Nonetheless David's reign was not altogether perfect. He sinned against man and God by sleeping with Bathsheba then having her husband murdered, for which he was rebuked by Nathan the prophet ([2Sam11,12](#)). He did not manage his family well and suffered a palace coup instigated by his son Absalom ([2Sam15:14](#)). A further reminder to us that we are all fallible, even the great men of the Bible are sinners except for Jesus Himself.

David's poetic abilities are evident in the book of Psalms where 75 of 150 are attributed to him. Of the others, one each is attributed to Moses and Ethan 2 to Solomon, 11 to the sons of Korah and 12 to Asaph (48 are not attributed). The Psalms stretch from Moses to some written after the exile. Psalms have an important place both in Jewish and Christian worship. Many Jews read through the psalms weekly or monthly. When a Jew dies the psalms are recited by daylight or candlelight until the burial service. Many Christians also regularly read through the psalms. Both traditions use them in worship services. Their words are often powerful expressions of emotions. Paul encourages the Ephesian church to speak to one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs ([Eph5:19](#)).

The books of Samuel close shortly before the death of David and the history is taken up in 1Kings and 2Chronicles. As David approached death there was a power struggle for succession. Adonijah had the support of the army commander Joab, but Bathsheba with the support of Nathan the prophet, Zadok the priest and David's guards managed to have her son Solomon anointed shortly before David died and with his blessing and this decision was accepted by the elders of the tribes ([1Chr29:22 & 1Ki1:39](#)). Solomon's reign was a golden time for Israel. Solomon built firstly a splendid palace and then a temple for God in Jerusalem. The kingdom had peace, they had considerable economic power, largely through Solomon's diplomatic strategy which often involved marriage ties. Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines. The wives in particular caused his downfall. He allowed them to continue their religious practices and to build altars and high places where the children of Israel also began to worship the Baals and Ashtoreths. Solomon himself was drawn aside to Ashtoreth, goddess of the Sidonians and Marduk, god of the Ammonites. He built a high place for Chemosh and Molek east of Jerusalem ([1Kings11:1-10](#))

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Solomon's wisdom, a gift from God, is illustrated by the well known story of his judgement in the case of the two harlots arguing over a child of one of them. It is also evident in the proverbs which are attributed to him. He also wrote two of the Psalms. The Song of Solomon (or Song of Songs) is a conversation about love and an allegory of the love between God and His people or between Christ and His church. The book of Ecclesiastes is attributed to Solomon and is a reflection on the many ways men seek satisfaction and the meaninglessness, emptiness and ultimate waste of life without God ([Ecc12:13,14](#)).

Solomon reigned for 40 years over the complete nation. On his death, Rehoboam his son succeeded him. The elders complained about the harshness of the tax regime Solomon had imposed and asked what Rehoboam intended to do about it. Rehoboam took counsel but chose unwisely between two opposing views ([1Kings12](#)). He declared that he would be much harsher than his father. This led to dissatisfaction and opened the way for Jeroboam, who had rebelled against Solomon and had been promised a kingdom of ten tribes by Ahijah the prophet of Shiloh, to offer himself as an alternative king. The ten northern tribes followed him, but the two southern tribes, Judah and Benjamin stuck with the rightful descendant and heir. This split in the kingdom was never healed and from this point on their histories are divided.

The Northern Kingdom

The Northern Kingdom, Israel, under Jeroboam followed a line of illegitimate kings, none of whom led them towards God. Not one of the kings is declared by the Bible to be good and to do what is right. One of Jeroboam's first acts was to set up two golden calves for the people to worship (remember Sinai) so that they would not need to travel to Jerusalem and come under Judah's influence ([1Kings12:28-30](#)). This was despite the words of the prophet Ahijah who told him he would gain the rule over ten tribes because of Saul's unfaithfulness to God ([1Kings11:31-39](#)). There was a very unsettled line of kings in Israel with many, often violent, coups over the following centuries. This line of kings includes Ahab who was married to Jezebel, the queen whose name has gone down in infamy. It was during the reign of Ahab, who did more to arouse God's anger than all the previous kings ([1Kings16:33](#)) that Elijah first appeared. He denounced Ahab for leading the people astray and prophesied a drought for several years. For this he is held up in the New Testament as an ordinary man gaining extraordinary power through prayer ([Jas5:16-18](#)). Elijah challenged the priests of Baal on Mt. Carmel ([1Kings18](#)), raised a widow's son from the dead ([1Kings17:22](#)) and encountered God in a "still small voice" ([1Kings19:21](#)). Through the account of his life we are reminded, as he was, that even in such threatening circumstances, God maintains a remnant of His people, often through the actions of faithful followers ([1Kings19:18](#)). He prophesied further in the reign of Ahaziah before passing on his mantle and inheritance to Elisha. He was then taken up into heaven in a whirlwind. Jesus compares John the Baptist to Elijah.

