

Four Disparate Stories

Commentary for December 1, 2017 —YHWH, Prophets, and Kings Interact

Four disparate story arcs move through this month's article, an episode of Israel and Judah: 27. Elisha and the Rise of Jehu."¹ First read the "[December 2017 Newsletter](#)" for background and cast of characters of the article. Four of the stories involve Elisha the prophet.

First, he warns a woman of a famine. She is the object of YHWH's mercy. This episode concludes one story arc. Only YHWH's prophets successfully predict the future.

Second, Elisha anoints a future king of Syria who will be God's tool to punish Israel for their sins and lack of fidelity to YHWH and their covenant with Him. This begins a new story arc about Syria becoming an even more troublesome enemy of Israel and Judah in the future. Interactions with Syria weaken all three kingdoms, which will allow the power of Assyria to increase.

Third, the story arc of the saga of sin by the kings of Judah and Israel, as well as by the people of both kingdoms. This story arc will move toward the punishment (and eventual destruction) first of the northern kingdom of Israel, and later in the future, the punishment (and destruction) of the southern kingdom of Judah. The inability of the leadership of the two kingdoms to see that their sin is counterproductive to their wellbeing is stunning. Why are they worshipping foreign gods? What do they gain? Nothing I can see from either biblical or secular history.

It is amazing that the rulers and the people never seem to learn anything from previous kings, punishments, temporary repentance, miraculous rescues from disaster and miraculous victories instead of defeat — time after time after time. Yet, at no time is there any indication the majority of the tribes of Israel have their eyes on YHWH, and the situation worsens with each succeeding generation. Such is the sin of man, intensified in God's own people.

Fourth, Elisha begins another story arc by anointing a future king of the northern kingdom of Israel. Like the king of Syria in the second story, this future king of Israel is also a tool of YHWH's judgment for sin against the family line of former King Ahab and lovely but murderous Queen Jezebel. Then that king, God's tool, himself becomes a problem. Of course, a famine, surprise attacks, battles, political turmoil, and regicide occur through the story arcs.

Things Are No Different Today

What do we see today in the Middle East? Chaos and breakup of nations, changing or eliminating borders, leadership changes occurring, refugees moving, some returning home, others leave permanently. While ISIS and other organized radical groups have "gone to ground"

¹ For a very brief description of story arcs, see my November 16, 2017 Commentary, "[Transmitting Thoughts Through Writing](#)."

around the world, having lost a territorial base in Syria/Iraq, terrorism is still a threat.

- Kurds in northern Iraq, eastern Turkey, northwest Syria, and northwest Iran increasingly desire independence and a homeland of their own, particularly if they cannot get a fair solution of participation in the Iraqi government and revenue from oil facilities in their territory. The land Kurds live on corresponds to the territory of ancient Assyria.
- Turkey is very anti-Kurd (and the Kurds react accordingly). They seem to want to hold their own Kurdish population hostage and are unwilling to discuss border changes to assist creation of a Kurdish state.
- Shiite Muslims in Iraq are mostly Arabs making up two thirds of Iraq's population, right next to overwhelmingly Shiite Muslim Iran with a larger population than Iraq. Sunni Muslims in Iraq formerly held government power, but no longer. They may turn to the Gulf States, and particularly Saudi Arabia.
- Iran seems expansive with proxy troops in Iraq, Syria, and perhaps in Yemen (a country in the southwest corner of the Arabian Peninsula). Low oil prices are hurting its economy.
- Syria is continuing its collapse into failed-state status. Syria's eastern borders have dissolved. The only firm borders it has now are with Israel and western Turkey. Its border with Lebanon is extremely porous, as is its long desert border with Jordan.
- Lebanon seems to be losing its constitutional government, with no good future in sight.
- Saudi Arabia just had its old king abdicate in favor of a younger successor, his son. He is cracking down on unrest inside and outside the kingdom, and is attempting to decrease the Sunni radicalism that began in the 1920s. (See the May 2016 ASK article by George Friedman and John Mauldin, "[Saudi Arabia, a Failing Kingdom](#).")
- Egypt is forming increasingly closer ties with Saudi Arabia. Egypt's population and Saudi funds could make for a working relationship that would control the Suez Canal, a major world trade pipeline.
- Israel is increasingly being friendly with Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Israel has been a de facto partner with Jordan for decades. All three Arab countries are moving toward publicly formalizing relations with Israel. Such a move will weaken Palestinian political power. An informal Egypt-Israel-Saudi relationship could be very productive. Israel is a world-class technological power.

Nothing is on the horizon for any of these countries but chaos and low-level warfare. None acknowledge YHWH as Lord and King. Israel is a secular nation; its people have given up overt paganism. Of course, several things are different from ancient times. Populations are enormous in these countries, technology based war is hellishly expensive, but religion is still a cause of war.

There will come in the future a change of heart in the people of Israel and around the world. God will remove the veil from Israel's eyes, and their ears will be opened to learn from God's Word. Read Dr. Martin's 1997 article "[The Coming Collapse of Traditional Religious Foundations](#)" for insight into this future situation. Chaos will continue for decades to come.

Enjoy this month's article.

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