

2 Kings

Downfalls of the Kingdoms					
Late Divided Kingdom			Surviving Kingdom		
Israel and Judah			Judah		
Chapters 1–17			Chapters 18–25		
Israel Exiled to Assyria			Judah Exiled to Babylon		
Ahaziah to Hoshea			Hezekiah to Zedekiah		
130 Years (852-722 BC)			163 Years (722-560 BC)		
2 Bad Israel Kings & Elisha's Ministry 1:1–8:15	10 Bad Israel Kings & 4 Bad/4 Good Judah Kings 8:16–16:20	Bad Hoshea culminating in Fall of Israel 17	Good Hezekiah & 2 Bad Judah Kings 18–21	Good Josiah & 4 Bad Judah Kings 22:1–24:16	Bad Zedekiah culminating in Fall of Judah & Jerusalem 24:17–25:30

Key Word: Downfalls

Key Verse: “So the LORD said, “I will remove Judah also from my presence as I removed Israel, and I will reject Jerusalem, the city I chose, and this temple, about which I said, ‘There shall my Name be’” (2 Kings 23:27)

Summary Statement:

The *covenant disobedience and resultant downfalls* of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah are contrasted with *God's loyalty to the Davidic Covenant* to remind Israel of the need to obey the Law—not repeat past mistakes.

Application:

“Don’t rearrange your idols! Remove them!” (Huang Sabin, *OT Made Simple*)

2 Kings

Introduction

Note: This introduction repeats that of 1 Kings except for the Characteristics section.

- I. **Title** First and Second Kings originally comprised only one book in the Hebrew canon called "Kings" (מְלָכִים) after the first word in 1:1 ("Now King"; וְהָמֶלֶךְ). However, this single scroll was arbitrarily divided in the Septuagint (250 BC) since the Greek required more scroll space. The Septuagint titles were Third and Fourth Kingdoms (since 1 and 2 Samuel were designated 1 and 2 Kingdoms). Jerome called 1 and 2 Kings "The Book of the Kings" about six centuries later. These titles are appropriate as these books record and interpret the reign of every king of Israel and Judah except Saul (David has a brief mention in 1 Kings 1:1-2:12).

II. Authorship

- A. External Evidence: Jewish tradition ascribes the author of the Books of Kings to Jeremiah, and this claim gains weight from literary parallels between Kings and Jeremiah's prophecy.
- B. Internal Evidence: The prophetic-like descriptions of Israel's apostasy indicate that the author was a prophet/historian. Also, this compiler had several historical documents at his fingertips: "the book of the acts of Solomon" (1 Kings 11:41), "the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel" (1 Kings 14:19), and "the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah" (1 Kings 14:29; 15:7). These books may be attributed to the official secretary Shebna and/or the official recorder Joah, son of Asaph (2 Kings 18:18; cf. Isa. 36:11). Parallels between 2 Kings 18–20 and Isaiah 36–39 also reveal that Isaiah's scroll also was a source. No firm evidence exists to refute the tradition that Jeremiah authored the Book of Kings.

III. Circumstances

- A. Date: Three lines of evidence indicate that First Kings and most of Second Kings were written before the Babylonian Captivity (586 BC). The ark still resided in Solomon's temple (1 Kings 8:8), Israel was still in rebellion against Judah (1 Kings 12:19), and Samaria's idolatry persisted even after its resettlement (2 Kings 17:34, 41). However, the final two chapters of Second Kings record up to 26 years after this captivity. They may have been recorded by a Jewish captive in Babylon or by Jeremiah himself, who would have been at least 84 years old.

First Kings covers a period of history totaling 120 years, beginning in 971 BC with Solomon's inauguration and ending in 852 BC near the end of Ahaziah's reign. The year 931 BC marks the most significant date when Solomon's kingdom split into the northern nation of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah after his death.

Second Kings starts in 852 BC and goes on until the fall of Samaria (722 BC) and Jerusalem (586 BC) and the release of Jehoiachin in Babylon in 560 BC—over 293 years.

- B. Recipients: The Book of Kings was written to the remaining kingdom of Judah before (1 Kings 1–2 Kings 23) and after (2 Kings 24–25) its exile in Babylon.
- C. Occasion: Jeremiah's prophecy and Lamentations record his eyewitness account of Babylon's siege and destruction of Jerusalem for the nation's sins. In addition to his prophetic word, the Holy Spirit moved him to record a *historical* compilation to give the context and justification for God's judgments on these two nations. The leaders and the people sinned through ungodliness and idolatry, and God gave them the consequences of their disobedience, faithful to the curses of Deuteronomy 28. Therefore, the purpose of the record is to show how the welfare of Israel and Judah depended upon the king's and people's faithfulness to the covenant of Moses, to teach the exiles to learn from the past mistakes of their ancestors. In large part, this purpose was accomplished in history as Israel has not, since the Captivity, had a problem with idolatry.

IV. Characteristics

A. Some contrasts between the two books of Kings may prove helpful:

	<u>1 Kings</u>	<u>2 Kings</u>
Dates	971-852 BC	852-560 BC
Length	120 years	Over 293 years
Kings	David-Ahaziah	Ahaziah-Zedekiah
# of Chapters	22	25
General Content	Division of the Kingdom	Downfall of the Kingdoms
Major Judgments	Divided Kingdom (931 BC)	Israel (722 BC), Judah (586 BC)
Temple	Built and consecrated	Violated and destroyed (380 yrs. later)
Beginning/end	Begins with blessings for obedience	Ends with judgment for disobedience

B. Second Kings depicts the reigns of more kings than any book in Scripture.

Argument

Second Kings continues the account from First Kings since they originally composed a single work. Therefore, the book presents the same ethical argument—to convince the readers from the lessons of the past that God blesses obedience to his covenant but judges disobedience. This is observable in the account of the kings of both Israel and Judah before the fall of Assyria (2 Kings 1–17) and the kings of Judah before its own fall (2 Kings 18–25). The book also shows God's merciful commitment to the Davidic Covenant through the kings of Judah who constitute only a single dynasty in contrast to the five dynasties of the northern kingdom that does not possess the promise of the Davidic Covenant. Therefore, while God punishes rebellion he nevertheless is faithful to the covenant he made with David.