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Elisha followed Elijah ([1Kings19:19](#)) as a prophet in Israel for about sixty years during the reign of four kings. He was instrumental in prophesying victories for Israel, especially over Moab and Syria. Elisha crossed the Jordan using Elijah's cloak to part the waters ([2Kings2:14](#)), provided for a widow to have a supply of oil ([2Kings4:1-7](#)), raised a young man from the dead ([2Kings4:34](#)) and cleansed the Syrian commander Naaman from leprosy ([2Kings5](#)).

Elijah and Elisha are giants amongst the prophets to Israel, but they are not alone. Other prophets who testified to Israel include Amos and Hosea. The prophet Jonah brought God's word to the people of Nineveh, enemies of Israel, They repented and God delayed His judgement on them for 70 years, a reminder that God's sovereignty, justice and mercy are not limited to the Jews, although they have a special role to play. We should remember that no-one is beyond the reach of God's mercy, unless they place themselves beyond it by rejecting him throughout their life.

Amos was a native of Judah but preached to Israel, especially in Samaria and Bethel during the reign of Jeroboam II. This was a time of peace and prosperity, but there was an increasing difference in the prosperity of the rich and the poor and a neglect of the Law. Amos was a sheep herder and a farmer of sycamore figs, not from the (discredited) school of prophets and not the son of a prophet. Following Amos' example, Hosea, Isaiah, Ezekiel and Jeremiah all give an account of their calling.

Jeroboam II (c. 781-741 B.C.), had practically restored Solomon's northern kingdom. There was long period of peace and security and a revival of artistic and commercial development. The poor and helpless were oppressed, however, and many of the richer, more powerful citizens used festivals for irreverent pleasure. Some amalgamated worship of Yahweh with worship of false gods

Into this mix Amos steps up in the royal sanctuary at Bethel to denounce Jeroboam II and announce the end of his dynasty and of the kingdom itself. The leading priest Amaziah denounced him to the king and he was forced to leave Israel. No longer able to speak out, Amos wrote his message down, probably in Jerusalem.

Jonah prophesied in Israel during the reign of Jeroboam II ([2Kings14:25](#)). He was commissioned by God to go to Nineveh the Assyrian capital to prophecy against them. Jonah fled in the opposite direction towards Tarshish, but the boat was caught in a storm. Realising he was to blame, Jonah testified to the sailors about God and asked to be thrown overboard. The sailors were reluctant, but eventually cast him off. Jonah was swallowed by a great fish and after three days, spat out onto land. He went to Nineveh (ancient Mosul) where the people repented. Jonah was angry with God, who explained to him about His mercy and judgement. Jonah teaches us important lessons about repentance and forgiveness.

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The northern kingdom finally came to an end when the men of Nineveh overran them in 736BC and they were taken into captivity beginning in 740BC or 733BC ([1Chr5:26](#)). The conquering monarchs were Tilgath-Pilneser III (Pul) and Shalmaneser V. Their victories were driven home by Sargon II

and his son and successor, Sennacherib. This attack in 722BC followed a period of oppression by Assyria and an attempt by Hoshea, Israel's final king, to free himself from tribute by appealing to So, king of Egypt ([2Kings17](#)). Sennacherib also besieged Jerusalem, but did not take it.

