

*Two Kingdoms*

*A new era begins when the north refuses to recognize Jeroboam as Solomon's successor, and separates, creating an Israel / Judah opposition. Let's be fair. No matter what his piety, or lack of it, no King in Palestine had a chance against the great powers of the day. The northern kingdom, Israel, fell to Assyria in 0741. Thereafter, we have only the history of Judah, all but a few moments of which, in the orthodox view, are moments of decline. Kings, whose task it is to recount that decline, gives us a few hopeful moments.*

(50) Jezebel's Wedding. We are on hand for this happy occasion.

(51) Elijah, a local seer, opposes the worship of Jezebel's gods, the Baals.

(52) The Attack on Mesha. This rare instance of north/south cooperation gives us the rare change to hear a story from the other side; in this case, from the victory inscription left behind by the King of Moab.

(53) Hezekiah's Defense of his city Jerusalem qualifies him as one of two kings of which the Book of Kings manages to approve.

(54) Josiah's Venture. He is the other. His role in the centralization of all Yahweh worship at the Temple of Jerusalem is still fiercely debated. His venture into the briefly uncontested land to the north of him won him praise at the time; Chronicles will later take the opposite view.

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*Next came the Exile, but it was not the end: Persia conquered Babylon, and let the Exiles return. This inspired rewriting of previous tradition, with gloomy Kings replaced by cheerful Chronicles. The next section looks at some highlights of the period, one of which gave a foundation for later Judaism.*