

# Old Testament History

## The Divided Kingdom – Lesson 9

### Background:

#### Introduction:

Under the reign of Jehu in the north and queen Athaliah in the south, both kingdoms were left in total disarray. Nothing had changed in the northern kingdom of Israel – the people were still steeped in idolatry. Because of this, the armies of Jehu suffered a disastrous defeat in war against the Syrians during his twenty-eight year reign (2 Kings 10:29-33). Even after the death of Athaliah and the ascent to the throne of Joash (837-800 BC), the improvements in Judah were only temporary. Like many of the kings before him, Joash proved to be a major disappointment. He had so disgraced himself by the murder of the son of Jehoiada that Joash was buried in the city of David rather than in the tombs of the kings. (2 Chronicles 24:25)

Jehoahaz (814-798 BC), the son of Jehu, succeeded his father to the throne, but nothing good is reported to have occurred during his reign of seventeen years. Jehoash (Joash), the son of Jehoahaz, became king and "did evil in the sight of the Lord. He did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin, but walked in them" (2 Kings 13:11). Sadly, a resurgence of the prophets of Asherah (Ishtar) and Baal continued to pervert the people with no opposition from the king of Israel, or his son Jehoash (Joash).

The prophet Elisha lived on into the reign of Jehoash of Israel, but the time of his death was drawing near. The rebellious king Jehoash came to the prophet and asked if he had a message from the Lord. Elisha told the king he would be able to repel the Syrians at Aphek. However, Elisha told Jehoash he would gain only partial victory over his enemies and would eventually be unsuccessful against them. As prophesied, Jehoash was barely able to seize his lost lands from Benhadad, the son of Hazael, and pass those lands to his son Jeroboam II.

The resurgence of Baal worship in Israel prevailed into the reign of Jeroboam II (793-753 BC), the son and successor of Jehoash. However, Jeroboam II accomplished much for the kingdom of Israel. He regained all the territory lost to the Syrians (Aramaea), enlarged his kingdom and brought unparalleled prosperity and military might to Israel that had not been seen in many years. But with the prosperity came a decline in moral and religious life. In the end, Jeroboam II "did evil in the sight of the Lord; he did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin" (2 Kings 14:24).

In the southern kingdom of Judah, Amaziah (800-783 BC) followed his murdered father, Joash to the throne. He avenged the death of his father by executing his father's

assassins. Amaziah then set his sights on Edom in an effort to bring the former Judean province back under his control. But he made the mistake of forming an alliance with Israel in this effort. An unknown prophet warned Amaziah of his mistake. Heeding the prophet's advice Amaziah sent the troops from Israel home, a move that greatly upset Jehoash. Amaziah went into Edom, destroyed the capital city, and carried the nation's gods home with him as part of the recovered treasures. Unfortunately, he set them up in Jerusalem and worshipped them along with the One true God. As a result, the prophet predicted the downfall of the king (2 Chronicles 25:15-16).

While Amaziah was busy in Edom, the troops from Israel who had been sent back home pillaged many villages of Judah out of pure vengeance. When the king of Judah returned from his victory, he challenged Israel to go to war over the matter. Jehoash warned Amaziah not to attempt such a contest, but the king, fresh from the victory over Edom, paid no attention. It was a decision that ultimately led to his downfall. Jehoash came into Jerusalem itself and plundered the treasuries of the temple and the royal palace. Eventually Amaziah, like his father, was assassinated by his own people, and died at Lachish. His young son Uzziah (Azariah) ascended to the throne in his place.

The reign of Uzziah (783-742 BC) in Judah is described in 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings, 2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles, and the book of Isaiah, although Isaiah merely mentions that he began his prophetic ministry during the year Uzziah died (Isaiah 6:1). Uzziah was righteous for the most part, but failed to remove the high places and allowed the people to worship there (2 Kings 15:4). He undertook successful campaigns against the Arabians and Philistines and extended his kingdom as far to the southwest as the border of Egypt. To protect his newly acquired territories, Uzziah built strong fortifications in Jerusalem and other strategic places, including several towers and wells in the desert (2 Chronicles 26:6-10), the remains of which have been uncovered by archeologists. Over time he gained a reputation for his military successes and for inventing engines of war. "But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction" (2 Chronicles 26:16), and Uzziah soon forgot the source of all his strength. As a result he became a leper and was forced to live in a separate dwelling the rest of his life. His son Jotham apparently co-reigned with him until Uzziah's death in 742 BC.