Hosea prophesied around 725BC following the capture of Israel by the Assyrians. He foresaw the destruction of Samaria. Hosea was called to prophecy by his lifestyle, especially his marriage and the way he named his children. He married a prostitute, Gomer, at God's command. She ran away from Hosea to another man, but he continued to love her. This adultery parallels the way in which Israel abandoned her relationship with God and worshipped false gods. Nevertheless God did not abandon His people, but continued to love them and sought to maintain His covenant with them. Similarly the names of Hosea's first son, Jezreel, is the name of a valley where much blood had been spilled and stood as a judgement against those, Israel's kings, who had spilt it. His daughter Lo-Ruhamah means "not pitied", but she is renamed Ruhamah "pitied". His son's name Lo-Ammi means "not my people" and is a symbol of the result of the people's rejection of God. The book of Hosea, along with Hosea's clear demonstrations through his family was a severe warning to Israel against their increasing idolatry.

Many of the people living in the northern kingdom were exiled and resettled in different parts of the Assyrian Empire. People from other lands were sent to Israel to replace them. This led to a mixing of the people who, by the time Judah returned from exile under Ezra, were considered to be non- Jews. They formed the Samaritans we are familiar with in the New Testament ([2Kings17:24](#)).

Nineveh finally fell to the Babylonians and Medes in 612BC as prophesied by Nahum. Nahum speaks in his book (written between 664BC when Thebes fell to the Assyrians & 612BC when Nineveh fell) of the city as "vile" ([Nah1:14](#)), "full of lies" ([Nah3:1](#)) and a city with "endless cruelty" ([Nah3:19](#)). The Assyrian empire fell completely in 605BC with the Battle of Carchemish.

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The Southern Kingdom

The Southern Kingdom of Judah fared better, with a continuous kingly line as promised to David. Asa expelled the shrine prostitutes and got rid of the idols ([1Kings15:12](#)). Jehoshaphat went further, removing the high places and the Asherah poles and sending teachers of the Law out into the villages and towns so that the people knew the words of God. Jehoshaphat allied himself with Ahab, king of Israel and was saved by God from Ahab's deviousness ([2Chr18](#)). In front of his people, he called on God to help Judah against Moab and Ammon and saw God win a miraculous victory as they sang praises to Him ([2Chr20](#)). Jehoram his son married a daughter of Ahab and forsook God. He lost all but one of his sons and all his riches when Jerusalem was sacked by local enemies. He died, probably from a prolapsed bowel ([2Chr21:18-20](#)). His son Amaziah also followed false gods, but died when, visiting Israel, he was found by Jehu whom God had sent to execute His judgement on Ahab's house. His mother (Queen) Athaliah slaughtered his household and then usurped the throne and reigned for a few years before being replaced by the rightful heir who had been kept hidden by the priests led by Jehoiada in his early life. Joash was guided by the priests and began to restore the Temple, but when Jehoiada died, Joash listened to others and forsook God. He murdered Zechariah, Jehoiada's son.

Although most of their kings were also declared to be bad, there were times when the king brought the people back to God. One such king was Hezekiah and another Josiah. Zephaniah was the great, great grandson of King Hezekiah. He prophesied in Jerusalem during the reign of King Josiah, who was a reforming king seeking to put right the misuse of the holy places and restore worship of Yahweh which had been replaced by worship of false gods during the reigns of Amon and Manasseh. He spoke against religious and moral corruption and pleaded for a return to the simplicity of their fathers instead of the luxurious foreign clothing which was worn especially in aristocratic circles. Impending judgement is a major theme and was brought about by the destruction of Jerusalem shortly after. The book of Zephaniah ends with a Messianic passage. The reforms urged by Zephaniah and Jeremiah were carried out in 622BC ([2Kings23](#)).

Habakkuk preached at about the same time. In his book he questions God, especially as to why he has to wait for God's deliverance ([Hab1:2](#)) and why He allows wickedness([Hab1:13](#)). God answers him and he is able to move past this questioning to a faith in the ultimate preservation and deliverance for one who believes in God ([Hab3:17-19](#)).

Micah's message came between 750 and 700BC. Micah drew on the destruction of Samaria, Israel's capital, warning that it had been destroyed by God because of its crimes of idolatry, oppression of the poor, and misuse of power. When the Assyrians attacked Judah in 701 they did so via the Philistine coast and the Shephelah, the border region which included Micah's village of Moresheth, as well as Lachish, Judah's second largest city. Micah warned the towns of the coming disaster (Lachish is singled out for special mention, accused of the corrupt practices of both Samaria and Jerusalem). Despite the sins enumerated by Micah and the prophesied destruction, Micah still looks to a future age in which the people of God will flourish ([Mic2:12-14](#); [4,5 7:8-20](#)).