Synthesis

Later divided kingdom covenant disobedience

Downfalls of the Kingdoms

1–17

1	Ahaziah (I)
2:1–8:15	Joram (I) vs. <u>Elisha</u>
2	Succession of Elijah
3	Water for [Joram, Jehoshaphat, king of Edom] vs. Moab
4:1–7	Oil for widow
4:8–17	Son for Shunammite
4:18–37	Restoration for Son
4:38–41	Stew for prophets
4:42–44	Bread for men
5	Healing for Naaman
6:1–7	Ax head for seminarians
6:8–23	Blinding of Syrians
6:24–7:20	Food of Syrians
8:1–6	Guidance for Shunammite
8:7–15	Prophecy of Hazael's succeeding Ben-Hadad
8:16–24	Jehoram (J)
8:25–9:29	Ahaziah (J)
9:30–10:36	Jehu (5; I)

Key:

Good kings are in **bold print**

I = Israel's kings

J = Judah's kings

5 = Numbers show new dynasties in Israel (Judah is one dynasty)

11	Athaliah (J)
12	Joash (J)
13:1-9	Jehoahaz (I)
13:10-25	Jehoash (I)
14:1-22	Amaziah (J)
14:23-29	Jeroboam II (I)
15:1-7	Azariah (Uzziah; J)
15:8-12	Zechariah (I)
15:13-16	Shallum (6; I)
15:17-22	Menahem (7; I)
15:23-26	Pekahiah (8; I)
15:27-31	Pekah (I)
15:32-38	Jotham (J)
16	Ahaz (J)
17:1-6	Hoshea (9; I)
17:7-23	Captivity reasons
17:24-41	Resettlement
18-25	Surviving kingdom (all Judah)
18-20	Hezekiah
18:1-8	Destroys paganism
18:9-12	Rabshakeh ridicules
19	185,000 killed
20:1-11	Sickness and sun
20:12-21	Babylonian messengers
21:1-18	Manasseh
21:19-26	Amon
22:1-23:30	Josiah
23:31-34	Jehoahaz
23:35-24:7	Jehoiakim 605 BC Deportation #1
24:8-16	Jehoiachin 597 BC Deportation #2
24:17-25:21	Zedekiah 586 BC Deportation #3
25:22-26	Governor Gedaliah
25:27-30	Jehoiachin released

Outline

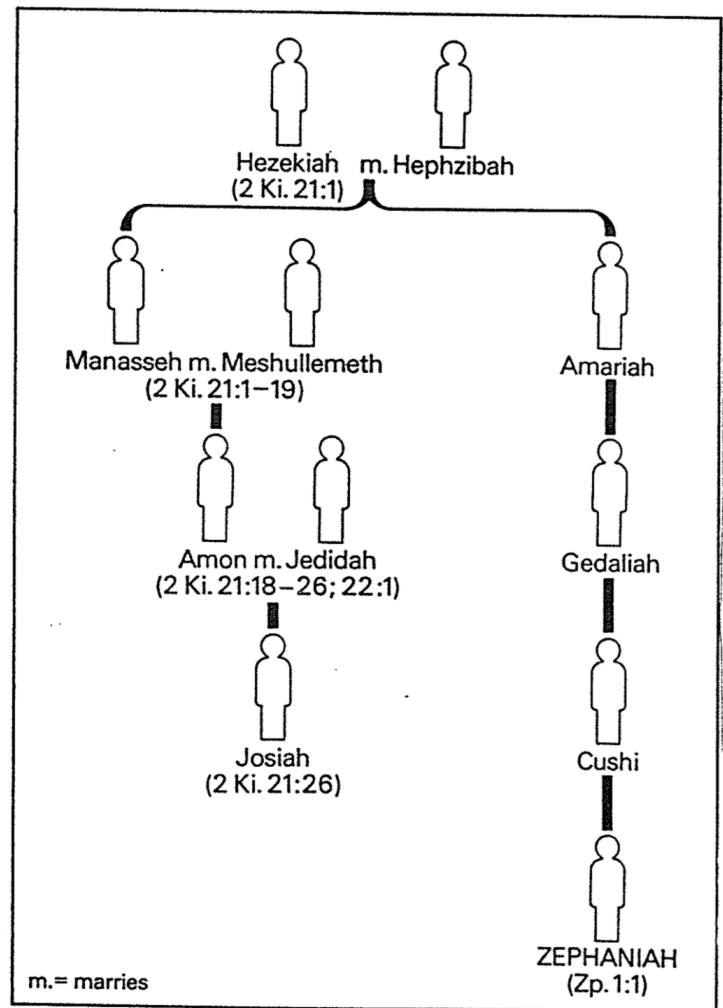
Summary Statement for the Book

The covenant disobedience and resultant downfalls of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah are contrasted with God's loyalty to the Davidic Covenant to motivate Israel to obey the Law—not repeat past mistakes.

- I. **God judged covenant disobedience of the divided later kingdoms of Israel and Judah in the Assyrian Captivity for them to obey the Law, not repeat the past (2 Kings 1–17; 852-722 BC).**
 - A. Ahaziah's evil reign in Israel (4th Dynasty) chronicles Elijah's fulfilled prophecy of his death after the fire-deaths of 102 men to show God over Baal-Zebub, god of Ekron (2 Kings 1).
 - B. Elisha revealed Joram's evil and idolatrous reign in Israel by miraculously showing God's sovereignty over Baal to convince Israel to trust the LORD alone (2:1–8:15).
 1. Elisha miraculously healed water in Jericho after succeeding Elijah as prophet after his master ascended into heaven, as evidence that the same LORD was with both (2:1-22).
 2. Elisha miraculously killed 42 mocking teenagers as a further sign of his prophetic authority (2:23-25).
 3. Elisha miraculously provided water for the wicked Joram of Israel and good Jehoshaphat of Judah to defeat Moab as a sign of God's sovereignty over Baal, the god of rain (2 Kings 3).

