Introduction to Studies from Ezekiel

# Goal

The goal of this course is to provide an overview of Ezekiel to set the stage for a study of the book of Revelation. This class will be followed by a study of the book of Daniel and then the study of Revelation.

An understanding of the books of Ezekiel and Daniel is necessary to understand Revelation. The reason that Ezekiel and Daniel are considered prerequisites to Revelation is because all three books have common themes and characteristics:

* An emphasis on judgment.
* Visions.
* Figurative language.

If we understand these elements in Ezekiel and Daniel, we are more likely to understand them in the book of Revelation.

Another reason we will study Ezekiel and Daniel is to see how these elements of prophetic writing fit into an actual historical setting. This will also aid our understanding of Revelation when we begin that study.

# Overview of the Class

The class will consist of a thorough introduction of Ezekiel, followed by selected topics from the book. The introduction will establish the context of Ezekiel, which is important to understanding the book. Elements of the context of Ezekiel will have much in common with the context in Revelation.

# The Context for Ezekiel

The context of the book Ezekiel is essential for understanding the book. How Israel arrived at the point of judgment is crucial to understanding that judgment. Ezekiel is prophesying to Judeans who have already been taken into Babylonian captivity. They don’t necessarily believe or accept his message. One specific message they refuse to accept is that the city of Jerusalem is about to be destroyed.

They are wrong.

We are going to establish the context for our study by looking at three views of Israel’s history:

1. **What happened.** The history of Israel from the Exodus to the fall of Jerusalem spans roughly eight centuries. How did the nation live during that time?
2. **Why it happened.** The history of Israel from the Exodus to the destruction of Jerusalem was NOT what God wanted for His people. Where did it go wrong?
3. **What God said about it through the prophets.** Prophets were present in every phase of Israel’s history.

# What happened

The creation of Israel is rooted in the promise made to Abraham in **Genesis 12.1-3**. In the days of Jacob and Joseph, Abraham’s descendants went to Egypt, lived there for several decades, and became the large multitude that God had promised to Abraham. The Exodus brought that multitude to the land that they had been promised so that they could take possession of it. Israel will spend the next 800 years living there.

## The Exodus

The first challenge was to take Israel out of Egypt, move them through a desert wilderness, and bring them to the land that God had promised.

The exodus posed several challenges:

* **They were crossing a desert wilderness.** This posed logistical challenges: people need food, water, shelter, clothing, defense, etc. All of this must be acquired/provided for them to survive.
* **Grumbling and complaining was a constant problem.** When things got tough, they grumbled instead of asking God to provide.
* **They were an easy target for raiders.** It would be hard to protect such a large group of people strung out over several miles of open desert.

There was a plan in place to provide everything they needed, both spiritually and physically. First, they were taken to Mount Sinai to receive the Law. From there, they would head north toward Canaan. When they arrived, they would be directed around some of the nations already in the land and then proceed to the portion of the land that had been given to them.

Due to Israel’s lack of faith, it didn’t go that way. When Israel arrived at Mount Sinai, they made a golden calf to worship (Exodus 32.1-8). Israel’s tendency to grumble and complain whenever things got difficult sabotaged their entry into the land they were promised.

Their lack of faith reached its pinnacle when they sent the twelve spies into the land to survey it and gather information about the people who lived there (Numbers 13.1-14.4). The report the spies brought back indicated that Canaan was in fact the “land flowing with milk and honey” that God had promised, but that Israel was too weak to take it. When Israel believed that report, God added forty years to their time in the wilderness so that the current generation of adults would die, and their children would inherit the land.

During that forty years, Moses and Aaron also died. When that time was completed, Joshua was the one who lead Israel across the Jordan and into the land of promise.

## The Conquest

The goal of the conquest was for Israel to occupy and take control of the land promised to Abraham. The mission they were given was to drive the current occupants out of the land or exterminate them. Then, the land would belong to Israel, and they could grow into the nation that God wanted.

Conquest posed several challenges:

* **Canaanite cities were large and well-defended.** The traditional way to conquer a city was to besiege it. Usually, a siege took several months or even years.
* **Israel has its entire population moving with the army.** That population needs to be fed, clothed, and defended.
* **Israel has no experience operating a city-based or agricultural economy.** This is very different from living as nomads in the wilderness.