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Uzziah restored some of Judah's power with a large, well equipped army, well fortified cities and tribute from other nations. However, he became proud and tried to burn incense (remember Saul) for which he was rebuked by the priests under Amaziah. He raged at them and was struck with leprosy ([2Chr26:9-21](#)). Uzziah's son Jotham succeeded him and continued his good work ([2Chr27:6](#)). His son Ahaz, however, did not continue in this way. Instead he offered sacrifices and burned incense all over the place ([2Chr28:4](#)). Under Amaziah Judah was defeated in battle against Israel and Aram, Edom and the Philistines. He responded by sacrificing to the gods of Aram and by appealing to the Assyrian Empire for help ([2Kings16:7-14](#)).

It was late in Uzziah's reign that Isaiah began to prophesy and in the year he died, 739BC, that Isaiah had his vision of God ([Is6](#)). He had two sons, naming one She'ar-Ya'shuv, meaning "A remnant shall return" ([Is7:3](#)) and the younger, Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz, meaning, "Spoil quickly, plunder speedily." ([Is8:3](#)), in the same way Hosea named his children as part of his prophetic message. Isaiah prophesied about his own times, but also looked to a future restoration and hope, both through Cyrus, king of Persia and in a future beyond the ancient world. There is much of the gospel in Isaiah, Messianic passages and so-called "Servant" passages. Perhaps the best known being [Isaiah 53](#). A number of passages can be applied to the 20th century return of the Jews to Israel. Isaiah prophesied for maybe 60+ years through the reigns of four kings of Judah.

Ahaz was succeeded by Hezekiah, a reforming king who re-opened and reconsecrated the Temple, celebrated Passover and sent out messengers into the land to call people back to God. He also destroyed the altars set up by Ahaz and reinvigorated the priests. ([2Chr31:20](#)). During Hezekiah's reign, he rebelled against Assyria and was attacked by Sennacherib who captured fortified cities. Hezekiah tried to buy off the Assyrians using gold and silver from the Temple, but Jerusalem was besieged despite this. Hezekiah prayed and sent for guidance to Isaiah, who prophesied Sennacherib's downfall ([2Kings19:32-34](#)) and was vindicated when the army of Sennacherib was destroyed overnight, possibly by plague, but certainly by God's hand ([2Kings19:35,36](#)). Sennacherib himself was murdered by two of his sons in Nineveh (681BC).

Hezekiah continued to serve God, but pride overtook him later in his life when he received envoys from Babylon's king Marduk-Baladan. He showed them all the riches he had accumulated in Jerusalem. For this he was rebuked by Isaiah ([2Kings20:16-18](#)) who warned him that the nation would be carried away by the Babylonians, but not in Hezekiah's lifetime.

Hezekiah's son Manasseh reigned next. It is during his reign that tradition suggests Isaiah was sawn in two ([Heb11:37](#)). Manasseh reversed many of Hezekiah's reforms. For this he was given into the hand of the king of Assyria and taken to Babylon with a hook through his nose ([2Chr33:11](#)). Here he repented and returned to Jerusalem where he undid some of his evil acts. Amon his son succeeded him, but followed his father's early example and did not repent. The next king, Josiah repaired the Temple and during this work a Book of the Law was found and read to Josiah. He was devastated by what he heard and sent for the prophet Huldah, a female prophet ([2Kings22:14](#)), who told him of the coming disaster brought about by Judah's turning from God. She assured Josiah this would not happen in his lifetime because of his penitence and God's mercy ([2Kings22:19,20](#)). Joash continued his reforms, but was mortally wounded by an arrow fighting against Pharaoh Necho in a battle Judah lost ([2Kings35](#)) as Egypt was marching to meet the Babylonians at Carchemish.

