



## Summary of Second Kings



Israel and Judah in 2 Kings circa 853 BC

## Introduction

The Book of Second Kings recounts events in Israel and Judah from the death of Ahab to the exile of Israel and Judah. The complex and shifting political setting for the book involves Israel, Judah, Syria, Ammon, Moab, Edom, and Philistia, as well as Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, and other kingdoms far beyond Israel's borders.

The Book is narrative history and prophecy concerning the affairs of the divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah. The author is anonymous; however, some suggest the prophet Jeremiah. It was written about 560-538 BC. Key personalities are many; they include Elijah, Elisha, the woman from Shunem, Naaman, Jezebel, Jehu, Joash, Hezekiah, Sennacherib, Isaiah, Manasseh, Josiah, Jehoiakim, Zedekiah and Nebuchadnezzar. Its purpose was to demonstrate the value of those who obey God, and the fate of those who refuse to obey and make him ultimate ruler.

In this book, God performs amazing miracles through his prophets as he sends these messengers to herald his messages. Despite a few good kings in Judah and faithful prophets, the two kingdoms are far from the Lord and lost in the monotonous confusion of their sins. God's prophets bring the only hope to this lost yet, chosen nation. The result is the dispersal of the northern kingdom among the nations at the hands of the Assyrians and a temporary exile into Babylon for Judah.

## Chapter One

Like his father Ahab, Ahaziah is destined to meet Elijah. The occasion for their confrontation is an injury sustained by the king when falling out the window of his upper chamber in Samaria. He decides to seek guidance from a pagan god rather than the Lord and so Elijah sends the Lord's judgement on him. In response Ahaziah sends soldiers to arrest Elijah but fire from heaven consumes the first two groups; the leader of the third group seeks Elijah's mercy and an angel instructs Elijah to go with him. The chapter concludes with his death and the succession of his brother Jehoram as Ahaziah had no sons.

## Chapter Two

The prophetic mantle passes from Elijah to Elisha. As Elijah has called fire down from heaven in Chapter 1, so he now will be lifted in fire up into heaven and dogged Elisha, who refuses to leave his teachers side, will be authenticated as his successor.

## Chapter Three

One expects that Elisha, as Elijah's successor, will also be involved in politics, and in this story he is consulted about a military campaign. When Jehoram

became king of Israel the king of Moab saw this as an opportunity to remove his people from the subjugation of Israel, and so he rebelled. Jehoram called King Jehoshaphat of Judah and the king of Edom to join him in a campaign against Moab but the armies found there was no water for them. When Jehoshaphat said they should enquire of the Lord then Elisha was summoned, who made it clear that he would only seek the Lord because he had regard for the king of Judah and not the apostate king of Israel.

Elisha informed the kings that the Lord would indeed fill the land with sufficient water to sustain his armies and it was so. When the Moabite army came out they saw the water and thought it was the blood of their enemies who must have fought amongst themselves but they were wrong and were defeated in battle. The narrative noticeably echoes 1 Kings 22:1-28.

#### Chapter Four

Both Elijah and Elisha are now associated with the God who provides water at will, whether by ordinary means, i.e. wind and rain as in 1 Kings 18:45, or not, i.e. neither wind nor rain as in 2 Kings 3:17. A number of further miracles serve in the same way as a reminder of Elijah.

Firstly he helps the widow of a fellow prophet who only has a single jar of oil yet it fills many containers which she sells. Thus she can pay off her late husband's creditors and stop her sons from going into slavery.

A wealthy Shunammite woman and her husband showed true hospitality to Elisha and his servant and so Elisha wanted to bless her in some way but she said she had all she needed. Elisha discovered that she was childless and was passed the age of childbearing and yet the prophet announced she would have a son, and it was so. However, the child grew sick and died, so the woman went to Elisha. He returned to the woman's home, prayed to the Lord, laid on the child and breathed into him. The Lord restored the child's life and he was returned to his mother.