Israel has one significant advantage: the people living in Canaan do not appear to be united. When Israel surrounds Jericho, no one seems willing to come to Jericho’s aid. The Canaanites don’t try to band together until later in the conquest.

Overall, the conquest goes well, but there are problems:

* The sin at Jericho (Joshua 7.1ff)
* The deception of the Gibeonites (Joshua 9.3-14).
* Israel does not fulfill its mission (Judges 1.28-33).

Their failure to fulfill their mission becomes a major stumbling block to their success in sustaining themselves in their new homeland.

## Consolidation (Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel)

At the end of the conquest, Israel effectively controlled the land they had been promised. There were still areas of Canaan that needed to be consolidated, but they were in control. Now, they need to learn how to live in the land.

At this point in Israel’s history, they are essentially a loose confederation of twelve tribes united by the Law of Moses and the priesthood. However, their unwillingness to fulfill their mission allowed other influences to work among the people and sin began to corrupt the nation. Thus, we enter the cycle of the book of Judges:

1. The people fall away from God.
2. God allows the nations around them to subdue and punish Israel.
3. Israel repents and cries for help.
4. God sends a “judge” or “deliverer” to drive out the oppressors.
5. Lather, rinse, repeat.

Overall, this period lasts roughly 400 years. Around 1200 BC, something new happens that poses an even bigger threat to Israel: The Philistines arrive and occupy the coastal lands west of Israel.

The Philistines were a seafaring nation that was facing its own problems. Archaeological evidence suggests they were from Crete, which was a thriving economic and technological power in the ancient world. They were a problem for Israel because they were more technologically advanced and better organized than Israel. The Philistines knew how to work iron and steel, skills that Israel had not yet learned. From a human point of view, the Philistines possessed both the will and the ability to impose their will on Israel.

## The United Kingdom

As the Philistines (and perhaps other nations) began to dominate Israel, Israel approached the prophet Samuel with a solution: give us a king like the other nations (1 Samuel 8.4-22). Samuel was not pleased with their request, but God told him to give them what they wanted.

Thus, Saul of the tribe of Benjamin became the first king of Israel. Early in his reign, Saul had great success. However, he soon began to follow his own path (1 Samuel 15.1-9). God decided to replace Saul with a different king, David, and Saul became so obsessed with this, that he spent a lot of time and energy trying to hunt down and kill David.

Eventually, Saul was killed in battle with the Philistines and David became king over Judah. A civil war broke out between the house of Saul and David, but David won and was proclaimed king of all Israel. David’s reign paved the way for the success of Solomon’s reign, but David also had his own sin: his adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband Uriah the Hittite.

When David died, his son Solomon succeeded him on the throne. Solomon’s reign represented the “golden age of Israel”. During Solomon’s reign, Israel achieved the height of its wealth, political influence, and the largest territory it ever ruled. Israel’s influence was so strong that Solomon married hundreds of wives and concubines (this is how treaties and trade agreements were made) and this became a snare to him (Deuteronomy 17.14-20). Solomon built places for these wives and concubines to worship their gods and then participated in that worship.

This cost the house of David ten tribes.

## The Divided Kingdom

When Solomon died, his son Rehoboam became king. While Solomon’s rule had generated a large amount of wealth, most of the work was done by common citizens of Israel and yet they hadn’t benefited from their labor. So, the people came to Rehoboam and asked him to reduce their workload (1 Kings 12.1-5). Rehoboam decided that he would be even harder on the people than his father Solomon had been, so the ten northern tribes rebelled and formed their own nation, Israel. The tribes of Benjamin and Judah remained under the house of David and became the nation of Judah.

The new king of Israel, Jeroboam, decided he had a problem. The temple built according to the Law of Moses was in Jerusalem in Judah. If his people continued to go there to worship, Jeroboam feared that they would renew their loyalty to the house of David and Jeroboam would be out of a job (and probably dead). So, he invented an entirely new religion with elements of the Law of Moses but based on pagan or idolatrous principles (1 Kings 12.25-33). This became a snare to the nation of Israel.