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Jeremiah began to prophesy shortly after Josiah began his reforms. He was concerned to explain the reasons for the coming destruction by the Babylonian army and the captivity to follow ([Jer5:19](#)). God's promised Jeremiah that although he would be attacked in many ways, his enemies would not overcome him ([Jer1:19](#)). Jeremiah was attacked by his own brothers, beaten and put into the stocks by a priest and false prophet, imprisoned by the king, threatened with death, thrown into a cistern by Judah's officials, and opposed by a false prophet. When Nebuchadnezzar seized Jerusalem he ordered that Jeremiah be freed from prison and treated well. He put him in the charge of Gedaliah, but when Gedaliah was assassinated he was taken against his will to Egypt ([Jer24](#)). He continued to speak God's word even though he was opposed and his messages ignored. Jeremiah is often called the "Weeping Prophet" either because he suffered so much for his faithfulness to God or because his writings record his tears (as well as God's) for his people.

Jeremiah also authored the Book of Lamentations. This is a series of poetic laments over the destruction of Jerusalem, but also a statement of faith. The five laments are concerned with Jerusalem's desolation, God's wrath against the city of Jerusalem, acknowledgement of God's faithfulness, God's faithfulness in, trust in God's faithfulness.

The people anointed Jehoahaz, Josiah's son as king, but Pharaoh Necho took him in chains to Egypt and appointed his brother Eliakim in his place, changing his name to Jehoiakim. Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah during his reign and Jehoiakim initially paid him tribute. After three years he rebelled and a coalition of Babylonian and other forces invaded. No help was forthcoming from Egypt as it had been so badly defeated by the Babylonians at Carchemish about 605BC. Nebuchadnezzar took articles from the Temple and placed them in his own temple in Babylon. He also took Jehoiakim captive and he died in Babylon.

Jehoiachin reigned for three months after Jehoiakim was taken off in chains, but then Nebuchadnezzar made him a captive also along with his family and the prominent people of the land. The standing army was also taken for Babylon's service as were skilled craftsmen. Nebuchadnezzar made Jehoiachin's uncle Mattaniah king and renamed him Zedekiah. Jeremiah prophesied against him and the people who had forsaken God, but Zedekiah would not listen. He rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar and after nine years' rule, Nebuchadnezzar returned to Jerusalem, the army and the king fled when the wall was breached and he was captured in the plains of Jericho. He saw his sons executed and was then blinded and taken to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar, or his commander Nebuzaradan, reduced the walls of Jerusalem to rubble, tore down the Temple, set fire to the city, massacred many of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, looted all the treasures and took any prominent survivors into exile. Jerusalem was utterly destroyed and at Riblah the highest leaders, civil and religious were executed.

Nebuchadnezzar set a man named Gedaliah as governor. He was assassinated in less than a year and any remaining officials or soldiers fled to Egypt.

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Jehoiachin was released from his chains by Nebuchadnezzar's successor Awel-Marduk but kept in exile in Babylon, albeit with some honour. Judah was, seemingly at an end, the southern kingdom had also fallen to one of the great empires of the middle east, the Babylonians. The nobles were led in captivity to Babylon and only the poor were allowed to remain as peasant farmers but the record does not stop there. *2Chronicles* finishes on a note of hope and continuity with a quote from Cyrus king of Persia (*2Chr36:23*).

Exile in Babylon

Ezekiel was among the first large group of Judeans taken into captivity by the Babylonians. He appears to have spent the rest of his life in Mesopotamia and it is here by the river Chebar that he receives the vision at the start of the book. A further deportation of Jews from Jerusalem to Babylon occurred in 586 when a second unsuccessful rebellion resulted in the destruction of the city and its Temple and the exile of the remaining elements of the royal court, including the last scribes and priests. The various dates given in the book suggest that Ezekiel was 25 when he went into exile, 30 when he received his prophetic call, and 52 at the time of the last vision about 571BC.

The book of Ezekiel opens with a vision of God moves on to anticipate the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, explains this as God's punishment, and closes with the promise of a new beginning and a new Temple. God sends Ezekiel as a watchman to Israel to proclaim judgement on Jerusalem and Judah and on the nations around. He then speaks of a new city and a new Temple built when the exile comes to an end and of blessings beyond those seen before.