In the northern kingdom of Israel, Jeroboam II successfully recovered much of the territory lost to the Syrians (Aramaea), particularly the territories lost during the reigns of Jehu and Jehoahaz. It is believed that he extended the borders of his kingdom to where they had been under the reign of Ahab, if not further. Although the Lord allowed these victories out of compassion for Israel, Jeroboam II, like his namesake, continued the policy of idol worship and tolerance toward the Baal cults that persisted throughout the region. By 753 BC he was dead, and his son Zachariah took his place in Samaria.

### **Historical Notes:**

The greatest prosperity experienced by Israel and Judah during the period of the divided kingdoms occurred during the reigns of Uzziah (Azariah), who reigned over Judah from 783-742 BC, and Jeroboam II, who reigned over Israel from 793-753 BC. "The Ammonites also gave tribute to Uzziah, and his fame extended to the border of

Egypt, for he became very strong. Moreover, Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem at the Corner Gate and at the Valley Gate and at the corner buttress and fortified them. He built towers in the wilderness and hewed many cisterns." (2 Chronicles 26:8-10)

Concerning Jeroboam II it is recorded that he expanded Israel northwards to take in Damascus and Hamath (2 Kings 14:25-28). In the writings of the prophets contemporary with those times, particularly Amos, there is much to indicate that Israel had achieved quite a level of material prosperity.

Archaeologists have made significant discoveries which indicate that this was indeed a time of power and prosperity. There was the rebuilding of the place of worship at Dan, and a new residential quarter at Hazor, which was destroyed by an earthquake – most likely the one mentioned in Zechariah 14:5 during the days of Uzziah. At Megiddo a large grain storage silo, stone-lined and capable of holding 12,800 bushels of grain, is also attributed to this period. At Samaria seventy receipts were discovered, written on ostraca (bits of broken pottery), referring to such things as oil, barley and wine being received in Samaria from surrounding localities.



Grain silo at Megiddo

In the southern kingdom of Judah there is also archeological evidence of an expansion into the south – the Negeb. During the period from 1976 to 1979, archeological excavations were made at Ain-el-Qudeirat, which is now in Egypt, but which at that time was under Israeli control following "The Six Days War" a decade earlier. The site is believed to be the location of ancient Kadesh-barnea, well known from the Biblical account of the wilderness journey.



Qumran on the Dead Sea

At this location, remains were discovered of a large rectangular fortress, seventy-five feet long, with solid walls twelve feet thick, and three projecting towers. This building, which is attributed to the time of Uzziah, is evidently one of the "towers in the desert" referred to in 2 Chronicles 26:10.

At Qumran, better known as the site of the Essene community who produced the Dead Sea scrolls, the remains of another fortified building was discovered dating to the time of

Uzziah. It is also recorded that Uzziah "built Eloth, and restored it to Judah" (2 Chronicles 26:2). Tell el-Kheleifeh, which lies at the center of the north shore of the Gulf of Eilat (or Gulf of Aqaba), has been extensively excavated, and besides evidence of being built in the time of Solomon, there is evidence of rebuilding in the time of Jehoshaphat, and further rebuilding in the time of Uzziah.



5. Where is another record of the acts of Jehoahaz? (2 Kings 13:8-9)

**B. Joash (Jehoash) and Elisha in Israel (2 Kings 13:10-13)**

1. Who was the father of Jehoash? He walked in the way of what king? (2 Kings 13:10-12)

**C. The death of Elisha (2 Kings 13:14-21)**

1. How did Elisha symbolize to Joash (Jehoash) the deliverance of Israel from Syria? (2 Kings 13:14-19)
2. What occurred when a man was buried in Elisha's sepulcher (2 Kings 13:20-21)

**D. Israel recaptures cities from Syria (Aramaea) (2 Kings 13:22-25)**

1. Why did the Lord have compassion on Israel? (2 Kings 13:22-23)
2. What was Joash (Jehoash) able to do when Hazael died? (2 Kings 13:24-25; cf. 2 Kings 13:19)