## Judah becomes an Assyrian vassal

During the centuries, the ancient world had undergone a slow transformation from smaller, regional powers to the rise of “superpower empires”. In this instance, we see the rise of the Assyrian Empire.

The Assyrian Empire has its roots in the city of Asshur, established around 1400 BC. The city was named after the god of war for these people and the people became known as the Assyrians. Historically, they were known as a brutal, war-like people who conquered most or all of Mesopotamia and then turned their eyes west toward Egypt. This brought them into Canaan.

As the Assyrians began to expand west, Egypt and the various Canaanite kingdoms, including Syria and Israel, began to form alliances to resist Assyrian expansion. When Ahaz king of Judah refused to join this alliance (2 Kings 16.1-9), the other nations decided to remove him from the throne of Judah and replace him with someone more agreeable to joining their alliance. Isaiah was sent to reassure Ahaz that his reign would be protected by God, but Ahaz refused to listen (Isaiah 7.1-16). Instead, he offered Judah as a vassal nation to Assyria and gave up Judah’s independence plus a considerable amount of Judah’s wealth.

This was the invitation the Assyrians wanted. Now they had a reason to move into Canaan to “protect their vassal” and they did so. They began a series of military campaigns that resulted in the destruction of Samaria in 722 BC and the deportation of most of the population of Israel. The Assyrians also captured Damascus.

From this point on, Judah would never again become a fully free nation.

## Vassal of Babylon

In 625 BC, a major revolt erupted throughout the eastern portion of the Assyrian Empire. This revolt was led by a coalition of the Medes and Persians and the Babylonians. In 615 BC, this coalition laid siege to the Assyrian capital city of Nineveh, which fell in 612 BC. The survivors of the Assyrian Empire retreated west to the city of Carchemish (near the modern Turkish city of Karkamis) to try to reestablish their empire.

The Babylonians pursued the Assyrians and engaged them in battle in 606 BC. At Carchemish, the Assyrians were reinforced by the Egyptian army, but the Babylonians prevailed. The Egyptians were forced to retreat, and the last vestiges of the Assyrian Empire were destroyed.

Once Carchemish was secured, the Babylonians immediately moved south to capture the city of Jerusalem. Judah surrendered without a fight and the first group of captives was deported to Babylon. From this point until the destruction of Jerusalem, Judah was a vassal of the Babylonian Empire.

## The Captivities

Under the Babylonians, Judah experience three deportations of Judeans to Babylonian territory in the country we now call Iraq. These captivities occurred around 606 BC, 596 BC, and 586 BC. There were no further captivities after that because Jerusalem and Judah were destroyed in 586 BC. After the city was destroyed, there was no one left worth deporting.

### First Captivity

The Babylonians saw Jerusalem as a key stronghold on their western border with Egypt. So, when they defeated the Assyrians and Egyptians at Carchemish, they moved quickly to establish control over the city.

When the Babylonians established control over Jerusalem in 606 BC, they did so without a fight. With Egypt reeling from its defeat at Carchemish, there was no other nation that could have (or would have) supported Judah if they chose to resist the Babylonians.

To ensure continued Judean loyalty, the Babylonians took a small group of captives back to Babylon to be raised and educated in the Babylonian culture, and to serve in the Babylonian administration. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were taken in this group of captives. If Judah behaved itself and paid its tribute, they would have no further problem with the Babylonians.

### The Second Captivity

The second captivity occurred as a response to Judah’s attempt to rebel against their Babylonian overlords. This rebellion was instigated by the Egyptians, who promised to support Judah in its efforts to gain its independence (and immediately become an Egyptian vassal).

The Babylonian army came to Judah to put down this rebellion. Historical accounts disagree about whether the Egyptians attempted to come to Jerusalem’s aid. Some ancient accounts say that the Egyptian did try to support Judah but were defeated. Other accounts suggest that they made an appearance but would not engage the Babylonians in battle. Either way, Jerusalem was forced to surrender without a fight.

This captivity was far larger than the previous one. This time, the Babylonians took skilled tradesmen and effectively gutted the Judean middle class. According to Jeremiah, those who remained in Jerusalem saw this as “God thinning out the bad figs” (Jeremiah 24.1-10) or “within two years, everything and everyone taken to Babylon will be returned” (Jeremiah 28.1-17).