Obadiah prophesied to Edom. The thrust of his message is that Edom should have helped Judah in their difficulties, but instead chose to look for plunder with the attackers in an opportunistic way. (*Ob1:11,13*) He prophesied that they would lose their land to Egypt and that no remnant of the people would be left. This was a punishment from God, but in response to disobedient and evil acts. Whether this was written in response to actions at the time of the invasion of Arabs and Philistines during the reign of Jehoram (*2Kings21:8-20*) around 845BC (making this Obadiah the one who meets Elijah and greets him (*1Kings18:1-16*) or between 605 & 586BC when Jerusalem was attacked by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon is the subject of continuing discussion.

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In Babylon the Jews settled down to a different life in exile. The Temple had been destroyed and there was no possibility of any substitute in Babylon. The system of synagogues developed during this time, a system which was to prove very useful in the first century AD as the gospel spread from Jerusalem. [Psalm 137](#) is a lament for the losses Israel have sustained and the effects of captivity. However, the prophet Jeremiah had written to the exiles explaining God's will for them in this land, promising His blessing and assuring them that the people would return to Jerusalem ([Jer 29](#)).

Individuals attained high rank in Babylon, the best known being Daniel and his three friends Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego. Heroic stands for their faith and miraculous deliverances from fire and lions have made them popular Sunday School characters. Esther and her family were also influential. Esther became queen and was used to deliver the exiles from a genocidal plot. Her uncle Mordecai was a valued adviser of the king. Both books are testimony to the care of God for His people, even in adversity.

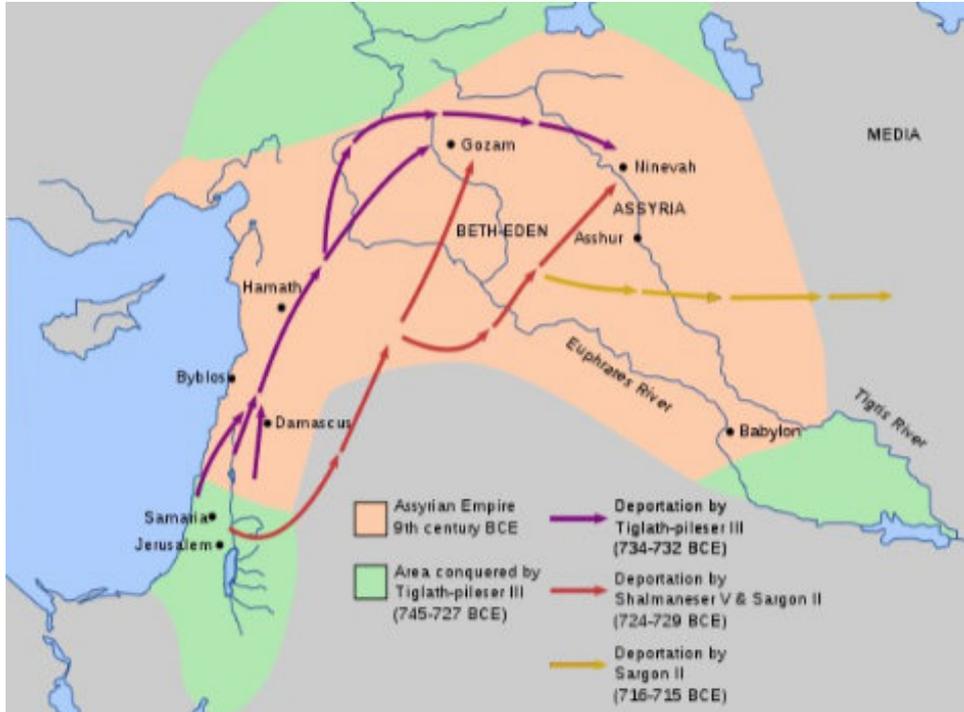
The book of Daniel records some of the events in Babylon, so is partly a history book. It also records dreams and visions which Daniel saw. These dreams are difficult to interpret, but seem to refer both to the history of the middle east after Daniel's death up to the appearance of Messiah, Jesus Christ and to the end times when Jesus returns to the Earth to claim it as His own. For this reason, much of the book is termed apocalyptic which means revealing and is also applied particularly to the Revelation of John in the New Testament.

