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Israel and Judah:

31. Prophets, Writings, and Kings

by David Sielaff, August 2018

Read the August 1, 2018 Commentary "[Prophets North and South](#)"

Then read the accompanying [Newsletter for August 2018](#)

Israel and Judah: 31

Prophets,
Writings,
and Kings

THE SITUATION: This episode begins the interplay of three prophets with the Kings of Israel and Judah. Those three prophets wrote books of the Bible. Their relationship and interaction with the Israel and Judah is examined. Then the reigns of the last six kings of the Kingdom of Israel over 42 years are given in just 34 verses. Dated from the reign of Azariah (Uzziah) of Judah, the kings and people of Israel fell deeper into disobedience and idolatry. YHWH's patience ended as His prophets were rejected.

The Old Testament is composed of three sections: the Law of Moses (the Torah), the Prophets, and the Writings (or Psalms as Jesus called them), as shown in "[The Geographical Design of the Holy Scriptures](#)" and explained in Dr. Ernest Martin's book, [Restoring the Original Bible](#). Note "[Chapter 4: The Tripartite Divisions](#)" of *Restoring*. One narrative of Israel and Judah is found in the books of Samuel-Kings in the Prophets section and the other narrative of Israel and Judah is in the Writings section. That would be First and Second Chronicles, considered to be a single book or scroll by the Jews. Again, I use the Concordant Literal Version for both Old and New Testament passages, so read verses quoted here in your favorite translations for different perspectives.

The Prophets section of the Bible contains 6 books: Joshua-Judges (one book), Samuel-Kings (one book), were the "Former Prophets," while *Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel*, and the single "book" of the 12 *Minor Prophets*^a were collectively called the "Latter Prophets." We focus on the last four (*italicized*) books in this discussion.

First and Second Chronicles, one book or scroll, is the last book of the Writings section and the last book of the Old Testament according to the Jewish order. Thus one narrative of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah is found in the Prophets section (Samuel-Kings) and the second narrative is in the Writings section

^a The twelve Minor Prophets collectively are considered as one "book" in the Hebrew canon and anciently they were thought to be a single "scroll." Scholars can show each writing of the Minor Prophets is linked in several ways to one before and after it. For example Amos has verbal links to Joel before and to Obadiah after it. See "[The Minor Prophets for Today](#)."

(Chronicles). Each give a different perspective.

I personally wish Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Minor Prophets told more about major historical events, changes among royal families and dynasties in their writings. (Isaiah in particular is not presented in chronological order and some later chapters tell events in reverse order.^b) Such information would be useful in fixing the chronologies of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. In turn, such a proper understanding of the sequence of events would help us better understand when and how prophecies were fulfilled, so we could apply those principles to prophecies future to us.

After the flood, God spoke indirectly to the people of Israel and Judah through prophets like Moses, Samuel, Elijah, Elisha, etc., and more directly through the prophets of the four books whose writings we have in our Bibles. Still later God spoke to us through His Son:

“By many portions and many modes, of old, God, speaking to the fathers in the prophets, in the last of these days speaks to us in a Son, Whom He appoints enjoyer of the allotment of all.”

• *Hebrews 1:1–2*

The “Latter Prophets”

Scholars collectively call the writings of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve Minor Prophets the “Latter Prophets.” God chose relevant writings of theirs to be collected and preserved to fulfill three purposes of God.

First, these writings told the people and future generations about God’s opinions regarding political, military, and spiritual events, evils, sins great and small, as well as telling of God’s many mercies toward His people.

Second, these writings give us detailed information of what the people of Israel and Judah thought, beyond the momentous political and historical events.

Third, they gave the people hope even at times of darkest despair that God had punished them but not rejected them completely. The future salvation through the Messiah was a large part of that hope.

Structure of the Twelve Minor Prophets

1	<i>Assyrian Period</i>	}	Hosea
2			Joel
3			Amos
4			Obadiah
5			Jonah
6			Micah
7			Nahum
8	<i>Babylonian Period</i>	}	Habakkuk
9			Zephaniah
10	<i>Post-Babylonian Period</i>	}	Haggai
11			Zechariah
12			Malachi

These prophetic books of the “Latter Prophets” make only occasional mention of triumphs for God’s people, when they occurred because of God’s mercy. The triumphs were too often turned quickly to even greater failure by worse sinning and defiance toward YHWH.

These four books contain most of the prophetic information of the future Davidic Messiah and Savior Jesus Christ, even though that knowledge was only dimly understood by the prophets themselves. It was even less understood by the people of their day (as the prophecies were misunderstood by Jews in the 1st century AD). Nonetheless, details of the Messiah’s first coming to this earth were presented mostly in these four books for a testimony to our time about Christ’s second coming in our future. See my article “[Christ and Messiah](#).”