Ezekiel was taken into captivity at this time.

### The Third Captivity

The third and final captivity occurred because, once again, Judah chose to revolt against the Babylonians at the instigation of Egypt[[1]](#footnote-1). When the Babylonian army appeared again in Judah, they were here to ensure there would not be another Judean rebellion.

Judah fought a lonely fight, and they did not have the resources needed to win. The wall was breached, the city fell, and everyone was deported to Babylon. The city itself was burned and left desolate[[2]](#footnote-2).

## The Teaser

Israel’s arrival in Canaan circa 1408 BC was an act of judgment. Israel’s departure in 586 BC was also an act of judgment. We will look at both in the next section of our study.

# Why it happened

Israel’s exodus from Egypt, arrival at Canaan, and subsequent conquest of the land should have been a “straight shot” and quickly accomplished. However, sin problems during the Exodus held them back:

* Constant complaining.
* The golden calf.
* The temptation to idolatry.
* A lack of gratitude.
* A lack of faith: they did not believe they could conquer Canaan.

This delayed their conquest of the land by 40 years until everyone above the age of 20 had died. After that, their children would enter the land.

## Israel’s Mission

Israel's mission in entering Canaan is the fulfillment of the promise made by God to Abraham. However, the fact that it was occurring at this time is also a result of God's grace: **Gen 15.12-16**. This gives us an indication that God was trying to save the inhabitants of Canaan, even knowing that His efforts were not going to be successful.

But now their iniquity is full; a tragic condition that we need to see as a warning and avoid.

The mission:

* **Deuteronomy 7.1-5** -- Destroy the inhabitants of Canaan and destroy their idolatrous places of worship.
* **Exodus 23.31-33** -- Drive them out and destroy their idolatrous places of worship.

The bottom line: when the conquest is complete none of the former inhabitants are to remain in the land and none of the places of idolatry are to remain in the land.

A question that will come up at some point: why kill all these people? The implication is that God is being rather harsh in His judgment. The short answer: some people have proven unfit to be allowed to live. We will see the answer to this question illustrated over time.

The problem here is not with the mission, but that we lack context to understand the need. What we know from archaeology indicates that the Amorite culture was brutal and sinful, but it was also thousands of years ago. Nazi Germany is a more recent example of a nation or culture that was judged and removed. When we look at the sin of that nation, very few people have difficulty understanding why that nation was judged and punished.

## Mission Failure

In the first chapter of the book of Judges, we see the conquest continuing after the death of Joshua. We see the tribes consulting with God on who should go out first and we see them cooperating with each other as they continue to subjugate the land.

Unfortunately, beginning in verse 21, we see a common pattern emerging:

* Verse 21: “But the sons of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who lived in Jerusalem” (NASB)
* Verse 28: And it came about when Israel became strong, that they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but they did not drive them out completely.” (NASB)
* Verse 29: “Neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites who were living in Gezer” (NASB)
* Verse 30: “Zebulun did not drive out the inhabitants of Kitron, or the inhabitants of Nahalol” (NASB)
* Verse 31: Asher did not drive out the inhabitants of Acco” (NASB) and several other places.

This lack of obedience was obvious to God: **Judges 2.1-5.**

This failure to complete the mission will ultimately lead to their captivity. It will require centuries to do this, but they will gradually embrace this new, integrated religious system and it will lead to their own judgment and destruction.

## Paganism

In ancient times, most cultures worshipped a multitude of gods and goddesses. Typically, there was a chief god or goddess who was in charge and then other deities that were assigned to operate specific aspects of nature such as the weather, agriculture, war, knowledge, love, etc.

Pagan religious systems had several things in common with the Mosaic Law:

* A worship system that involved sacrificial offerings.
* A temple or altar where these offerings were made.
* Some form of priesthood that served as the intermediary between the gods and the people.
* Harvest festivals or other ways that significant events from the gods were remembered and honored.

However, there is one aspect that was very different: the intent behind worship. Pagans understood worship as something that the gods wanted or needed, but that the faith or moral character of the worshipper was pretty much irrelevant. Since this was something that the gods wanted or needed, it could in turn be used to placate or obligate the gods to do something that we want in return. Also, since we want the gods to continue to operate the universe as we know it, it is in our best interest to give them what they need so the universe doesn't break down or fall apart.