Daniel understood from his reading of the scriptures and especially of Jeremiah's letter that the exile would last 70 years. Consequently he began to fast and pray, confessing as one of God's people the nation's unfaithfulness and asking Him to turn His anger away from Jerusalem and to forgive His people for the sake of His name ([Dan 9](#)). God sent Gabriel to answer Daniel and to show him more of His will for the future, this is part of the apocalyptic section in Daniel.

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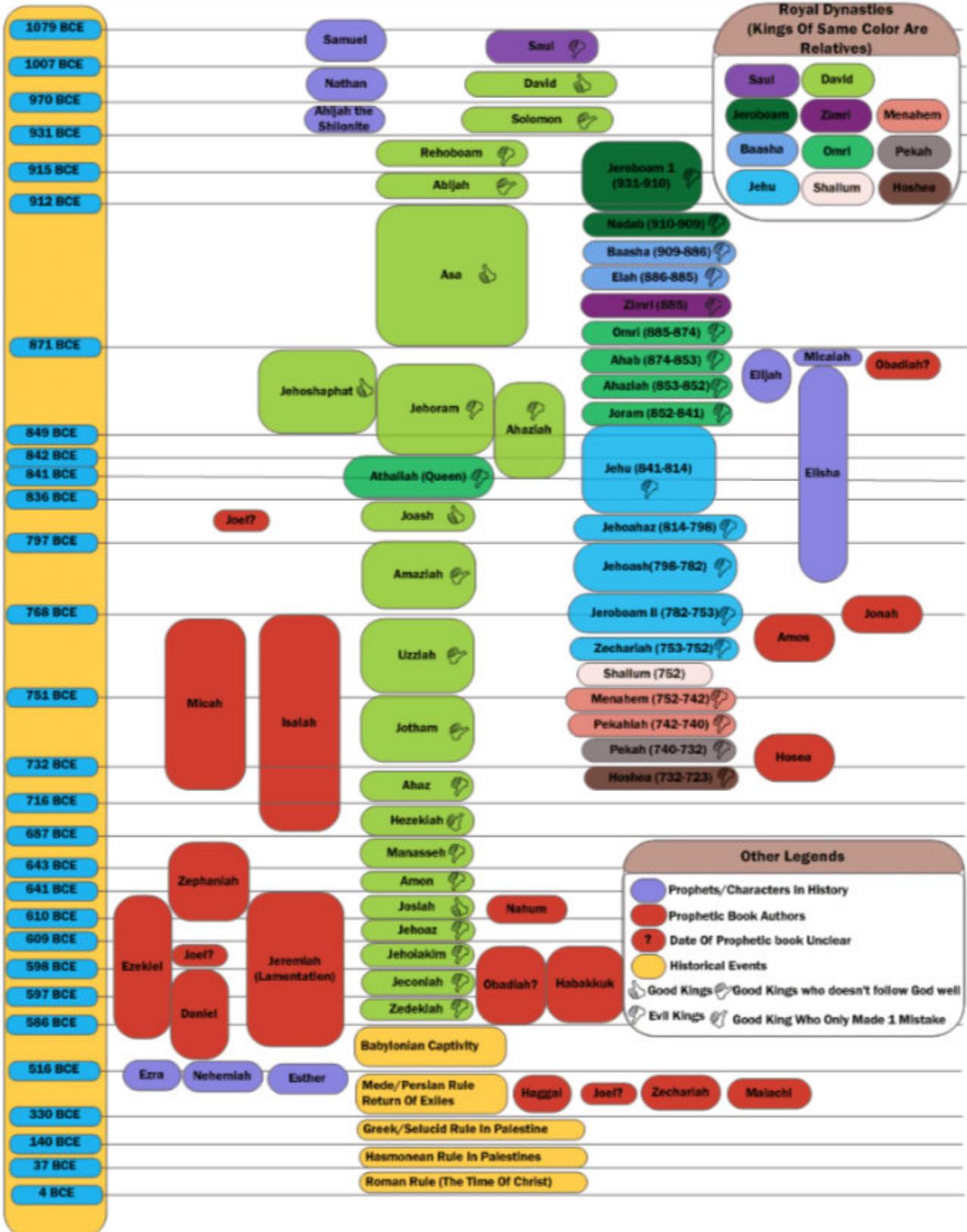


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Chronological Timeline Of Kings and Prophets



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