4. Elisha miraculously provided oil for a prophet's widow to pay her debts to show God's care for those who trust him despite the apostasy around them (4:1-7).
 5. Elisha miraculously enabled a Shunammite woman to bear a son to embarrass the powerless Baal, the so-called god of fertility (4:8-17).
 6. Elisha miraculously restored the Shunammite's boy to life years later to show God's sovereignty over Baal, to whom child sacrifice was offered in Israel (4:18-37).
 7. Elisha miraculously cured a deadly stew to show God over Baal, the god of vegetation, and warn of the fatal effects of Baalism despite its apparent harmlessness (4:38-41).
 8. Elisha miraculously multiplied 20 bread loaves to feed 100 men during a famine to show God's sovereignty over the powerless Baal, god of fertility and "lord of the earth" (4:42-44).
 9. Elisha miraculously transferred faithful, thankful, foreign Naaman's leprosy to the unfaithful, greedy, Israelite Gehazi to show God cares for foreigners and Baal can't heal (2 Kings 5).
 10. Elisha miraculously floated an iron ax head to reassure students building a new dorm that they serve the LORD, who provides all their needs, while Baal meets no needs (6:1-7).
 11. Elisha miraculously helped his servant see God's protective chariots and led the blinded raiding Syrians to Joram to show God protects through a prophet, not warriors (6:8-23).
 12. Elisha miraculously prophesied Samaria's rescue from a Syrian famine siege, and God gave the enemy's food to show that God provides food and protection, not Baal (6:24-7:20).
 13. Elisha miraculously told a Shunammite how long to sojourn from her land during a famine so that she regained her house, land, and income to show God delivers the righteous (8:1-6).
 14. Elisha miraculously prophesied of God's discipline of Israel through the cruelty of Hazael as king of Aram, and then Hazael impatiently seized the crown (8:7-15; cf. 1 Kings 19:15).
- C. Jehoram's evil reign in Judah due to marrying a daughter of Ahab saw victory over Edom and the sparing of Jehoram's life because of God's commitment to the Davidic Covenant (8:16-24).
- D. Ahaziah's evil reign in Judah as a grandson of Ahab ended with God anointing Jehu of Israel to slay Ahaziah and Joram to end the fourth dynasty as God's sentence for wickedness (8:25-9:29).
- E. Jehu's evil reign in Israel (5th Dynasty) continued golden calf worship but deceitfully purged Israel of Jezebel, Ahab's whole family, and all Baal worship to show God over Baal (9:30-10:36).
- F. Athaliah's evil reign in Judah destroyed the entire royal family except her one-year-old grandson Joash, but he still became king and Athaliah died to show God guarding David's line (2 Kings 11).
- G. Joash's good reign in Judah until his servants murdered him retained the high places, but he did repair the temple and began a righteous rule by four Judean kings lasting 105 years (2 Kings 12).
- H. Jehoahaz's evil reign in Israel was judged by the complete dominance of Hazael and his son Ben-Hadad II of Aram to show God's judgment of idolatry (13:1-9).
- I. Jehoash's evil reign in Israel had only three victories over Aram (as Elisha predicted before his death), rather than a complete victory to warn of the dangers of disbelieving God (13:10-25).
- J. Amaziah's good reign in Judah retained the high places, executed his father's murderers, and defeated Edom, but was defeated after picking a fight with Jehoash of Israel (14:1-22).
- K. Jeroboam II's evil reign in Israel restored Israel's borders in fulfillment of Jonah's prophecy and saw Israel spared from intense suffering due to God's promise not to blot out Israel (14:23-29).
- L. Azariah's (Uzziah) good reign in Judah lasted 52 years but did not remove the high places, so he lived in a separate house due to his leprosy (15:1-7; cf. 2 Chron. 26).