The books of the Latter Prophets give us a record of how God proved His love to all His people Israel even when they continued to disobey. We receive from those books a large amount of data beyond the narrative accounts of Samuel-Kings and Chronicles. The Latter Prophets give us a large amount of God’s thinking regarding the sins of His chosen people. Then we are given YHWH’s responses according to the Covenant

^b Isaiah’s first 35 of 66 chapters do have some connection between prophetic commentaries and historical events and people in his lifetime. Several incidents and visions of Isaiah are dated to specific events in the reigns of the kings of Judah (for example Isaiah 6:1, 14:28) and other historical events such as Isaiah 20:1. Later in chapters 36–39, Isaiah’s commentaries and prophecies do have an historical narrative like Samuel-Kings and Chronicles to describe detailed events. This will provide for the Israel and Judah series a third column of textual data to compare and contrast when we usually have one or two.

between God and His people Israel. Much of that data is in God’s own words, given to the people of Israel and Judah through His prophets, written down in detail for us to read. See Chapter 3, “[Progressive Revelation](#)” of Dr. Martin’s book, *The Essentials of New Testament Doctrine*.

Ezra the Priest Spoke to the Returnees from Exile about the Latter Prophets

Below read what Ezra the Priest said to those gathered in Jerusalem after their return from exile in Babylon and Mesopotamia. Ezra looked back at the history of the people. Ezra reviewed their ancestral story from Abram to the exile (Nehemiah 9:6–32), pointing out the seeming endless cycle of Israel’s disobedience, God’s punishment, and then God’s mercy and even blessing — and then another round of disobedience, punishment, etc. Even after YHWH dispossessed and exiled them, God remembered His people and provided for their return. Ezra told those returnees that their presence in Jerusalem on that day proved YHWH’s mercy. God had not abandoned His people. Here is part of Ezra’s message:

TEXT: Ezra Summarizes Israel’s History after the Return from Exile

Nehemiah 9:31–35

³¹ Yet in Your great compassion You did not make an extermination of them, and You did not forsake them, for You are the gracious and compassionate El.

³² And now, our Elohim, the great, masterful and fear-inspiring El, Who are keeping the covenant and the benignity [*mercy*], let not all the stress [*or troubles*] appear little before You that came upon us, our kings, our chiefs, our priests and our prophets, on our fathers and all of Your people, **from the days of the kings of Assyria until this day**.

³³ You [*God*] have been in the right regarding everything that has come upon us; for You acted faithfully, yet [1] we, **we did wickedness**. ³⁴ Our kings, our chiefs, our priests and our fathers, [2] neither did they observe Your law, [3] nor did they pay attention to Your instructions and Your testimonies with which You testified against them.

³⁵ When they were in their own kingdom, in Your great goodness that You bestowed on them, and in the wide and fertile land that You provided before them, [4] **they did not serve You** and [5] **did not turn back from their evil practices**. **[end text]**

Ezra confirmed everything we read in the Israel and Judah saga. The violations of covenant, the sins, the idolatry, and the wickedness, all of it was true as Ezra said, and the people knew it to be true because their relatives told them so.

Verse 31. God had the right to exterminate all the people of Israel from the earth, as He did with the flood except for eight people. Twice when Israel rebelled, God asked Moses to decide if He should destroy Israel and begin Israel again through Moses (Exodus 32:9–11; Numbers 14:1–12). Regarding God’s great mercy, note how His mercy will extend even into “**the latter days**” (Deuteronomy 4:30–31). What did Moses mean

Sequence of Events (Refer to This as Needed)

Isaiah and 7 of the Minor Prophets live during the **Assyrian Period**.

Isaiah, Hosea, Joel, and Amos prophesy in the reigns of Uzziah of Judah and Jeroboam II of Israel.

Last 6 kings of Israel reign during the **Assyrian Period**.

Jeremiah, Ezekiel and 2 of the Minor prophets live during the **Babylonian Period**.

Daniel (recorded in “Writings”) and 3 of the Minor Prophets live in the **Post-Babylonian Period**

Ezra the Priest lives in the **Post-Babylonian Period**. He tells about their evil ancestors, God’s mercy, and return from exile.