**II. Amaziah in Judah (2 Kings 14:1-22; 2 Chronicles 25:1 – 26:2)**

**A. Amaziah reigns in Judah (2 Kings 14:1-22; 2 Chronicles 25:1-16)**

1. To who is Amaziah compared? What kind of heart did he have? What was not removed? (2 Kings 14:1-4; 2 Chronicles 25:1-2)

2. What did Amaziah do as soon as he had confirmed the kingdom? What law given by Moses did he observe? (2 Kings 14:5-6; 2 Chronicles 25:3-4; cf. Deuteronomy 24:16)
  
3. When Amaziah prepared for battle, he hired men of valor from Israel to go with him. What did the man of God tell him? (2 Chronicles 25:5-8)
  
4. When Amaziah dismissed the men of Israel, what was their attitude as they returned home? (2 Chronicles 25:9-10)
  
5. Describe Amaziah's victory over Edom. (2 Kings 14:7; 2 Chronicles 25:11-12)
  
6. What did the men of Israel do on their way home? (2 Chronicles 25:13)
  
7. How did the victory work toward Amaziah's detriment? (2 Chronicles 25:14-16)

**B. Amaziah and Joash (Jehoash) (2 Kings 14:8-14, 17-20; 2 Chronicles 25:17 – 26:2)**

1. What challenge did Amaziah send to Joash (Jehoash)? How did Joash reply? (2 Kings 14:8-10; 2 Chronicles 25:17-19)

2. Describe the confrontation between Amaziah and Joash. What happened to Amaziah? (2 Kings 14:11-14; 2 Chronicles 25:20-24)
  
3. Why was Amaziah and Judah delivered into the hand of their enemies? (2 Chronicles 25:20)
  
4. How did Amaziah die? (2 Kings 14:19-20; 2 Chronicles 25:27-28)
  
5. Who was made king after the death of Amaziah? How old was he? (2 Chronicles 26:1-2)

### **III. Jeroboam II in Israel**

#### **A. Jeroboam II reigns in Israel (2 Kings 14:23-29)**

1. Who is the father of Jeroboam II? He is compared to what other king of Israel? (2 Kings 14:23-24)
  
2. What did Jeroboam II restore to Israel? This was according to the word of what prophet? (2 Kings 14:25)
  
3. Describe the affliction of Israel. Who had afflicted Israel? (2 Kings 14:26; cf. 2 Kings 8:7-13; 13:3, 7, 22)

4. By whose hand did the Lord save Israel? (2 Kings 14:27; cf. 2 Kings 13:4-5)
  
5. Jeroboam II recovered what cities? (2 Kings 14:28-29)

#### **IV. Uzziah (Azariah) in Judah**

##### **A. Uzziah (Azariah) reigns in Judah (2 Kings 15:1-7; 2 Chronicles 26:3-23)**

1. What kind of king was Uzziah (Azariah)? What was not removed? How long did he prosper? (2 Kings 14:21; 15:1-4; 2 Chronicles 26:1, 3-5)
  
2. What city did he restore to Judah? (2 Kings 14:22; 2 Chronicles 26:2)
  
3. Uzziah strengthened his kingdom in the following ways (2 Chronicles 26:6-15)
  - a. Military campaigns and defenses:
    - (1). Who did he go to war against – breaking down walls of cities and building cities among them?
  
    - (2). Against whom did he receive help from God?
  
    - (3). Who did he receive tribute from?
  
    - (4). His fame was spread abroad as far as where?

(5). Where did he build towers and fortified them?

(6). Where else did he build towers?

b. Agriculture:

(1). What did he do in the lowlands and plains for livestock?

(2). Why did he hire plowmen and vinedressers in the hill country?

c. Army:

(1). What was the size of Uzziah's army?

(2). What weapons and armament did Uzziah use to equip his army?

(3). What else is he known for inventing?

4. What sins did Uzziah (Azariah) commit when he was strong? (2 Chronicles 26:16-19)

5. The Lord inflicted Uzziah (Azariah) with what disease? (2 Kings 15:5; 2 Chronicles 26:20-21)

6. Where are the acts of Uzziah (Azariah) recorded? (2 Kings 15:6-7; 2 Chronicles 26:22)

**Application:**

In your own words, explain the lessons we can learn from these events, and how those lessons can be applied to present-day situations?