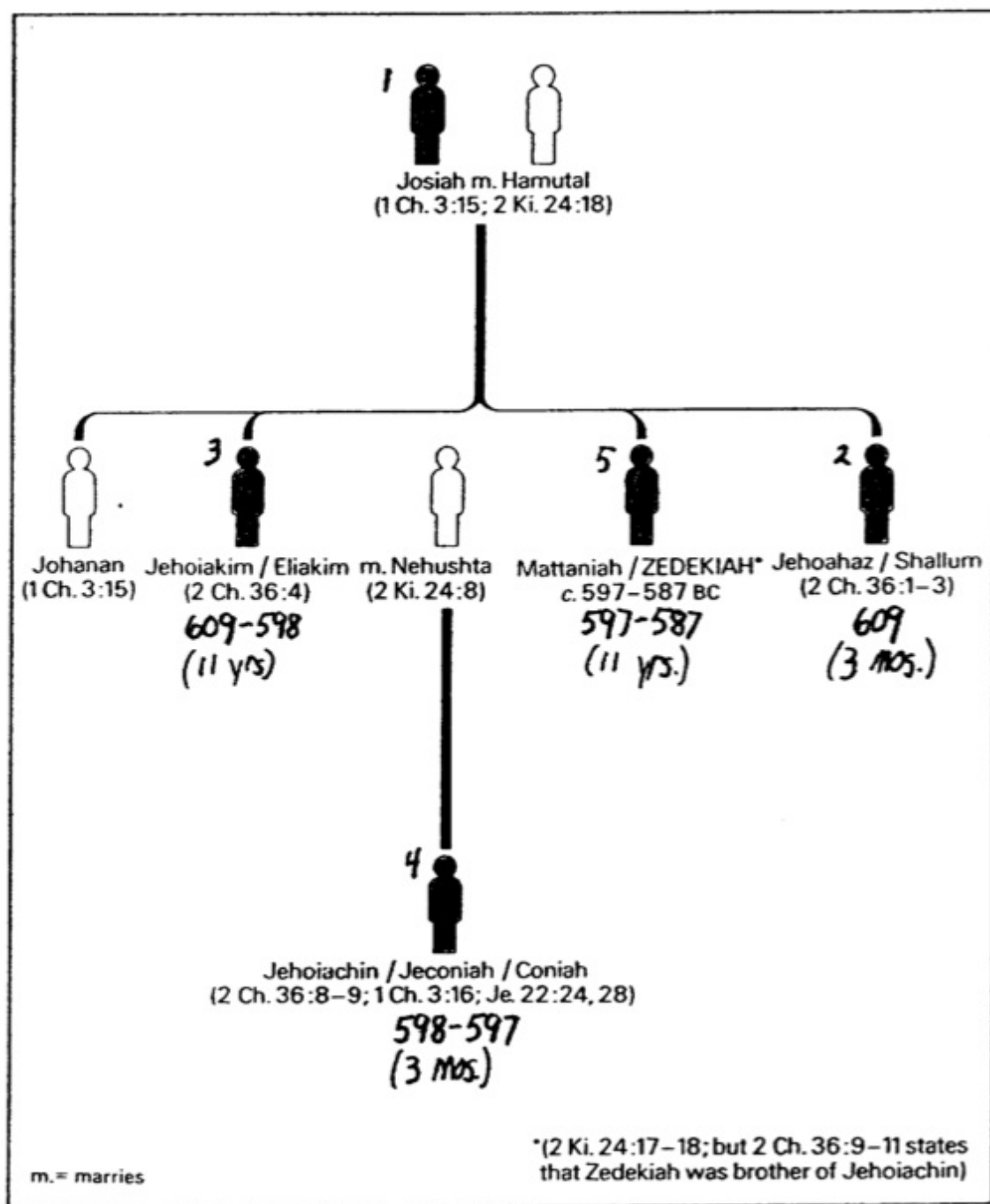
- M. Zechariah's evil and idolatrous reign in Israel ended when Shallum publicly assassinated and succeeded him to fulfill God's word for Jehu's house to last to the fourth generation (15:8-12).
 - N. Shallum's evil reign in Israel (6th Dynasty) lasted only one month until his assassination by Menahem, son of Gadi, as God's punishment for his wickedness (15:13-16).
 - O. Menahem's evil reign in Israel (7th Dynasty) paid tribute to Pul (Tiglath-Pileser) of Assyria as God's judgment for his idolatry (15:17-22).
 - P. Pekahiah's evil reign in Israel ended his dynasty by assassination from Pekah, son of Remaliah, as God's judgment upon his sin of idolatry (15:23-26).
 - Q. Pekah's evil reign in Israel (8th Dynasty) ended with Tiglath-Pileser's second invasion that took cities, deported Israelites, and saw Pekah's murder by Hoshea for his idolatry (15:27-31).
 - R. Jotham's good reign in Judah rebuilt the temple's Upper Gate but allowed high places and saw Pekah of Israel and Rezin of Aram start to attack in anticipation of Ahaz's evil reign (15:32-38).
 - S. Ahaz's evil reign in Judah broke 105 years of good reigns by sacrificing his son, building and worshipping at high places, and trusting Tiglath-Pileser instead of God for protection (2 Kings 16).
 - T. Hoshea's evil reign in Israel (9th Dynasty) sought So of Egypt to shun tribute to Shalmaneser of Assyria, leading to a third and final Assyrian invasion that deported Israel (17:1-6; 722 BC).
 - U. Israel went into Assyrian exile as God's judgment for despising God for idols, sacred stones, high places, Asherah poles, astrology, divination, sorcery, and other pagan practices (17:7-23).
 - V. Other conquered pagan peoples resettled Samaria and, despite the teaching of a priest of Yahweh, mixed pagan practices of their national deities with Yahweh worship (17:24-41).
- II. God judged covenant disobedience of the surviving kingdom of Judah in the Babylonian Captivity for them to obey the Law, not repeat past mistakes (2 Kings 18–25; 722-560 BC).**
- A. **Hezekiah's** good reign surpassed any king in devotion to God, but his foolish trust in Babylonian messengers eventually led Judah into exile, teaching Judah to trust God alone (2 Kings 18–20). (Note: Isaiah 36–39 records this account nearly verbatim.)
 - 1. Hezekiah's good reign excelled that of any king of Judah before or after him in that he destroyed all forms of pagan worship and served the LORD wholeheartedly (18:1-8).
 - 2. In Hezekiah's 14th year, Sennacherib's Assyrian army commander Rabshakeh ridiculed Judah's God and threatened to conquer Jerusalem (18:9-12; cf. Isa. 36).
 - 3. Hezekiah trusted God to kill Rabshakeh and 185,000 Assyrian soldiers as evidence of God's sovereignty over the Assyrian and local gods (2 Kings 19; cf. Isa. 37).
 - 4. Hezekiah's sickness and miraculous 15-year lease on life displayed God's sovereignty even over death, the sun's movements, and Assyria (20:1-11; cf. Isa. 38).
 - 5. Hezekiah's foolish trust in the Babylonian messengers eventually led to Judah being taken into exile after Hezekiah's death to encourage trust in God alone (20:12-21; cf. Isa. 39).
 - B. Manasseh's evil 55-year reign (longer than any king) reinstitutes all of the pagan practices ended by his father Hezekiah to vindicate God's soon Babylonian exile for the nation (21:1-18).
 - C. Amon's evil reign repeated Manasseh's mistakes until his officials assassinated him, and the people assassinated the officials before they placed Amon's son Josiah on the throne (21:19-26).



The genealogy of Zephaniah, based on the assumption that 'Hezekiah' (Zp. 1:1) was King Hezekiah of Judah.

