

# Old Testament History

## The Divided Kingdom – Lesson 11

### Background:

#### Introduction:

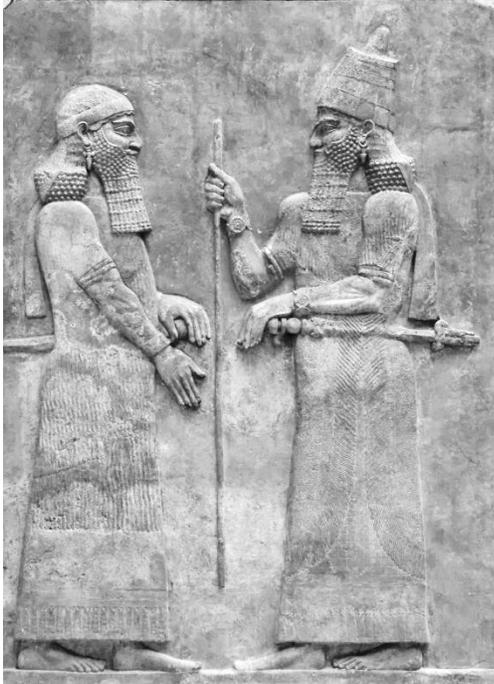
Intrigue and assassinations ruled the day in the northern kingdom of Israel. Hoshea, the last king of Israel (732-722 BC) came to the throne after the brutal assassination of Pekah, who like his predecessors, "did evil in the sight of the Lord." Hoshea also "did evil in the sight of the Lord, but not as the kings of Israel who were before him" (2 Kings 17:2). Although he failed to wipe out idolatrous worship in the northern kingdom, at least he did not give the practice official approval as those before had done. Hoshea took the throne as a puppet king under Assyria which dominated vast regions of the ancient world, even extending its control as far south as Egypt.

Like all conquered territories of the Assyrians, Israel was forced to pay tribute (taxes) to the Assyrian king Shalmaneser V (c. 726-722 BC). In an effort to free himself and Israel from the yoke of Assyrian bondage, Hoshea conspired with Egypt to withhold paying taxes. When the Assyrians learned of Hoshea's rebellion and conspiracy, the Assyrian king massed his armies and advanced toward Israel's capitol city Samaria. Hoshea desperately tried to appease Shalmaneser V with tribute, but the capital city of Samaria was besieged and Hoshea was captured and imprisoned for a time. Two years later, Hoshea once again rebelled against the Assyrians. In response, the Assyrian armies swept through the northern kingdom of Israel, slaying all who opposed them and laid siege to the capital city of Samaria. For three years their siege failed, but in the year 722 BC the walls of the city were finally breached.

History is unclear whether Shalmaneser V deserves credit for the fall of Samaria, or whether it occurred during the reign of Sargon II. Regardless, those who survived the assault were carried away into captivity to be disbursed throughout the Assyrian Empire (2 Kings 17:18-23). To ensure that the region would never again rise up as a united kingdom against the Assyrians, "the king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Ava, Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel; and they took possession of Samaria and dwelt in its cities." (2 Kings 17:24-25)

Now, that the northern kingdom of Israel was no more, the southern kingdom of Judah and its capital Jerusalem, was ripe for the picking by the Assyrian king Sennacherib (c. 704-681 BC), the son of Sargon II (c. 721-705 BC).

## Historical Notes:



Sargon II (right) and an unknown dignitary

Sargon II (722 BC- 705 BC) is mentioned only once by name in the Old Testament (Isaiah 20:1), which records the Assyrian capture of Ashdod, and may be "the king of Assyria" (2 Kings 17:6) who carried Israel into captivity.

According to history, Shalmaneser V had laid siege to Samaria for a period of three years. But shortly before or very soon after Samaria's fall, Sargon II, who may have been responsible for the king's death, overthrew the dynasty, and in his annals credited himself with the capture of the city and the deportation of its inhabitants. Whether he assumed the name of the famous ancient founder of the Accad dynasty is not known.

At the beginning of his reign, Sargon II was confronted with a serious situation in Assyrian controlled Babylon. Merodach-baladan of Kaldu, who had paid tribute to previous rulers, on hearing of Shalmaneser's death proclaimed himself king in Babylon (721 BC). To defend his reign, Sargon II fought with the forces of the usurper Merodach-baladan and his Elimite allies. Although Sargon II claimed the victory, the result was apparently indecisive. Rebellions continued to break out in other parts of the Assyrian empire.

In 720 BC Sargon II faced another threat. The king of Hamath (present-day Hama in Syria) formed a coalition against Sargon II with kings from Gaza, Egypt, and the cities of Arpad, Damascus and Samaria. According to Assyrian records, Sargon II won a decisive victory, capturing and flaying some rebel kings, burned others alive, and carried the others captive to Assyria. In his final victory, Sargon II carried away over 9,000 into Assyrian captivity. On his return, he had the city of Samaria rebuilt as the capital of the new province of Samerina and settled it with Assyrians.

