

Emmanuel Houaito

Dr. David Emanuel

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The Ramifications of the Northern Exile

Introduction

Prophet Ahijah warned Solomon that the Kingdom would be taken out of his hands and given to ten tribes (*New King James Version*, 1 Kings 11:31). Ahijah was influential in the splitting of Solomon's kingdom into the Southern Kingdom (Judah) and the Northern Kingdom (Israel). Jeroboam set up golden bull idols of Bethel and Dan (Bright 49). He feared that if the Jewish were permitted to go and bring offerings to the Temple in Jerusalem, their hearts would revert to being faithful to the king of Judea. Ahijah separated with his protégé and prophesied God's destruction upon his lineage (1 Kings 14:6-16). The northern Kingdom ripened in immorality, and the consequences were imminent. The paper looks into events that led to the fall of the northern Kingdom up to the renovation of the Jewish Temple by Herod the Great.

How the Event Began and Who was Involved

The northern kingdom inhabitants' exile started in 733 BCE during the rule of King Tiglath-Pileser III (745-727 BCE) (Greenspoon 50). The Assyrians established provinces after 732 BCE (Rainey and Notley 210). 2 Kings 15:19 indicates the initial mention of the Neo-Assyrian Empire during the rule of King Tiglath-pileser III of Assyria, also referred to as Pul. The king devised a two-way mass expulsion strategy that offered the Assyrians advantages in their control over the captives they had vanquished via a demographic shift that generated commitments and loyalists towards the conqueror (Greenspoon 50). King Tiglath-pileser III's

military success impacted Israel and Judah. Azah, king of Judah, bribed King Pul to keep Judah's other enemies at bay (2 Kings 16:7-8). Menahem gave money to the King of Assyria, who turned back and did not stay there in the region (2 Kings 15:19-20). However, in the days of Pekah, the king of Assyria invaded Israel (Northern Kingdom) and took the inhabitants prisoners to Assyria.

The northern Kingdom's people continued with the idolatrous and sinful nature of their forbears throughout the generations. They built numerous altars to serve Astarte, Baals, and Canaanite gods while disregarding Jewish ideals centered on assisting the poor, being kindhearted, and practicing justice. The king of Assyria, Shalmaneser V, began a siege on the city of Samaria in the year 725 BCE that ended later during the rule of his successor, Sargon II (722-705 BCE). In 722 BCE, the northern Kingdom experienced destruction. Assyria took northern Israel's inhabitants into captivity to a foreign land during the rule of the last Israelite King, King Hoshea (2 Kings 17:1). 2 Kings 17:1 illustrates that in the twelfth year of Azah, Hoshea became king in Samaria over Israel for nine years; however, he did iniquitously in the Lord's sight. The king of Assyria, Shalmaneser V, advanced against King Hoshea, became his vassal and paid him accolades. The king of Assyria found King Hoshea guilty of conspiracy and arrested and imprisoned Hoshea. The king of Assyria occupied the entire land. He attacked Samaria, which he besieged for three years (2 Kings 17:5). The destruction of the northern Kingdom's capital, Samaria, was foretold by Micah in Micah 1:6 and Hosea in Hosea 13:16.

The King of Assyria seized Samaria and took away the inhabitants of the northern Kingdom to Assyria and placed them in Halah and by the Habor, the Gozan river, and in the towns of the Medes (2 Kings 17: 6). Assyria moved some of its people into the region initially occupied by the Israelites. When the new inhabitants failed to prosper, the king of Assyria sent an Israelite priest into the region to instruct the occupants to worship and fear Jehovah. However,

this was liberally mixed with Assyria's paganism, where every nation made gods of their own and laced them in the houses which the Samaritans had created (2 Kings 17:29). The intermarriage of the Assyrian settlers with the stragglers who had survived the exile caused the Samaritans to claim Israelite covenant blessings.

According to Greenspoon some former northern kingdom inhabitants were not expatriated but stayed in their residential regions (50). After the Shomron's annihilation and its inhabitants' banishment, the undertaking of the kings of Judah supports the assumption that not all inhabitants of the northern Kingdom were taken to exile. The diplomatic marriages by the kings of Judah desired to connect distinguished households still dwelling in Galilee with the House of David via family ties. Greenspoon asserts that the activity focused on connecting the Israelite population that stayed in the northern kingdom's region with the southern Kingdom (51).

The kings of Judah conducted two religious reforms after the destruction of Israel. Both attempted to incorporate the Israelite population in the north in these activities. An example of diplomatic nuptials is Manasseh (698-642 BCE) married Meshulemeth, Haruz's daughter from Jotbah (2 Kings 21:19). In 2 Kings 23:36, Josiah married Zebida, daughter of Pedaiah, from Rumah identified with Rumi in the Lower Galilee.