C. F. Pfeiffer, "Zephaniah," *New Bible Dictionary*, 2nd ed., 1279

- D. **Josiah's** good reign recovered the Book of the Law (Deut?) during temple repairs that spurred him to renew the Law and destroy his grandfather Manasseh's pagan altars (22:1-23:30).
- E. Jehoahaz's evil reign ended subject to Pharaoh Neco after only three months, followed by exile and death in Egypt, while his brother Jehoikim replaced him (23:31-34).
- F. Jehoikim's evil reign became subject to Pharaoh Neco of Egypt, Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, and raiders from Aram, Moab, and Ammon to teach the cost of rejecting God (23:35-24:7).
- G. Jehoiachin's evil reign yielded to Nebuchadnezzar's second invasion (597 BC), with Jerusalem sieged and Jehoiachin [and Ezekiel], temple treasures, and 10,000 rich people taken (24:8-16).
- H. Zedekiah's evil reign led to Nebuchadnezzar's third and last siege (586 BC) that ruined the temple, palace, key buildings, and most of the citizens as he judged their idolatry (24:17-25:21).
- I. Ishmael of Nethaniah (of royal blood) killed the Babylonian appointee Gedaliah, but then fled to Egypt and never ruled to show the folly of trying to seize rule only for Davidic kings (25:22-26).
- J. Jehoiachin's release from his Babylonian prison in 560 BC to eat at the king's table until his death foreshadows God's mercy by protecting David's dynasty to restore Israel to their land (25:27-30).



An interpretation of Zedekiah's family tree.

Source: D. W. Baker, "Zedekiah,"
New Bible Dictionary, 2nd ed., p. 1277

Assyrian Foreign Policy

John H. Walton, *Chronological and Background Charts of the OT*, 2d ed., 66, adapted

<p>STAGE 1</p>	<p>Vassal relationship Vassal committed to: —Annual payment of tribute —Furnishing of auxiliary troops</p>
<p>STAGE 2</p>	<p>If vassal was involved in Anti-Assyrian conspiracy —Appointment of new ruler (from native royal house if representative loyal to Assyria could be found) —Territorial reductions (areas taken away were either given to loyal neighboring vassals or made into Assyrian provinces) —Deportations of parts of the upper class —Increased tribute and military presence</p>
<p>STAGE 3</p>	<p>If further Anti-Assyrian activity were even suspected —Vassal ruler removed —Political independence revoked —Territory made into Assyrian province with Assyrian governor and officials —Deportation of upper class; replaced with foreign upper class</p>

Assyrian Campaigns Against Israel and Judah

The Bible Visual Resource Book, 79

2 Kings

Assyrian Campaigns against Israel and Judah

The Assyrian invasions of the eighth century B.C. were the most traumatic political events in the entire history of Israel.

The brutal Assyrian style of warfare relied on massive armies, superbly equipped with the world's first great siege machines manipulated by an efficient corps of engineers.

Psychological terror, however, was Assyria's most effective weapon. It was ruthlessly applied, with

corpses impaled on stakes, severed heads stacked in heaps, and captives skinned alive.

The shock of bloody military sieges on both Israel and Judah was profound. The prophets did not fail to scream out against their horror, while at the same time pleading with the people to see God's hand in history, to recognize spiritual causes in the present punishment.

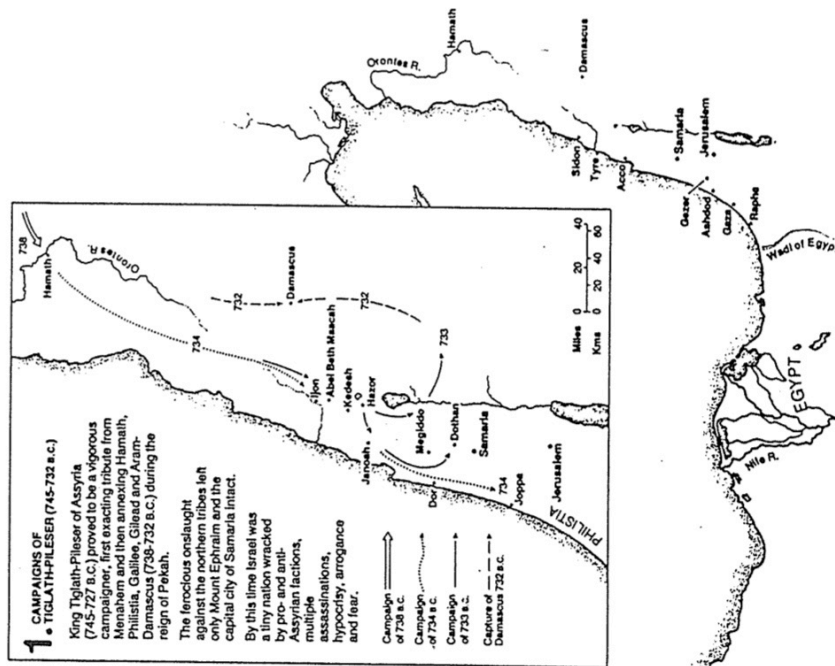
1 CAMPAIGNS OF TIGLATH-PILESER (745-727 B.C.)

King Tiglath-Pileser of Assyria (745-727 B.C.) proved to be a vigorous campaigner, first exacting tribute from Menahem and then annexing Hamath, Philistia, Galilee, Gilead and Aram-Damascus (738-732 B.C.) during the reign of Pekah.

The ferocious onslaught against the northern tribes left only Mount Ephraim and the capital city of Samaria intact.

By this time Israel was a tiny nation wracked by pro- and anti-Assyrian factions, multiple assassinations, hypocrisy, arrogance and fear.

Legend
Campaign of 738 B.C.
Campaign of 734 B.C.
Campaign of 733 B.C.
Capture of Damascus 732 B.C.

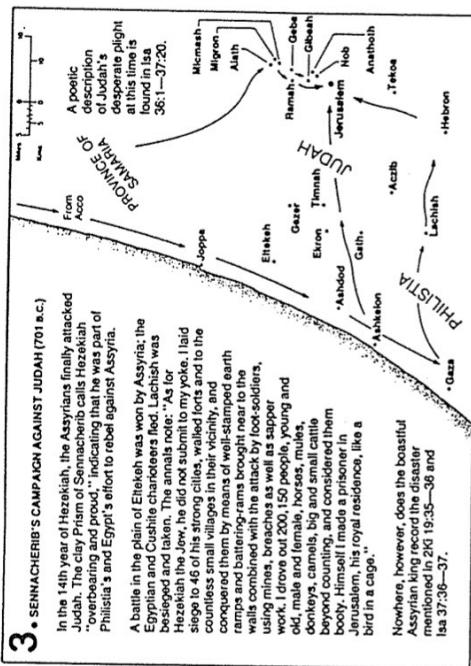


3 SENNACHERIB'S CAMPAIGN AGAINST JUDAH (701 B.C.)

In the 14th year of Hezekiah, the Assyrians finally attacked Judah. The city Priam of Sennacherib calls Hezekiah "overbearing and proud," indicating that he was part of Philistia's and Egypt's effort to rebel against Assyria.

