

BIBLE MYSTERY AND BIBLE MEANING OLD TESTAMENT

LESSON 14

THE DIVIDED KINGDOM

This lesson will be primarily about the historical setting of which the prophets played such an important role. Although this is setting historical dates in place, we must always realize that it is our growth in consciousness that is our ultimate goal. We have already observed how the Hebrew people received guidance and inspiration only to slip back into the old comfortable established ways of believing. Metaphysics is the realization that there is a greater understanding that is above the physical level.

We saw growth in the United Monarchy and yet there was also weakness. Three kings and yet while each of them made contributions to the kingdom, these contributions remained largely of the physical nature. We cannot discount the battles that Saul won. David relocated his kingdom by winning control over the Jebusites and taking control of Jerusalem. Solomon, who expanded the city of David and built the Temple.

“Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them. According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt, even to this day—with which they have forsaken Me and served other gods—so they are doing to you also. Now therefore, heed their voice. However, you shall solemnly forewarn them, and show them the behavior of the king who will reign over them.”

I Samuel 8:7-9

WRITERS OF THE BIBLE

The writings concerning this portion of Hebrew history were prepared by the scribes in Judah, and so in reading we must understand that there may well be a bias regarding the northern kingdom of Israel.

THE KINGDOM SPLITS

When Solomon died in or about 922 B.C., his son, Rehoboam, became king. This precipitated a national crisis. Jeroboam the Ephraimite, who had conspired against Solomon, returned from Egypt where he had fled for sanctuary. It is quite possible that the Egyptian government had actively encouraged Jeroboam, in the hope that when Solomon died, Jeroboam would be instrumental in dividing and thus weakening the Israelites.

Rehoboam was preparing to try to reunite the kingdom by force. Shemaiah, a prophet, declared: *“Thus says the Lord, You shall not go up or fight against your kindred the people of Israel. Let everyone go home, for this is from me.”* I Kings 12:24

This is one of our greatest lessons to allow each person the opportunity to grow, to learn in their own time and in their own way. Each person is standing on “holy ground” they are exactly where they need to be, according to their awareness.

The Northern Kingdom of Israel was far more fertile and wealthy than Judah. It had five times the territory of Judah, but was easily invaded because of its location. While small in size, Judah, was located on a upland area, with two valleys on either side allowing for an easier defense from foreign invasion.

Israel chose for its capital the city of Samaria, while Judah chose Jerusalem. It seems that one contentious subject was whether the Hebrew people living in the Northern Kingdom of Israel were to pay homage by visiting the Temple in Jerusalem. Jeroboam set up golden calves at the sanctuaries of Dan and Bethel, the most northern and southern cities of Israel, in an attempt to make shrines for the worship of Jahveh.

INCLUSIVE OR EXCLUSIVE

It has been a point of discussion as to whether the Kingdom of Israel was inclusive in their beliefs regarding the worship of Jahveh while the Kingdom of Judah was exclusive. Inclusive allowing for the worship of Jahveh with local gods also being worshiped; exclusive being the worship of Jahveh and only Jahveh. There is no doubt with the scriptures given that, in fact, Israel was practicing inclusive worship practices and yet so was Judah. Archeological digs have produced small pillar figurines used in worship Isaiah cautioned about in Isaiah 44:10 *"Who would form a god or mold and image. That profits him nothing?"* Furthermore in Jeremiah 7:30-31 *"And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and daughters in the fire, which I did not command, nor did it come into My heart."* Child sacrifice is horrendous, and yet fear can cause a variety of ill conceived deeds. One of the greatest fears is that of change, allowing a new innocent thought, one full of love and kindness to come into our lives. The Hebrew people simply could not accept the thought of an omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent Father. They could not rise above old beliefs of limitation and accept the love that God so abundantly provides.