The apostle Peter after Pentecost tells of future Seasons of Refreshing and Times of Restoration.

by “**the latter days**”? Read “[Mosaic Prophecies for the End-Time.](#)”

Verse 32. The writings of the Latter Prophets began in “**days of the kings of Assyria**” until the time of Ezra and Nehemiah.^c The people of Israel knew. They were informed by Moses, the Prophets, and the Writings (at least half the Psalms for example were extant) that existed in their time. They had no excuse. As Prof. James Nogalski tells us, a new element came into the prophetic formula, why did the writings of the prophets begin when they did? The books of the Latter Prophets tell of YHWH’s cumulative punishments that began in the 8th century BC with the ascendancy of the Assyrian empire. The result and effect of God’s punishments included the exile of Israel and Judah, as well as the occupation of the land by foreigners, all lasting into the period of the Persian Empire.^d

Verses 33–35. God is just, Ezra says, and the punishments Israel received were deserved. Ezra pointed out that everyone from the top to bottom of society deserved the punishment received. The leaders and people wanted to ignore God, to be left alone, and forget their Covenant with Him. Unfortunately for them, God is faithful to His commitments, His words, and He will not abandon His Covenant or His people.

The Narratives of Second Kings and Second Chronicles — and the Prophetic Books

From here to the end of the narrative of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, the prophetic books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Minor Prophets “plug in” to and are part of the sequence of events of Second Kings and Second Chronicles. However, there are difficulties. Only limited portions of those four prophetic books contain narratives to identify and link the prophecies with the histories of Kings and Chronicles. How does anyone identify how any given prophecy relates to a specific event or even the period when the prophecy was given? The largest section relating to the narratives is during Hezekiah’s 27-year reign when the writings of Isaiah directly relate to the histories.

Other than those exceptions, large sections of the Latter Prophets tell how the people of the Kingdoms related to (or rather ignored) the Law of Moses, disobeyed their Covenant with God, allowed or practiced idolatry, and how God would punish them as He said He would. We are not given specifics as we would wish.

Problems of Prophecy

The prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Minor Prophets have four possible times of fulfillment:

1. Fulfillment to happen within the near future or a few decades from when the prophecy was given.
2. Fulfillment to happen in New Testament times relating to the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, His death, resurrection, post-ascension events, as well as the ministry of the apostles.
3. Fulfillment still future to us today, particularly when Christ returns bringing the Kingdom of God to this earth.
4. Fulfillment of some prophecies that have dual or triple realization, part in the past, part still in our future or even our far future as explained in “[The ‘Great Generation’ and Modern Prophecy.](#)”

Number 4 may be disheartening to some. How could we ever know the truth? Nonetheless, statement Number 4 is true if you read Dr. Martin’s article and God can and will help us understand the truth of these matters.

The issues in understanding even one prophecy are complex and our information is incomplete, yet we know more than the apostles did at the end of their lives. For any single prophecy, dozens of questions can be asked about who, what, when, and why it will be fulfilled. A large number of them will be, although a perfect understanding will not come to us until our resurrections to immortality. Then all will make perfectly good

^c Ezra was a major compiler of First and Second Chronicles.

^d James D. Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve: Hosea–Jonah*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary Series (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2011), 43–44.

sense to us. Read “[God’s Inspiration Made Clear](#)” to learn about the issues regarding prophecies of Christ.

This inherent complexity of prophecy was one reason Dr. Martin wrote numerous articles about prophecy, but never wrote a full-length book on the subject of future prophecy. Articles can be changed as new knowledge becomes available, and the ASK website updated with the new information. Books linger far longer, and some people prefer older information even if the author demonstrated that old information was wrong. See my July 2017 Commentary, “[Dr. Martin’s Original Writings](#).”

On the other hand, Dr. Martin’s books on history and doctrine are still very relevant, insightful, informative, and revolutionary as they guide people to a better understanding of the Scriptures, the ultimate source of knowledge about God for mankind. That is the goal of ASK and hopefully the goal of every Bible teacher:

“All scripture is inspired by God, and is beneficial for teaching, for exposure, for correction, for discipline in righteousness, [why?] that the man of God may be equipped, fitted out for every good act.”

• *2 Timothy 3:16–17*

Refreshing and Restitution of All Things

Dr. Martin and I have written often in ASK articles, that a “**restitution of all things**” is promised by God, as the apostle Peter taught just days after Pentecost:

“Yet what God announces before through the mouth of all the prophets — the suffering of His Christ — He thus fulfills. Repent, then, and turn about for the erasure of your sins, so that seasons of refreshing should be coming from the face of the Lord, and He should dispatch the One fixed upon before for you, Christ Jesus,

Whom heaven must indeed receive until the times of restoration of all which God speaks through the mouth of His holy prophets who are from the eon [age].”