A company of prophets made a stew during a time of famine that included wild gourds that were poisonous. When they began to eat the stew they realised that it was harmful to eat it and so they cried out to Elisha. He simply added a small amount of flour and the stew became edible.

Finally, Elisha instructs that a small amount of food, only twenty loaves of barley bread and some grain, should be served as a meal for one hundred men. It was clearly insufficient but Elisha said the Lord has said they should eat for there would be plenty and some left over. And it was so.

## Chapter Five

It is the account of the faith of a young Israelite slave girl who dared suggest that her Aramæan master Naaman go to Elisha in Samaria to be healed of his leprosy. It is the only account of such a healing in the OT.

Following the healing the Aramæan offered Elisha a gift but he declined to accept it as he was serving the Lord in his actions. However, his servant Gehazi went after Naaman and lied to him that Elisha would take a reward after all. Although Gehazi hid the reward Elisha knew that he had taken it and so he dismissed him from his service and was also afflicted with leprosy.

## Chapter Six

The chapter starts with yet another miracle. Elisha was with some prophets cutting wood when one of them dropped his borrowed axe into the River Jordan. He told Elisha who through a stick into the river near where the axe was lost and behold the iron axe floated to the surface and was retrieved.

Each time the king of Aram planned a raid on Israel, Elisha notified the Israelite king and the attack was thwarted. When the king of Aram was told that it was Elisha that was responsible for the failures he gave orders that he should be captured in the town of Dothan. The Aramæans surrounded Dothan and Elisha's servant was afraid so Elisha prayed that his eyes might be opened and immediately the servant saw the heavenly host on the hillside protecting them from the Aramæans. Then Elisha prayed that the Aramæans should be blinded so that he could lead them to Samaria and it was so. When he handed them over to the king of Israel he wanted to kill these soldiers but Elisha said they should be shown hospitality, fed and released back to their master.

King Ben-hadad of Syria lay siege on Samaria and there was great famine in the city. A woman told the king that she had an agreement with her neighbour that they should cook and eat the first woman's son one day and then the other woman's on the second. The first child was cooked and eaten but on the second day the other woman had hidden her child. The king was in great distress over what was happening. He blamed Elisha for the famine from God and sent men to arrest him but Elisha prophesied that the following day the famine would end.

## Chapter Seven

Having prophesied the unlikely reversal of the siege of Samaria, four lepers living outside the camp and starving decided to go to the Aramæan camp, which they find deserted. They eat and drink their fill and then take away valuables to hide for themselves. They then realise that this is good news that they must share with city so they return and report it to the gatekeepers, who

inform the king. He suspects a trap and sends out men to see if the Aramæans are preparing to entrap them but they find that the army has indeed fled. Therefore, the city is opened for the people to go to the camp and retrieve the much needed food which is then sold at the prices prophesied by Elisha. In addition, the officer who had doubted the word of the Lord was trampled to death in the gate, also fulfilling Elisha's word.

### Chapter Eight

Chapter Four told the story of Elisha and the Shunammite woman, how she had a son she never expected and how his life was restored by the Lord through Elisha. The authors now add the detail that Elisha had warned her of a coming famine and had advised that her whole family relocate to another land for seven years so that they might survive. When the family returned after seven years living with the Philistines, they appealed to the king to have their lands restored. Now Gehazi had told the king how Elisha had restored the son's life and he now told the king that this was that family, so the king ordered that their lands should be restored to them.

King Ben-hadad was ill and he sent Hazael to ask Elisha if he would recover. Elisha told Hazael to tell the king that he would recover, stating that in fact he would not. Elisha then wept. When Hazael asked why, Elisha told Hazael that he would be the next king and that he would do wicked things to the Israelites. Hazael said he would not. He returned to the king in Damascus, told him that he would not die but then murdered him the following day and Hazael succeeded him as king of Aram.

A summary of King Jehoram of Judah shows that he was an evil king like those in the northern kingdom of Israel. He even married a daughter of King Ahab. During his reign Edom rose up against Judah and set their own king in place. When he died Ahaziah succeeded him.