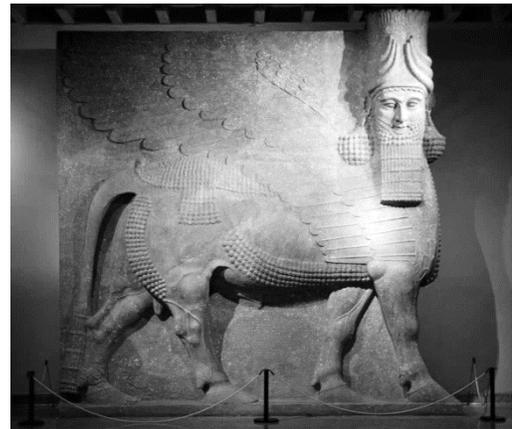
In 717 BC Sargon II conquered cities in parts of the Zagros Mountains (the largest mountain range in Iran and Iraq) and the Syro-Hittite city Carchemish on the upper Euphrates. In 714 BC Sargon II launched another campaign, this time against Urartu in Armenia<sup>1</sup> Bas-reliefs of the campaign show the difficulties of the terrain: the war chariots had to be dismantled and carried by soldiers (with the king still in the chariot). In a letter written by Sargon II to the god Ashur (found in the town of Assur, now in the Louvre), Sargon describes how paths had to be cut into dense forests. The battle that took place in a steep valley flanked by mountains that reached into the clouds, Sargon II defeated the army of King Rusas, slaying the horses of his chariots with Assyrian spears. But

<sup>1</sup> This territory corresponds to the mountainous plateau between Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, and the Caucasus mountains, later known as the Armenian Highlands.

Rusas managed to escape on a mare that had escaped the carnage. Sargon II plundered the region, destroying orchards, burning harvests. Many of the inhabitants of surrounding villages and town fled to the mountains, and Sargon claims to have destroyed 430 deserted villages.

In 710 BC Sargon II felt confident enough to move against his Babylonian arch-enemy Merodach-baladan, who no longer enjoyed the support of Elam, and whose rule over Babylon had not been popular with his subjects. Sargon turned part of his armies against Elam, and the remaining against Babylon. After the dust of battle had settled, Sargon II was crowned as the king of Babylon. He remained in Babylon for three years, where in 709 BC he led the new-year procession as the king of Babylon and Assyria. Sennacherib, Sargon's son and a successful military commander, who had married an Aramean noblewoman, stayed in the southern part of the kingdom to pacify the Aramaic and Chaldean tribes of the lower Euphrates, as well as some areas in Elam.

In his later years Sargon II chose the city of Nineveh to be the new capital rather than the traditional capital at Assur. In 713 BC he ordered the construction of a new palace and town (called the "House of Sargon") 20 km (about 12 ½ miles) north of Nineveh.



A lamassu from the palace of Sargon II

Finally, Sargon II fell in battle in 705 BC while driving out intruders who had gained control of his weaker Persian and Median vassal states. Sargon II was succeeded by his son Sennacherib (705-681 BC).

## Outline:

- I. **Hoshea and the fall of the Northern Kingdom of Israel (2 Kings 17)**
  - A. Hoshea reigns in Israel (2 Kings 17:1-4)
  - B. Israel carried away into Assyrian captivity (2 Kings 17:5-23)
  - C. The Assyrians resettle Samaria (2 Kings 17:24-41)

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## **The Exposition:**

### **I. Hoshea and the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel (2 Kings 17)**

#### **A. Hoshea reigns in Israel (2 Kings 17:1-4)**

1. Describe Hoshea. (2 Kings 17:1-2)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Who invaded Israel during the reign of Hoshea? What happened to Hoshea? (2 Kings 17:3-4)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. How long was Samaria besieged? Where was Israel carried into captivity? (2 Kings 17:5-6)

#### **B. Israel carried away into Assyrian captivity (2 Kings 17:5-23)**

1. The Lord was very angry with Israel and removed them out of His sight, for they:
  - a. Feared whom? (2 Kings 17:7)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. Walked how? (2 Kings 17:8)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - c. Secretly did things that were not right and built what? (2 Kings 17:9)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - d. Set up what on every high hill and under every green tree? (2 Kings 17:10)

- e. Did what in high places? (2 Kings 17:11)
  
  - f. Served whom? (2 Kings 17:12)
  
  - g. Hardened their necks and rejected what three things? (2 Kings 17:13-15)
  
  - h. Followed what, became what, and went after what? (2 Kings 17:15)
  
  - i. Made what to worship the host of heaven, when they left the commandments of the Lord? (2 Kings 17:16)
  
  - j. Served whom? (2 Kings 17:16)
  
  - k. Caused their sons and daughters to do what? (2 Kings 17:17)
  
  - l. Practiced what two things? (2 Kings 17:17)
2. Who was left alone? How did they walk? (2 Kings 17:18-19)

3. What had Jeroboam done? (2 Kings 17:20-23)

**C. The Assyrians resettle Samaria (2 Kings 17:24-41)**

1. Who did the king of Assyria bring to Samaria to settle there? Why do you think he did this? (2 Kings 17:24) <sup>2</sup>
2. Why did the Lord send lions among the people? (2 Kings 17:25)
3. What reason did the people give for the Lord sending lions? (2 Kings 17:26)
4. Who was brought to Bethel to teach the people about God? (2 Kings 17:27-28)
5. What did the people from the foreign nations make? Whom did they fear? Whom did they serve? (2 Kings 17:29-33)

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<sup>2</sup> The Samaritans of the New Testament evolved from these Israelites that were left in the land, and who intermarried with the heathen foreigners.