At its core, pagans see the relationship between themselves and their gods as primarily an economic relationship or an exchange of goods and services. If the proper offerings were made, the gods would take care of their business and worshippers were pretty much free to do whatever they wanted the rest of the time. If the gods got upset, they could be placated with additional sacrifices.

A second aspect of worship was this: because the gods wanted and needed worship, they were obligated to protect their temples, sanctuaries, and altars so that they could continue to be worshipped.

Ancient pagans typically saw conflicts and wars between nations as conflicts and wars between their gods. The victor of the conflict would be the one with the stronger god or goddess. For the defeated, they often concluded that a god who could not defend his or her temple wasn't worth worshipping anymore and could be replaced by the gods of the victor.

Typically, when pagan religions encountered each other, they didn't necessary fight or have one religion replace another. They tended to do something different: they merged.

This is a real danger to Israel. The Canaanites would be perfectly willing to accept the God of Israel as either being the same deity as Ba'al Hadad or a new addition to their pantheon. The fact that there are no other gods in the Israelite pantheon just makes the merger easier. From the Israelite point of view, the Canaanites that were left behind have become friends, neighbors, and allies, or have proven to be stronger which would tend to suggest that their gods are stronger. Either way, to get along with our new friends or because the Canaanite gods have shown some serious strength, we might want to take another look at this to see if there is something of value here.

The bottom line is this: Israel didn’t replace God. They chose to worship both God and the gods of the nations around them.

It was this desire to worship both God and the Canaanite gods that led Ahaz to another major “innovation”: he introduced pagan altars into the Temple (2 Kings 16.10-16). From a pagan point of view, this was the most natural thing they could have done. From God’s point of view, this was an abomination.

## Chastisement versus Judgment

From the Biblical perspective, chastisement and judgment are both tools to correct a sin problem. Chastisement comes from a Latin word that means “to set right” or “to make pure”. It can include a verbal reprimand or a physical punishment. Chastisement is one of many tools to guide and correct sin problems or character flaws. Other tools include teaching, good and bad examples, history, and a properly trained sense of right and wrong.

Judgment means to weigh the evidence, reach a verdict, and then assign a punishment to the guilty. In civil judgment, the punishment can significant, ranging from fines, community service, loss of freedom (prison), and even execution.

Both chastisement and judgment can be painful, but chastisement is intended to correct. Judgment is a more permanent solution.

Chastisement and judgment were both part of Israel’s journey to Canaan. Israel was chastised during the Exodus to eliminate sin problems such as idolatry, lack of gratitude, constant complaining, or a lack of faith. Israel arrived at Canaan as God’s judgment on the ancient Amorite culture. Later, during the time of the Judges Israel was chastised to correct sin problems.

## Universal Judgment

Israel and Judah were not the only nations being judged in the ancient world. They chose their own path, but they were influenced by the nations around them. Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel record God’s intent to judge these nations while judging Israel because they were the stumbling blocks.

# The Prophets

During the early history of Israel, the prophets emerged as an important part of God’s effort to call Israel back to Him. The Hebrew word for "prophet" is "nabi" and the Hebrew word for "prophetess" is "nebiyah". Both are from a Hebrew word "naba" that means "to bubble forth, like a fountain or spring of water". In an arid country, a spring of water is literally a source of life and something to be valued and treasured.

## The role of the prophet

The role of the prophet was to be an inspired spokesperson from God. Their message was to come from God and God alone and they were to respect that message and deliver the entire message to the people. In some ways, this is like the responsibility we as Christians have to respect and deliver God's message, but the prophet received direct inspiration from God.

When Israel was established in Canaan, the nation was mostly illiterate because slaves typically were forbidden to learn to read and write. Moses would have known how to read and write and perhaps others, and it seems very likely that the priests and Levites would have been taught this skill to properly preserve and teach the Law. After the conquest, Levi was not given a tribal holding but instead was given 48 cities (Joshua 21.1-3) distributed throughout Israel. In addition to providing the Levites with a place to live, this would have also distributed knowledge about the Law throughout the nation.