King Ahaziah was an evil king like his father. He fought alongside King Joram or Jehoram of Israel against the Aramæans. When Joram was wounded in battle he retreated to Jezreel and Ahaziah went to see him.

### Chapter Nine

Elisha commanded another prophet to go to Jehu and anoint him king of Israel. Jehu was instructed that the Lord wanted him to purge the entire house of Ahab. After the prophet had left, Jehu told his men what was said and they declared him to be the new king.

Jehu set off for Jezreel where King Joram was convalescing, having been wounded by the Aramæans. King Ahaziah was visiting him there. As Jehu approached messengers were sent to find out if he came in peace but the

messengers joined Jehu instead of returning. Therefore, Joram and Ahaziah both went out to meet Joram, who made it clear he had come to kill Joram. Joram turned his chariot around to flee but Jehu shot him through the heart with an arrow and his body was dumped on Naboth's land as was prophesied.

King Ahaziah fled the scene but was pursued on the orders of Jehu and was shot. He escaped as far as Megiddo but died there and was buried in Jerusalem.

Jehu then travelled to Jezreel where Jezebel waited in an upper room. Jehu ordered that she should be thrown down from the window and she died in the street. After eating and drinking, Jehu gave the order for the queen to be buried but the men found that most of her had been eaten by dogs thus fulfilling the word of the Lord given through Elijah.

### Chapter Ten

There were seventy male descendants of Ahab in Samaria so Jehu sent a challenge to the elders of the people saying they should decide which should become their king and fight against Jehu. However, they feared Jehu and pledged their allegiance to him. So Jehu had them kill the seventy men and have their heads sent to Jezreel. Later, he encountered forty two relatives of Ahaziah on their way to visit their king and the king of Israel. Jehu took them prisoner and had them killed also.

Jehu then called a great feast in the temple of Baal, calling all the priests of Baal to minister and all the worshippers of Baal to come to make offering to their god. However, this was a plan on the part of Jehu to rid the land of the worshippers of Baal and he ordered his men into the temple to kill everyone. However, Jehu did not follow the Lord but kept to the ways of Jeroboam.

During the reign of Jehu Israel lost land to their enemies and it was the will of the Lord that it should be so. Jehu's reign came to an end with his death and his son Jehoahaz succeeded him.

### Chapter Eleven

With the death of her son Ahaziah, Athaliah plans to kill all the heirs to his throne so that she would be queen and so Jehosheba hides the infant Joash thus avoiding his death. After seven years the priest Jehoiada showed the boy to his guards and instructed them to stand guard at the temple while he anointed Joash as the king of Judah. When Athaliah went into the temple and saw that Joash had been made king she cried treason but Jehoiada instructed the guards to take her outside and kill her. When the people heard that the queen was dead and that Joash was their new king they went to the temple of Baal, tore it down and killed the priest of Baal.

## Chapter Twelve

King Jehoash was basically a good king and set about returning the people of Judah to the Lord. However, he did not rid the country of the high places where some people still made offerings to the Lord rather than coming to the temple. He also set about having the temple repaired for it had been neglected for many years. After some delays the work was undertaken.

When King Hazael of Aram came up against Jerusalem King Joash decided to pay him rather than face him in battle and the Aramæans withdrew from the city. After a forty year reign, Jehoash was killed by two of his servants and his son Amaziah ascended to the throne.

## Chapter Thirteen

This chapter starts by stepping back in time from the death of King Joash of Judah and returns to the theme of the kings in the northern kingdom of Israel.

It commences with the reign of Jehoahaz son of Jehu, who did evil in the sight of God and caused his anger to focus on his errant people. As a result they were continually plagued by the Aramæans until the king called upon the Lord, who heeded his pleas and restored peace to the land at the end of the king's reign, albeit with a much weakened army to defend them.

When Jehoahaz died after seventeen years on the throne his son Jehoash succeeded him and ruled for sixteen years, He continued in the evil ways of his father and was at war with King Amaziah of Judah.