A battle in the plain of Eltekeh was won by Assyria; the Egyptian and Cushite chariots were destroyed. Hezekiah was besieged and taken. The annals say: "As Hezekiah the Jew, he did not submit to my yoke, I laid siege to 46 of his strong cities, walled forts and to the countless small villages in their vicinity, and conquered them by means of well-stamped earth ramps and battering-rams brought near to the walls combined with the attack by foot-soldiers, using mines, breaching as well as sapper work. I drove out 200,150 people, young and old, male and female, horses, mules, donkeys, camels, big and small cattle beyond counting. I made a prisoner of their booty. I made a prisoner of the king of Jerusalem, his royal residence, like a bird in a cage."

Nowhere, however, does the boastful Assyrian king record the disaster mentioned in 2Ki 19:35-36 and Isa 37:36-37.

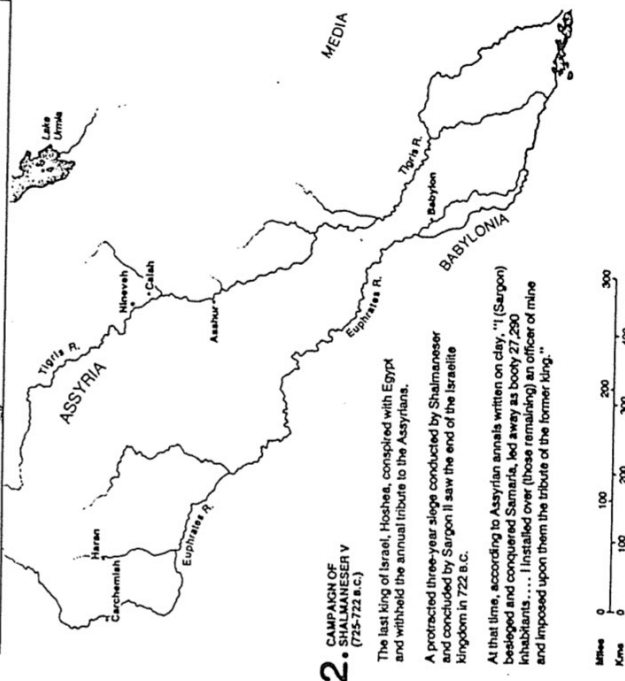


2 CAMPAIGN OF SHALMANESER V (725-722 B.C.)

The last king of Israel, Hoshea, conspired with Egypt and withheld the annual tribute to the Assyrians.

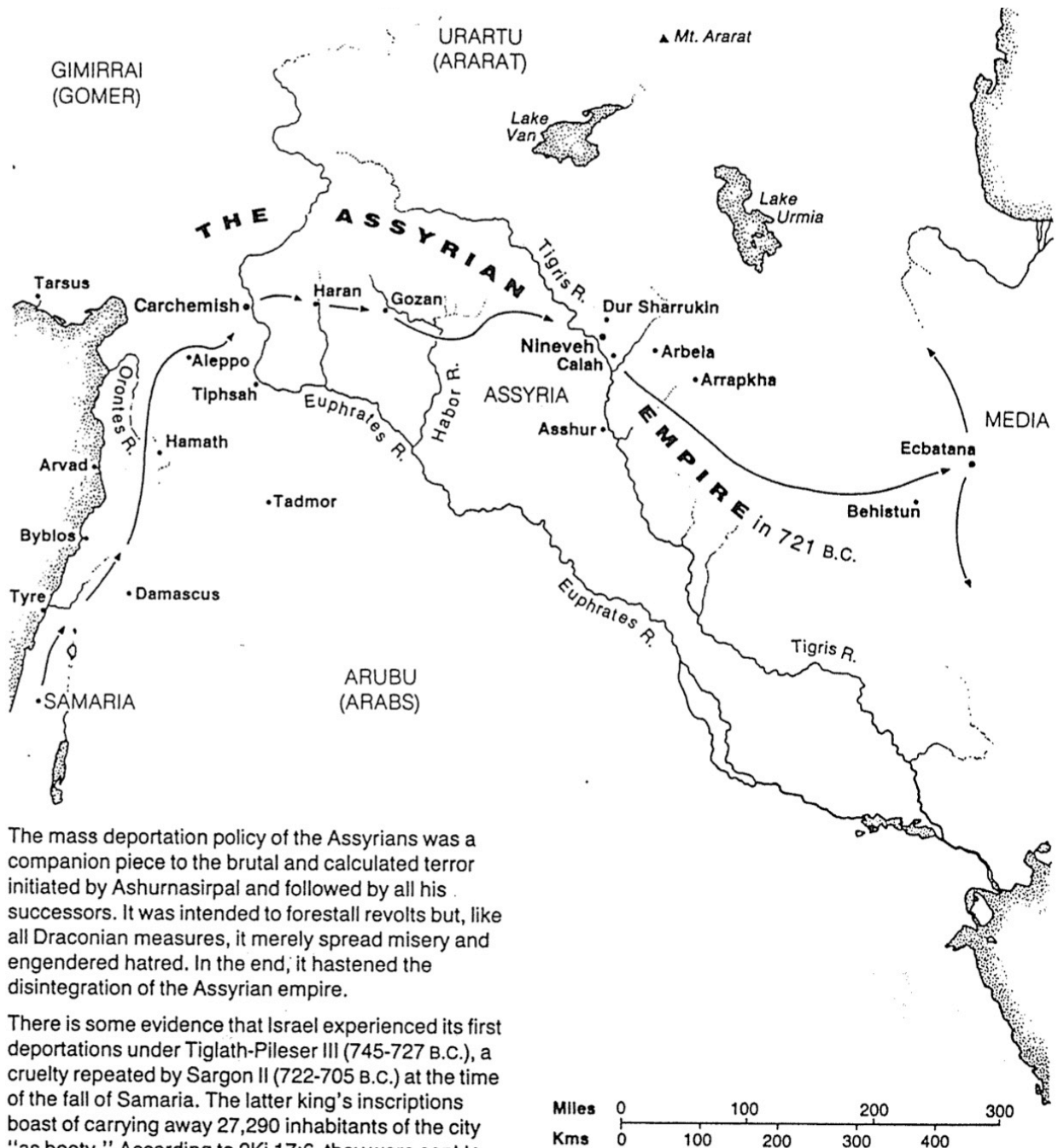
A protracted three-year siege conducted by Shalmaneser and concluded by Sargon II saw the end of the Israelite kingdom in 722 B.C.