In Israel, the prophets would serve as another mechanism for revealing the will of God and focusing more on immediate circumstances and needs. The message of the prophet would always be in harmony with the Law of Moses.

## The prophetic view

Prophets served an important role throughout the history of Israel. We read about them in historical passages and see the message that they had for the people of their time and place. From Moses to Malachi, each of them had a message and served a purpose for Israel of their generation.

However, most of the prophets mentioned in the Old Testament did not leave a written message. The fact that they didn’t leave a written message does not devalue their service. The prophets that did leave a written message did so by inspiration. Their written message has value to us: it is showing us who God is, how He wants to interact with humanity, and how He is forced to interact with humanity because of our sin.

In modern times, there is a tendency to “over-interpret” the prophetic writings of the Old Testament. Specifically, we are so focused on “what the prophet is saying to us” that we overlook what the prophet was saying to his generation. Ezekiel and Daniel are both often treated this way.

So, we don’t want to make that mistake. We want to understand what the prophets were saying to their generation. But we also want to understand that their message was preserved for our benefit and to understand how their message benefits us.

The four major prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel have a common theme that binds them: the judgment of Israel. Isaiah was written roughly 100 years before the other three prophets lived. Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel were contemporaries, but each lived and served in a different location. Jeremiah served in Jerusalem, Ezekiel lived in the Babylonian countryside among the exiles, and Daniel lived and served in the city of Babylon.

Here is a one-line summary of each prophet’s message.

**Isaiah**: Judgment can be averted by repentance.

**Jeremiah**: Judgment can be survived by submission.

**Ezekiel**: We are going to be here for a while.

**Daniel**: Something better is coming.

## Prophetic language

The prophets used different speaking techniques to reach their audience. In written form, they often used poetry or repetition to elevate their message. Sometimes they gave their children names that described some aspect of their mission (Isaiah 8.1-4, Hosea 1.2-9).

Three prophetic teaching forms common to Ezekiel, Daniel, and Revelation (as well as other prophets) are:

1. Prediction.
2. Visions.
3. Figurative Language.

### Prediction

Predictive prophesy was a sign of an inspired prophet (Deuteronomy 18.15-22), especially predicting a future outcome. Often, this outcome was conditional, meaning that the outcome would only happen if certain conditions were met. Sometimes, the outcome was unconditional and based on the current spiritual condition of the nation.

An example of a conditional prophesy is Isaiah chapter 1. In Isaiah 1.2-6, Isaiah describes the sinful condition of Israel and the suffering that it is experiencing because of that sin. In Isaiah 1.18-20, Isaiah offers a solution, repent, with two conditional outcomes: repentance leads to blessing but failure to repent leads to destruction. Later, when Jeremiah writes about the coming subjugation and captivity of Judah, the prophesy is not conditional: it is coming and cannot be averted, but it can be survived.

### Visions

Visions are included in Ezekiel, Daniel, and Revelation. Typically, visions describe a place or event in symbolic language. Understanding the visions included in Ezekiel and Daniel will help us understand the visions recorded later in Revelation.

The book of Ezekiel includes many visions. Ezekiel was a priest, saw things through a priest’s eyes, and will describe these visions in language that his audience would understand. Our goal will be to understand these things like they did, but perhaps not as well as they would have understood them.

### Figurative language

Here is the best description of figurative language I could find:

“Figurative language makes meaning by asking the reader or listener to understand something by virtue of its relation to some other thing, action, or image. Figurative language can be contrasted with literal language, which describes something explicitly rather than by reference to something else[[3]](#footnote-3).”

Figurative language is to writing what special effects are to movies. Figurative language typically uses metaphors and similes in comparative statements. Poetry often uses rhyme and cadence to create “word images” of whatever the poet is discussing.

Ezekiel, Daniel, and Revelation all include figurative language. Most of the visions recorded in all three books are a form of figurative language. The visions describe something in a visual and vivid way that the audience of these letters would understand.

# Summary

Israel arrived in Canaan as the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham. For 800 years, God worked with Israel to transform them into the nation and the people He wanted them to be. Ultimately, they chose their own path and sealed their own judgment.