The story now turns to the death of Elisha, the great prophet and servant of God. Before his death, the king was with him and Elisha instructed him first to fire an arrow out of the window towards the east and then to strike his remaining arrows on the ground. Through this Elisha prophesied that Israel would have victory against the Aramæans but only three times. Ultimately, Aram would succeed. When the corpse of a man was thrown into Elisha's grave it came to life again.

Although Jehoahaz was plagued by the Aramæans throughout his reign, his son was granted three victories over them in accordance with Elisha's prophecy, recovering the towns that Aram had taken from Israel.

## Chapter Fourteen

Following the death of his father, King Amaziah son of Joash reigned in Judah. Like his father he was basically a good king although he too did nothing to remove the high places of worship from the land. He had the servants who killed his father put to death.

Having defeated the Edomites, Amaziah challenged King Jehoash of Israel, who responded by telling him he should stay at home or face a heavy defeat. Amaziah would not listen, went into battle and was defeated. He was taken captive by Jehoash who broke down the walls of Jerusalem and took all the treasure from the temple and the palace before returning to Samaria.

King Jehoash died and was replaced by his son Jeroboam II. Amaziah lived on in Jerusalem for fifteen more years before a conspiracy in Jerusalem caused him to flee to Lachish. However, the conspirators followed him there and killed him. He was succeeded by his son Azariah.

Although Jeroboam too was an evil king in God's sight, the Lord took pity on his people and gave Jeroboam success in regaining some of the land previously lost. When he died his son Zechariah came to the throne of Israel.

### Chapter Fifteen

King Azariah or Uzziah was king for fifty two years from the age of sixteen. He was basically a good king although he too never removed the high places of worship. Not told in Kings but in Chronicles, Azariah's pride allowed him to attempt to make an offering in place of the priest and was struck with leprosy so it was his son Jotham who was in effective charge of the kingdom.

In Israel the pattern of evil kings continued. Zechariah had succeeded his father and was the fourth generation of Jehu. After just six months on the throne he was killed by Shallum, thus the dynasty of Jehu ended as the Lord had said. Shallum lasted just one month before he was assassinated by Menahem, an even more evil king. When the king of Assyria came against Israel, Menahem paid him so that he could keep his reign of the land, which he did for ten years.

Menahem's son Pekahiah succeeded his father and ruled for two years before being assassinated by Pekah, the Captain of his guard along with fifty Gileadite co-conspirators. Pekah then assumed the throne of Israel and it was during his twenty year reign that King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria came against Israel and took people away to Assyria in bondage. Pekah in turn was assassinated by Hoshea to seized the throne as a result.

Meanwhile, in Judah Jotham had succeeded his father Azariah/Uzziah. Like his father he did what was good in Lord's sight but he failed to remove the high places. He reigned in Judah for sixteen years.

### Chapter Sixteen

The authors now describe the uprooting and scattering of Israel, long foretold but delayed because of God's promises and God's character.

Despite the troubles that had plagued the northern kingdom of Israel, the new king of Judah, Ahaz, followed in their idolatrous ways and the nation suffered because of it. The Edomites rebelled and took land away from Judah. The Syro-Ephraimite War intensified so that Ahaz had to call on the king of Assyria to come to his aid against Aram and Israel, paying him tribute to do so.

When King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria, he saw the altar that was at Damascus and he sent a description of it to the priest Uriah, ordering him to have one made and placed in the temple instead of the altar that was there. When Ahaz returned to Jerusalem he made offerings upon the new altar and ordered the priest to continue using the new pagan one.

Following this he desecrated the temple according to the wishes of the king of Assyria. Thus his sixteen year reign was a reversal of those kings that had gone before him. When he died his son Hezekiah succeeded him and would be a much better king, turning the people back to the Lord.