THE RISE OF HEBREW PROPHECY

Israel and Judah, with all of their shortcomings, became the setting in which the prophetic movement grew and developed. These small nations became, as it were, a laboratory in which the prophets acquired a growing realization of spiritual and moral principles, which they felt impelled to share with their faltering countrymen. They saw that if Israel and Judah were to be saved, their people must genuinely turn to God. They knew that *"where there is no vision, the people perish."* Proverbs 29:18

The prophets' primary work was to speak on behalf of God. One aspect of their work was precognition, or prediction of future events. The prophecies, however, were conditional and informed by the reality of a just and righteous God. They saw that if the people thought and acted in harmony with God, they would have harmony and prosperity in their everyday lives. If, on the other hand, they thought and acted in ways contrary to God, they would suffer and their national life would be destroyed.

HISTORICAL FACTS

It is axiomatic that no one teaches in a vacuum. Eternal truths are announced in ways that are relevant to the times and culture.

The upper classes of Israel prospered for several generations. With but few exceptions, however, their kings were of weak character. Israel, as a nation, became spiritually decadent and fell to the Assyrian

invasion in 722 B.C. The Assyrians forced the leading officials into exile, hoping that the remaining population would be easier to control.

During the reign of Hezekiah in Judah, in 702 B.C., the Assyrians tried to overthrow Judah. They had moved around Jerusalem to the city of Lachesh, which they conquered. They were not, however, able to defeat Jerusalem. The account can be read in II Kings 19:1-37.

Judah does fall to Babylon in 586 B.C. This account can be read in II Kings 25:1-21. Under the direction of King Nebchadnezzar, no part of the city was spared. Solomon's Temple, his palace, and the city of Jerusalem were all completely destroyed by fire. The Hebrew people were taken into captivity, in Babylon. It was during the Babylonian captivity that the Hebrews began writing in Aramaic; this became instrumental in the dating of Biblical writings.

Another power arose, and in 539 B.C., the Persians under the leadership of Cyrus the Great, overthrew the Babylonians. The belief of the Persians differed greatly from that of the Assyrians and the Babylonians, and so Cyrus allowed the Jewish (Hebrew) people to return to Jerusalem. There were some Jewish people that chose to remain in Babylon, for they had become very comfortable. It is plausible that during the time in Babylon that the Jewish community began using the synagogue as their place of worship.

There is no written assignment for this lesson.

UNITED KINGDOM

1050-1010 B.C.	Saul
1010-970 B.C.	David
970-930 B.C.	Solomon

DIVIDED KINGDOM

<u>SOUTH (JUDAH)</u>	PROPHETS	<u>NORTH (ISRAEL)</u>
930 Rehoboam		Jeroboam
910 Abijam		Nadab
910 Asa		Baasja
Jehoshaphat		Ella, Omri
850 Jehoram	<i>Elijah</i>	Ahab
	<i>Elisha</i>	
850 Ahaziah	<i>Joel</i>	Joram
Athenian		Jehu
800 Joash		Jehoahaz
800 Amaziah	<i>Jonah, Amos</i>	Jehoash
Uzziah	<i>Hosea</i>	Jeroboam II
750 (Azariah)	<i>Isaiah</i>	Zechariah
750 Jotham	<i>Micah</i>	Menahem
Ahaz		Pekah
700 Hezekiah		Hoshea
700 Manasseh	<i>Nahum</i>	<u>Israel falls to</u>
650		<u>Assyria in 722 B.C.</u>

650	Amon	<i>Habakkuk</i>	<u>In 702 B.C. Assyria attempts to conquer Judah, they fail.</u>
600	Josiah Jehoiakim	<i>Zephaniah Jeremiah</i>	
600 536	Zedekia	<i>Obadiah Daniel Ezekiel</i>	<u>In 586 B.C., Judah falls to Babylon. Jerusalem and the Temple are destroyed.</u>
	<u>Leaders</u>		<u>The Persians overthrow Babylon and allow the Jews to return to Jerusalem in 539 B.C.</u>
537?	Zerubbabel	<i>Haggai</i>	
458	Ezra	<i>Zechariah</i>	
445	Nehemiah	<i>Malachi</i>	