Judah’s restoration is a result of the third promise made to Abraham: through his Seed all the nations will be blessed. So, Judah will be restored to the land and encouraged to settle into various regions of the ancient world to prepare for the arrival of this Seed, Christ.

# Figures and Tables



# Summary of the Judges

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Passage** | **Judge** | **Opponent** | **Comment** |
| Judges 3.1-11 | Othniel | Mesopotamians | In Judges 3.5-7, Israel married Canaanites and served Canaanite gods. They were specifically told NOT to do this. |
| Judges 3.12-30 | Ehud | Moab, Ammon, Amalek | Ehud killed the Moabite king and then Israel defeated his army. |
| Judges 4.1-24 | Deborah and Barak | Jabin king of Canaan | Control via better technology: iron chariots. |
| Judges 6.1-9.57 | Gideon | Midian | With God, 300 men defeated thousands. Some of Israel did not assist Gideon. Gideon also refused to become king over Israel. Gideon’s son, Abimelech, did try to become king. This led to a small civil war in Israel. |
| Judges 10.6-12.7 | Jephthah | Philistines and Ammonites | After Jephthah defeated the Ammonites, he had to defend himself against Ephraim. |
| Judges 13.1-16.31 | Samson | Philistines | Samson was a Nazirite and exhibited superhuman strength until his hair was cut. Samson was able to damage the Philistines, but this did not end the threat. |

Not all of Israel’s enemies are external. Judges chapters 17 through 21 focus on internal strife within Israel. They are creating idols, stealing from each other, murdering, and eventually engaging in a civil conflict that nearly destroys the tribe of Benjamin.

# Summary of the Kings

## The Kings of Israel

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **The Kings of Israel** | **Reign Summary** | **New Dynasty** | **Length of Reign** | **Character of Reign** | **Notes** |
| Jeroboam | 1 Kings 13.33-34; 1 Kings 14.19-20 | Yes | 22 years | Evil | Built the two golden calves, reintroduced worship at the high places |
| Nadab | 1 Kings 15.25-31 |  | 2 years | Evil | Assassinated by Baasha, lineage destroyed |
| Baasha | 1 Kings 15.33-16.4 | Yes | 24 years | Evil |  |
| Elah | 1 Kings 16.8-10 |  | 2 years | (Evil) | Assassinated by Zimri while drunk |
| Zimri | 1 Kings 16.11-18 | Yes | 7 days | (Evil) | Assassinated by Omri |
| Omri | 1 Kings 16.23-27 | Yes | 12 years | Evil | Built Samaria; was worse that anyone who went before him. The name Omri is Arabic |
| Ahab | 1 Kings 16.29-33 |  | 22 years | Evil | Married Jezebel. Worst king up to this point |
| Ahaziah | 1 Kings 22.51-53 |  | 2 years | Evil | Match his parents in moral character |
| Jehoram | 2 Kings 3.1-3 |  | 12 years | Evil | Not as bad as parents. Put away the pillar of Baal. |
| Jehu | 2 Kings 10.28-36 | Yes | 28 years | Moderately evil | Destroyed the worship of Baal but kept the golden calves. Was the most moral king of Israel. |
| Jehoahaz | 2 Kings 13.1-9 |  | 17 years | Evil | Asked God for help against the Syrians and received it, but kept the golden calves |
| Jehoash (Joash) | 2 Kings 13.10-12 |  | 16 years | Evil |  |
| Jeroboam 2 | 2 Kings 14.23-28 |  | 41 years | Evil | Received help from God against the Syrians |
| Zechariah | 2 Kings 15.8-12 |  | 6 months | Evil | Assassinated by Shallum |
| Shallum | 2 Kings 15.14 | Yes | 1 month | Evil | Assassinated by Menahem |
| Menahem | 2 Kings 15.17-20 | Yes | 10 years | Evil | Paid tribute to the Assyrians |
| Pekahiah | 2 Kings 15.23-25 |  | 2 years | Evil | Assassinated by Pekah |
| Pekah | 2 Kings 15.27-30 | Yes | 20 years | Evil | The Assyrians took northern Israel into captivity |
| Hoshea | 2 Kings 17.1-6 | Yes | 9 years | Evil | Israel went into Assyrian captivity |