### Chapter Seventeen

King Hoshea was to be the last king over the northern kingdom. During the early part of his nine year reign he paid tribute to King Shalmaneser of Assyria as a vassal state. However, he then turned to Egypt and stopped paying Assyria. Therefore, Shalmaneser came against Israel, defeated them and took all the people into captivity. The Lord allowed this to happen to his people because of their continuous sin and apostasy. Only the kingdom of Judah now remained of the people of God and even they were not faithful to the Lord.

Assyria resettled the land with people from many other lands but they did not know the Lord and he sent lions to kill them. So the Assyrians had one of the priests brought back from captivity to teach the people how to worship God. Although the people worshipped the Lord they did not do so wholeheartedly. They appointed their own priests and they continued to worship all their traditional pagan gods as well.

### Chapter Eighteen

Just as the northern kingdom was in its death throes, the southern kingdom of Judah finally had a really good king who is described as doing right just as David had done. He set about removing all the elements of pagan worship and the high places that the people had used for illicit worship to the Lord. He refused to submit to the King of Assyria and he won battles against the Philistines.

However, eight years after the fall of the northern kingdom, the King of Assyria attacked Judah and captured many of the cities. Fearing the Assyrians, King Hezekiah paid tribute to the Assyrians. Even though he handed over all the wealth of the nation, the Assyrians still came to Jerusalem and challenged

Hezekiah. Did he rely on the Egyptians? Did he rely on God? Surely not God for he had been unable to prevent the Assyrians so far in their campaign.

The representative of the King of Assyria, the Rabshakeh, called out to the people of Jerusalem in their own language not to be taken in by the words of Hezekiah that the Lord their God could save them but that they should accept peace with Assyria and move away to other lands in that empire where they would have their own homes and land. The people did not respond for the king and told them to say nothing.

### Chapter Nineteen

Following the devastating words of the Rabshakeh in Chapter 18, King Hezekiah is in distress and he goes into the temple. He instructs his counsellors to seek out Isaiah and they do so. Isaiah tells them to inform the king that he should not worry for the Lord will turn the Assyrian's words back on themselves.

Sennacherib was still fighting against Lachish when the Rabshakeh returned to him. He also knew that the Ethiopians were coming against him and so he sent the Rabshakeh back to Jerusalem to tell Hezekiah he had no option but to comply with the terms offered to him.

On receiving Sennacherib's final demands, Hezekiah went into the temple and prayed to the Lord to save his people from the Assyrians. The response came to him via Isaiah, who told him that not only would he protect Jerusalem, he would prevent the Assyrians from attacking it or even laying siege to the city.

That very night the angel of the Lord struck down the Assyrian army. Sennacherib returned to Nineveh, where he was later assassinated by his sons.

### Chapter Twenty

When Hezekiah became ill the Lord passed him a message through Isaiah that he would die as a result. Therefore, Hezekiah prayed and wept before the Lord, asking for a miraculous healing on account of the way he had been faithful to the Lord. The word of the Lord came back to Isaiah to instruct him to tell Hezekiah that he would indeed be healed and live for a further fifteen years. The sign of this would be for the sun's shadow to move backwards.

Having heard that Hezekiah had been ill, the king of Babylon sent envoys on a diplomatic mission to him. In his pride or foolishness, Hezekiah showed the envoys all the treasures in Jerusalem. Isaiah warned the king of his folly saying that a day would come when all those treasures, along with the king's descendants, would be taken away to Babylon. After a successful reign of twenty nine years, Hezekiah died and was succeeded by his son Manasseh.

## Chapter Twenty One

After the times of promise under Hezekiah, his son Manasseh not only reversed what his father had done in removing the high places of worship, he actually reintroduced Baal worship and led the people to become far worse in the eyes of the Lord than the nations that he had driven from the land in order to give it to his people Israel. In addition, he had innocent people killed for no good reason. As a result of his evil behaviour God promised that judgement would come upon the nation and he would send them into exile.

After the fifty five year reign of Manasseh his son Amon succeeded him and he continued in the evil ways of his father, abandoning the Lord God of Israel. After just two years of king, he was killed in his own house by his servants, who in turn were killed by the people. His son Josiah succeeded him.