Sargon II succeeded Shalmaneser upon his death. Sargon II destroyed Samaria and carried survivors into Assyria. It ended Israel's history in the Old Testament and set the stage for the loss of the ten northern tribes. 2 Kings 17:13 illustrates prophets warning both Judah and Israel. Both Kingdoms were not immune to God's wrath due to their sins. Prophet Micah in Micah 1:2-5 castigated Judah and Israel for their sins proclaiming that God intends to wreak judgment upon them. In Micah 1:6-9, Micah describes God's annihilation of Samaria.

Assyria threatened Judah (the Southern Kingdom) not long after the annihilation of Israel (the Northern Kingdom). Micah portrayed the Assyrian's destruction of Judah but did not include Jerusalem (*Micah* 1:9-15). Sargon II's successor Sennacherib attacked Judah during King Hezekiah's reign and destroyed most of her principal cities. However, Sennacherib could not capture Jerusalem and returned to his home and remained at Nineveh (2 Kings 19:36).

The ambitious and reforms politics of King Josiah boosted Judah's national identity (Bright 320). During this phase, the universal superpower of Assyria was swiftly subsiding, ultimately releasing its grasp on the Southern Levant (Hiebel 2). The southern Kingdom was flourishing, and King Josiah's cultic improvement meant it was executing laws from God. However, the sudden and violent demise of King Josiah rapidly altered the political landscape around the southern Kingdom. The Babylonians had established themselves as the Assyrian Empire's heirs, and Josiah's heirs made several imprudent political decisions (Hiebel 2).

Micah warns that God will not spare Jerusalem if she continues to sin. After a lengthy illustration of Judah's transgressions, Micah spoke a devastating prophecy. Micah foretells the imminent devastation of Jerusalem due to God's wrath over her sins (*Micah* 3:12). In *Jeremiah* 26:19, Jeremiah asserts that Hezekiah, King of Judah, and all Judah heeded Micah's warning and repented, thus precipitating God's forgiveness and reprieve of God's judgment against Jerusalem.

Nonetheless, Judah's repentance was short-lived, and prophet Ezekiel in *Ezekiel* 23:1-49 and *Jeremiah* in *Jeremiah* 3:6-10 castigates Judah for failing to internalize Israel's punishment. The southern Kingdom people believed that the northern kingdom people's exile had no bearing on their future. The southern Kingdom seemed to have regarded the northern Kingdom as sinful while erroneously assuming God saved Jerusalem from the Assyrian superpower due to their righteousness. Ezekiel disapprovingly echoes the opinions of Jerusalem's inhabitants, who

argued the legitimacy of the southern Kingdom as the true bearer of the Israelite traditions (Ezekiel 11:15). According to Jerusalem's inhabitants, God maintained Judah, its king, Temple, and the capital city thus indicating their chosen status.

How the Event Came to an End

The northern Kingdom's exile reverberated into the background of the Southern Kingdom's disaster in 586 BCE. The northern Kingdom should have positively influenced the southern Kingdom, guiding them to rectify their character. However, they did not; the exile of the southern Kingdom ensued, leaving them in fear that the results of their exile would be similar to their northern counterparts, a devastating and permanent loss. The Jerusalem residents were forced to contend with the inconceivable exile of Jerusalem. In 597 BCE, Jehoiachin was forced to capitulate Jerusalem to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (Hiebel 2).

In 587 BCE, the Temple was largely burned and destroyed after a cruel and long siege, and Judah was reduced to a province status in the Babylonian Empire (2 Kings 25:1-21). Numerous leaders strived to capture Jerusalem, including Alexander, Antiochus IV, and Pompey. Simon captured the Seleucid garrison in the Akra of Jerusalem in 141 BCE (Zangenberg 329). Herod the Great also captured Jerusalem and converted its dilapidated provincial status into a major tourist attraction and pilgrimage site of the Greco-Roman world (Seeman and Adam 51). Meyers et al. (53) assert that Herod the Great is most remembered for his splendid building projects, especially the renovation of the Jewish Temple.

Summary and Conclusion

The northern exile resulted in the loss of the ten tribes. Ultimately, the southern kingdom was invaded, and they suffered the same consequences as the Northern Kingdom. Numerous

leaders strived to capture Jerusalem, and it ultimately destroyed the Jewish Temple. However, Herod the Great strived to renovate the Jewish Temple.

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