At that time, according to Assyrian annals written on clay, "I [Sargon] besieged and conquered Samaria, led away as booty 27,290 inhabitants.... I installed over [those remaining] an officer of mine and imposed upon them the tribute of the former king."



Exile of the Northern Kingdom

The Bible Visual Resource Book, 81



The mass deportation policy of the Assyrians was a companion piece to the brutal and calculated terror initiated by Ashurnasirpal and followed by all his successors. It was intended to forestall revolts but, like all Draconian measures, it merely spread misery and engendered hatred. In the end, it hastened the disintegration of the Assyrian empire.

There is some evidence that Israel experienced its first deportations under Tiglath-Pileser III (745-727 B.C.), a cruelty repeated by Sargon II (722-705 B.C.) at the time of the fall of Samaria. The latter king's inscriptions boast of carrying away 27,290 inhabitants of the city "as booty." According to 2Ki 17:6, they were sent to Assyria, to Halah (Calah?), to Gozan on the Habor River, and apparently to the eastern frontiers of the empire (to the towns of the Medes, most probably somewhere in the vicinity of Ecbatana, the modern Hamadan).

The sequel is provided by the inscriptions of Sargon: "The Arabs who live far away in the desert, who know neither overseers nor officials, and who had not yet brought their tribute to any king, I deported . . . and settled them in Samaria."

Much mythology has developed around the theme of the so-called ten lost tribes of Israel. A close examination of Assyrian records reveals that the deportations approximated only a limited percentage of the population, usually consisting of noble families. Agricultural workers, no doubt the majority, were deliberately left to care for the crops (cf. the Babylonian practice, 2Ki 24:14; 25:12).

Nebuchadnezzar's Campaign Against Judah

The Bible Visual Resource Book, 83

2 Kings

Nebuchadnezzar's Campaign against Judah

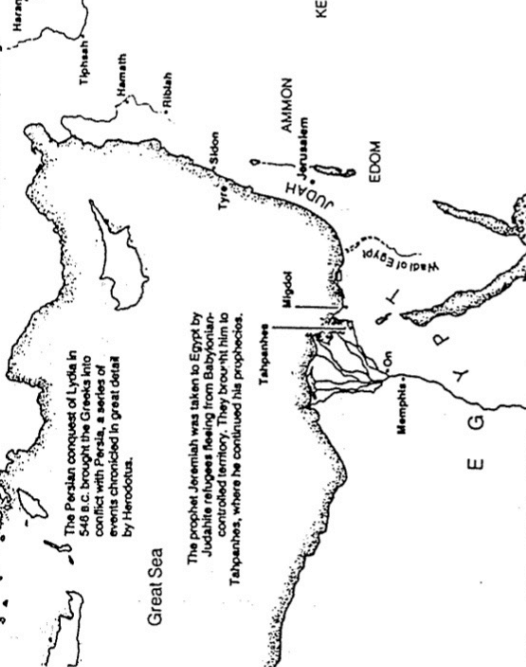
605-586 B.C.

Events in Judah moved swiftly following the death of Josiah. Pharaoh Neco pressed his advantage by deposing the new ruler and appointing a second son of Josiah, Jehoiakim, as king.

The Persian conquest of Lydia in 600 B.C. brought the Greeks into contact with Persia, a series of events chronicled in great detail by Herodotus.

Great Sea

The prophet Jeremiah was taken to Egypt by Judahite refugees fleeing from Babylonian controlled territory. They brought him to Tahpanhes, where he continued his prophecies.



Soon a stronger power appeared in the north in the person of Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Chaldeans (Neo-Babylonians), who determined to follow the fierce policies of his Assyrian predecessors.

The tribute of Jehoiakim was paid at a distance when he heard of Nebuchadnezzar's approach. After three years as a Babylonian vassal, he rebelled, bringing a rapid response in the form of small-scale raids from Babylonians, Arameans, Moabites and Ammonites.

The Medes yielded to the Persian conqueror Cyrus by 549 B.C.; a decade later the Neo-Babylonian empire fell to the Persians as well. Cyrus initiated a major policy shift, creating an enlightened and humane government that allowed Aramaic-speaking people, including Jews, to hold official posts.

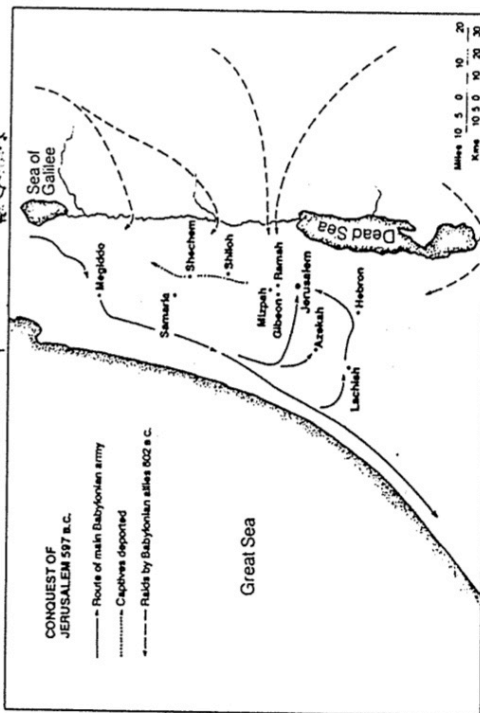
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CONQUEST OF JERUSALEM 597 B.C.