• *Acts 3:18–21*

Israel and the Jews did not repent in the time of Acts or while Peter was alive. Some believers fell away because prophecies did not occur when they thought fulfillment should have come. After the revelation of the Mystery demonstrated to the apostle Paul and others that Christ’s return would be far in an unknown future, as would the “**seasons of refreshing**” and “**times of restitution.**” Yes, the repentance of Israel will occur before Christ returns. The sequence will be as follows:

- (1) Israel will repent. This means many if not most of the people of Israel will accept Christ as their Savior before Christ returns. Through the apostle Paul we know this now includes Gentile believers (which includes most of you reading this today). This Jewish or Israelite conversion will energize the preaching and teaching of the Gospel to the world.
- (2) Then the “**seasons** [*kairoi*, plural] **of refreshing**” in verse 19 will occur. This will reinforce Israel’s repentance. Many events will be involved in this fulfillment. Note, there will be more than one season of refreshing: “**seasons** [plural] **of refreshing**,” which means at least two periods of time or seasons are involved. Who knows how one “season” will be distinguished from the other? I do know that this will take time for the information to “sink in” to the tens of thousands of minds God will open.
- (3) Only then will Christ return, or “**until** [but not before] **the times** [*chronoun*, verse 21] **of restoration.**”^e Several “times” or eras will coalesce.

^e Two other passages use both Greek terms for time:

[1] Acts 1:7, “**times** [*kronous*] **or eras** [*kairous*],” where neither has the definite article in Greek, and

[2] First Thessalonians 5:1, “**the times** [*kronon*] **and the eras** [*kairon*],” both have the definite article in Greek.

Verse 21 says explicitly that Christ will not return — indeed cannot return — **until after** “the seasons [Greek *kairoi*, plural] **of refreshing ... Whom heaven must receive until the times** [Greek *chronoun*, also plural] **of restoration of all,**” as verse 21 clearly says. The “*kairoi* of refreshing” and the “*chronoun* of restoration” are the same event expressed in different terms for time. The first refers to an era of good feeling, the second refers to the time sequence in history. Both are good periods that bring glory to God.^f

What Will be Refreshed? What Will be Restored?

One thing refreshed and restored will a better understanding of the prophecies from the Latter Prophets to be fulfilled before Christ returns.

We will be able to compare how prophecies were fulfilled in the past with events happening on the world stage when the prophecies were written.

We will not have perfect understanding.

We will not know precisely when Christ will return (even then date-setting will be a fool’s errand), but we will be close as more and more predicted events take place.

We will understand why prophecies are occurring as they happen before our eyes. As our knowledge increases about the events themselves, and from being able to check off events as they are “fulfilled,” we will be able to look forward to the next prophesied event. The same knowledge will be available to everyone, but not everyone will understand. This was the case in ancient Israel and Judah, and in the 1st century AD in the days of Jesus and the apostles.

We will learn and know these histories and prophecies much better before Christ comes back to this earth. It will not be through the effort of one person or one organization. No single event will open up all prophecy. And our understanding is unlikely to be opened from any sign or wonder.

God Will Activate the Refreshing and Restoration

There will be another part of the refreshing and restoration of all things in addition to the repentance of Israel and a better understanding of prophecies. A further important aspect is that all mankind will be refreshed and restored to knowledge of God, and God Himself will do it. Yes, God will reveal Himself to mankind. How will He do this? Will it be done by some spectacular worldwide vision or supernatural announcement?

No.

God will reveal Himself through the “**wise of the world**” and they will suddenly discover facts and information that will give irrefutable evidence of God in creation. It will not happen all at once. It likely will begin slowly, and then a torrent of discoveries will come forth, one after another. It will happen in every field of science and in every avenue of human study. In the near future God will begin to allow the floodgates of knowledge about Himself to break open.

The “**wisdom of this world**” (1 Corinthians 1:20, 27) will be forced to acknowledge new facts added to the mass of what is already known, but is rejected because of bias. God will not permit most of the wise to accept the truth. Until He allows that opening to begin, the current situation will continue,

“... that which is known of God is apparent among them, for God manifests it to them. For His invisible attributes are described [made known] from the creation of the world, being apprehended by His achievements, besides His imperceptible power and divinity, for them to be defenseless.”

• ***Romans 1:19–20***

The phrase “**being apprehended by His achievements**” is expressed (perhaps better) in the King James Version as “**being understood by the things that are made**” (Romans 1:20). Some of the wise already know the truth, but have kept it secret as Paul tells us:

^f See “[The Coming Revolution in Knowledge](#),” “[The Greatest Revolution in Human History](#),” “[Restitution and the Temple](#),” and “[The Elijah to Come](#),” along with other links within these articles.

