

*Two Kingdoms*

*The north refused to recognize Solomon's son Rehoboam as his successor, and separated under King Jeroboam, creating an Israel / Judah opposition. Let's be fair. No matter what his piety, or how much he might achieve against the Philistines, no King in Palestine had a chance against the great powers. The northern kingdom, Israel, fell to Assyria in 0741. Thereafter, we have only the history of Judah, most of which is a tale of decline and fall.*

(51) The Book of Kings. Its story of deserved and inevitable doom allows its readers two briefly hopeful moments along the way.

(52) Jezebel's Wedding. We are on hand for this felicitous state occasion, and appreciate every moment, as bride and groom are praised in turn.

(53) Elijah. For lack of any other, this local seer is brought in from Tishbe to oppose the worship of Jezebel's gods, the Baals.

(54) Elisha. He mostly ignores the Baals (that was Elijah's issue), and concerns himself more with Israel's Israel's external enemies.

(55) The War with Moab. We have earlier had the Balaam's-eye view; here is that battle again, as seen by the principals: the two kings themselves.

(56) Hezekiah's Defense. Holding out against Assyria qualifies him as one of the two kings of which the Book of Kings approves.

(57) Josiah's Venture. His role in the centralization of Yahweh worship is exaggerated, but his single military exploit did win him praise.

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*The Exile brought with it loss of national identity and extreme theological pessimism. Then Persia conquered Babylon, and allowed the Exiles to return. The Jerusalem Temple was rebuilt, and more optimistic texts began to appear. The next section looks at some highlights of this period.*