— Route of main Babylonian army

..... Captives deported

--- Raids by Babylonian allies 602 B.C.

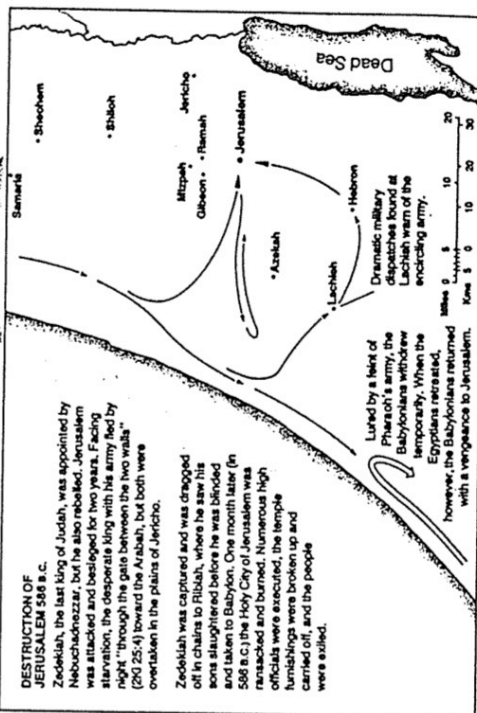


DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM 586 B.C.

Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, was appointed by Nebuchadnezzar, but he also rebelled. Jerusalem was attacked and besieged for two years. Facing starvation, the desperate king with his army fled by night "through the gate between the two walls" (2K 25:4) toward the Arabah, but both were overtaken in the plains of Jericho.

Zedekiah was captured and was dragged off in chains to Riblah, where he saw his sons slaughtered before he was blinded and taken to Babylon. One month later (in 586 B.C.) the Holy City of Jerusalem was razed and burned. Numerous high officials were executed, the temple furnishings were broken up and carried off, and the people were exiled.

Lured by a letter of Pharaoh's army, the Babylonians withdrew temporarily. When the Egyptians retreated, however, the Babylonians returned with a vengeance to Jerusalem.

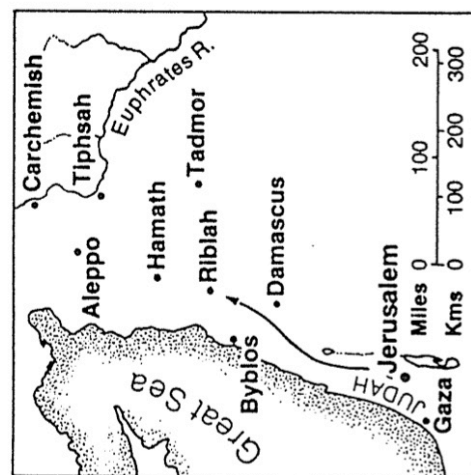


Exile of the Southern Kingdom

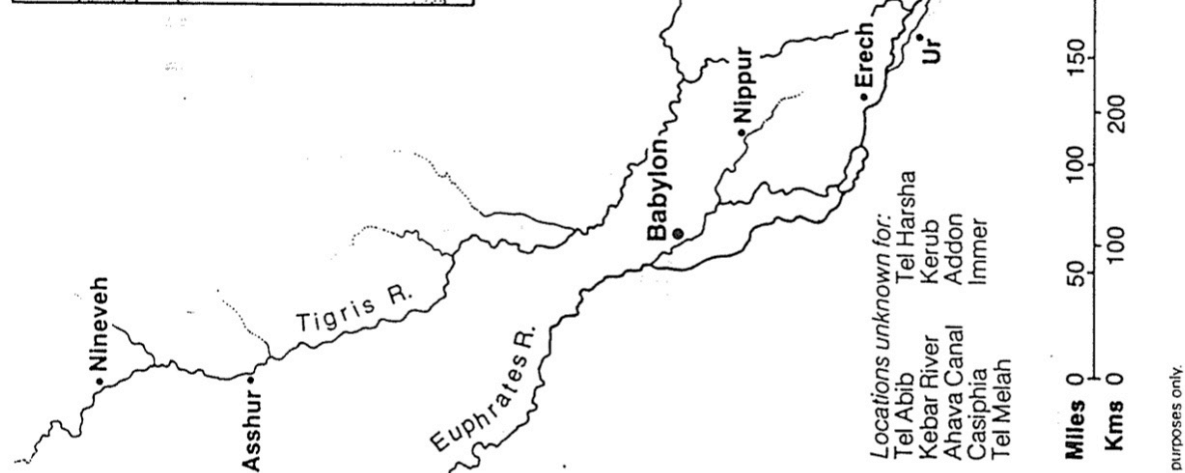
The Bible Visual Resource Book, 84

2 Kings

Exile of the Southern Kingdom



Clay tablets called the Murashu archives have been found at Nippur from the fifth century B.C. They document the commercial transactions with Jewish families who remained in Mesopotamia following Ezra's return to Jerusalem.



Locations unknown for:
Tel Abib
Kerub
Addon
Immer
Ahava Canal
Casiphia
Tel Melah

Knowledge about the destiny of the captives from Israel and Judah is sparse in the period following the capture of Samaria and the later destruction of Jerusalem.

Assyrians and Babylonians treated their subject peoples essentially the same: overwhelming military force used in a manner inspiring psychological terror, along with mass deportations and heavy tribute.

Three deportations are mentioned in Jer 52:28-30, the largest one consisting of 3,023 Jews who were taken to Babylon along with King Jehoiachin in 597 B.C.

After the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuzaradan, the commander of the Babylonian army, hundreds of exiles were taken to Riblah "in the land of Hamath," where, in addition to Zedekiah's sons, at least 61 were executed.

Jehoiachin and his family were kept in Babylon, where clay ration receipts bearing his name have been found in a dramatic archaeological confirmation of Biblical history.

Eze 1:1-3 and 3:15 indicate that other captives were placed at Tel Abib and at the Kebar River, both probably in the locale of Nippur, as were other villages mentioned in Eze 2:59; 8:15, 17; Ne 7:61.