## Chapter Twenty Two

Josiah was still a child when he ascended to the throne following more than fifty years of apostate rule by his father Amon and his grandfather Manasseh. Yet he was determined to be a godly king and so, as a young adult, he gave instructions for the temple to be repaired. During this process the book of the law was discovered and when it was read to the king he realised just how far away from God his ancestors had brought the nation. He instructed his priest and other ministers to inquire of the Lord through the prophetess Huldah. The word of the Lord came back saying that God would indeed bring judgement upon the nation as the book of the law said he would but because Josiah had been humble and penitent, it would not occur during his lifetime.

## Chapter Twenty Three

Josiah continued the reforms by gathering the people to the temple, having the law read to them and then leading them in reaffirming their covenant with the Lord. After that he set about comprehensively removing and destroying every idolatrous place, symbols and the people who led worship at such places. This he did throughout all Judah and parts of the former northern kingdom, including destroying the altar at Bethel that Jeroboam had erected there.

For the first time since the days of the judges, Josiah reintroduced the Festival of the Passover. He fully committed himself to following the Lord and ensured that nothing remained in the land that offended the Lord. However, even this was not enough to remove the judgement that Judah must face.

When Pharaoh Neco II travelled north to join the Assyrians in their military campaign against the Babylonians, Josiah went out to meet him in battle at Megiddo. There he was killed and brought back for burial in Jerusalem. Yet,

because he had served the Lord so faithfully, it is recorded that he rested in peace with his ancestors.

Josiah was succeeded by his son Jehoahaz, who was evil in the sight of God. Pharaoh Neco took him as prisoner to Egypt where he died and placed another son Eliakim as king. Eliakim was renamed Jehoiakim by Neco and was forced to pay tribute to Egypt. He, too, was another bad king.

#### Chapter Twenty Four

King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon makes Judah his vassal state, taking over from the Egyptians, for the Babylonians now ruled the region. In addition, the Lord punished Judah by allowing other fighting bands from the surrounding nations, who were allied to the Babylonians, to come against Judah also at this time. Therefore Jehoiakim knew no real peace throughout his eleven year reign as a puppet king, first serving the Egyptians and then the Babylonians. When he died he was succeeded by his son Jehoiachin who, after just three months, was taken away in captivity to Babylon. In addition, Nebuchadnezzar took all the wealth from the city and several thousand of its most prominent citizens, those fit for military service and the skilled tradesmen.

The king was replaced by his uncle Mattaniah, whom Nebuchadnezzar renamed Zedekiah. He served as a puppet king to his Babylonian overlords for eleven years before rebelling against them.

#### Chapter Twenty Five

A two and a half year siege of Jerusalem followed, and the city eventually fell in 586 BC. Towards the end, famine became very severe causing great suffering to those who remained. As the city wall was being breached on the northern side, Zedekiah managed to escape by night with his troops through an exit in the south eastern wall that is probably to be identified with the Fountain Gate of Nehemiah 3:15. He was captured while fleeing to the Arabah by way of the Wadi Kelt in the vicinity of Jericho and was taken to King Nebuchadnezzar. Zedekiah's sons were executed in his presence, he was blinded and taken bound to Babylon.

Jerusalem was virtually destroyed, including its outer walls, the temple and its palaces. Apart from a few poor people, everyone remaining alive was taken into captivity except for the key officials and priests who were executed. All the precious metals, including gold, silver and the great bronze pillars and baths from the temple, were taken away to Babylon.

Gedaliah was made governor to oversee the community that was left to care for the vines and soil, but he was killed by Ishmael, a captain of the guard who had

also remained in the land. Fearing reprisals from the Babylonians, he then led the remnant of people including Jeremiah into exile in Egypt.

Nebuchadnezzar was eventually succeeded by King Evil-merodach who, after thirty seven years of captivity, released King Jehoiachin and allowed him to eat at the kings table for his remaining days in Babylon.