## The Kings of Judah

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **The Kings of Judah** | **Reign Summary** | **New Dynasty**  | **Length of Reign** | **Character of Reign** | **Notes** |
| Rehoboam | 1 Kings 14.21-24 |  | 17 years | Evil | Engaged in all kinds of Canaanite pagan worship |
| Abijam | 1 Kings 15.1-3 |  | 3 years | Evil |  |
| Asa | 1 Kings 15.9-14 |  | 41 years | Good | Removed much of the pagan worship from Judah, but not the high places |
| Jehoshaphat | 1 Kings 22.41-44 |  | 25 years | Good | One of the best kings, but made an alliance with the house of Ahab |
| Jehoram | 2 Kings 8.16-19 |  | 8 years | Very Evil | Married Athaliah, daughter of Ahab and Jezebel |
| Ahaziah | 2 Kings 8.25-27 |  | 1 year | Evil | Killed by Jehu |
| Athaliah | 2 Kings 11.1-3; 11.13-16 | Skip | 6 years | Very Evil | Almost destroyed the lineage of David. Killed during a revolt against her rule |
| Jehoash (Joash) | 2 Kings 12.1-3; 12.19-20 | House of David restored | 40 years | Good | Assassinated by his own servants, possibly because he paid off Hazael with Temple money |
| Amaziah | 2 Kings 14.1-6; 14.17-20; 2 Chron 25.14-16 |  | 29 years | Good | Started worshiping Edomite gods after defeating them. Assassinated by a conspiracy. |
| Azaraiah (Uzziah) | 2 Kings 15.1-7; 2 Chron 26.16-21 |  | 52 years | Good | Attempted to burn incense in the Temple and became a leper as a result |
| Jotham | 2 Kings 15.32-35 |  | 16 years | Good | Did not remove the high places |
| Ahaz | 2 Kings 16.1-4 |  | 16 years | Very Evil | Sacrificed his own son and restored paganism to Judah |
| Hezekiah | 2 Kings 18.1-8 |  | 29 years | Good | One of the most righteous kings. Saw the destruction of Israel |
| Manasseh | 2 Kings 21.1-9; 2 Chron 33.10-16 |  | 55 years | Very Evil | Embraced paganism, filled Jerusalem with blood, but repented after spending time in Assyrian prison |
| Amon | 2 Kings 21.19-24 |  | 2 years | Very Evil | Undid his father's reforms, killed by conspiracy |
| Josiah | 2 Kings 22.1-2; 23.24-25 |  | 31 years | Good | One of the most righteous kings. Restored the covenant and worship of God. Defiled pagan places. |
| Jehoahaz | 2 Kings 23.31-34 |  | 3 months | Evil | Taken into Egyptian captivity and died there |
| Jehoiakim | 2 Kings 23.36-24.6 |  | 11 years | Evil |  |
| Jehoiachin | 2 Kings 24.8-17 |  | 3 months | Evil | Went into Babylonian captivity |
| Zedekiah | 2 Kings 24.18-25.7 |  | 11 years | Evil | Final king of Judah |

## Conclusion

* Israel had 19 kings and 9 dynasty changes.
* All the kings of Israel are described in the summary of their reigns as “evil”. Jehu is described as the best of the bunch.
* Judah had 20 kings and only one dynasty. Athaliah attempted to establish a new dynasty, but she was ultimately defeated and executed, and the house of David was restored.
* Twelve kings of Judah are described as “evil”, including the final four kings.
* Eight kings are described as “good”, though most of them were flawed in some way.

Israel went into Assyrian captivity roughly 136 years before Judah went into Babylonian captivity. The moral character of its leaders suggests a reason why Israel was destroyed before Judah was.

1. If there is any one lesson Judah should have learned about Egypt, it’s this: Egypt was completely unreliable. They were unreliable when Judah was under Assyrian control, and they had already proven unreliable when Judah was under Babylonian control. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Most of the major structures in the city were stone. Burning the city would ruin the stone so that it could no longer be used as building material. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. From https://liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/wlf/what-figurative-language#:~:text=Figurative%20language%20makes%20meaning%20by,by%20reference%20to%20something%20else. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)