“For God’s indignation is being revealed from heaven on all the irreverence and injustice [or unrighteousness] of men who are retaining the truth in injustice [unrighteousness].”

• **Romans 1:18**

God will temporarily suspend His wrath, His anger, in conjunction with the conversion of the Jews and Israel. He will briefly allow knowledge of His creation to enter the minds of the wise and be accepted, for a period of time, temporarily removing the blindness of the wise of the world. God is entirely justified in doing so. Read all of Romans chapter 1. A new renaissance about everything known will come about once a true foundation of knowledge is established. That foundation is the fear of God, as Solomon wrote:

“The wise one may also hear and add to his education, And the one of understanding may acquire skills — To understand proverb and puzzle, The words of the wise and their enigmas: The fear of Yahweh is the beginning of knowledge; Wisdom and admonition the foolish ones despise.”

• **Proverbs 1:5–7**

Wisdom also follows from the same fear of YHWH (Proverbs 9:10; Job 28:28; Psalm 111:10).

Daniel and God’s Revelation of Knowledge

Read what Daniel said about God’s control of the world, **“He is altering the eras and the stated times, causing kings to pass away and causing kings to rise, ...”** (Daniel 2:21). We know this is certainly true from the saga of Israel and Judah alone. Then note what Daniel said about God’s control of knowledge and its revelation to mankind. Daniel says God is:

“granting wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those knowing understanding. He is revealing the deep and the concealed things, knowing what is in the darkness, and the stream of light with Him unties knots.”

• **Daniel 2:21–22**

God will open “the wisdom of the world” to understand His presence in creation. He will do that for a brief period of time. He will do for the wise of the world what He did for Daniel before Nebuchadnezzar:

“To You, O Eloah of my fathers, I am acclaiming and lauding, for wisdom and mastery have You granted to me. And now You have made known to me what we petitioned of You, for the king’s matter have You made known to us.”

• **Daniel 2:23**

God will do this as an object lesson to mankind. After humanity accepts God’s existence, humanity will then reject Him — again — and accept the lies of the false prophet and antichrist before Christ returns.

God can judge mankind when they will quickly accept, begin to ignore, then finally reject Him and receive a fraud, just as the people did in the times of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah.

There will be a multitude of recognizable events, insights, and discoveries in the studies of archaeology, history, and every realm of science — all leading the world to the conclusion that (1) God exists, and (2) He should be obeyed. What human beings will quickly reject is that God must be obeyed.

If it were to be one or two events to open the larger understanding of God’s prophecies, their effectiveness would be diminished.

Did the people in Noah’s time know what was coming when the deluge of rain and catastrophes began? Yes, but for them it was too late. Did Israel and Judah know the prophecies of God were true when the prophesied judgments upon them began to happen? Yes, but for them it was too late. They cried out to God, but His patience and mercy had an end. Death, destruction, and horror came upon every one of the people, as we will read in future episodes of Israel and Judah.

“For my Lord Yahweh is not doing a thing without revealing His deliberation to His servants, the prophets.”

• **Amos 3:7**

The three Major Prophets and the Minor Prophets each received the Word of God giving prophecies, admonitions, encouragements, and warnings. The words were written for our benefit, so we could read them today.^g

What good are prophecies that were spoken, recorded, but when they are fulfilled are not understood? How many people in the 1st century AD understood the prophecies about the Messiah who came in their lifetime? Only a minority of Jews (and they had the Old Testament Scriptures) and later some Gentiles.

Why should we expect to understand prophecies yet to be fulfilled? Jesus told believers who were, without realizing it at the time, asking questions of Him through whom all creation was accomplished:

“Jesus, then, said to the Jews who have believed Him, ‘if ever you should be remaining in My word, you are truly My disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.’”

• **John 8:31–32**

“Who is the Image of the invisible God, Firstborn of every creature, for in Him is all created, that in the heavens and that on the earth, ... all is created through Him and for Him, and He is before all, and all has its cohesion in Him.”

• **Colossians 1:15–17**

See also Hebrews 2:10 and 1 Corinthians 8:6–7. With all this in mind, look at the interesting and connected opening verses of three important prophetic books:

TEXT: Introducing the Prophets Isaiah, Hosea, and Amos

Isaiah 1:1	Hosea 1:1	Amos 1:1
<p>¹ The vision of Isaiah son of Amoz which he <u>perceived concerning Judah</u> and <u>Jerusalem</u>, in the days of <u>Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah</u>, kings of Judah.</p>	<p>¹ The word of Yahweh which came to Hosea, son of Beerī, in the days of <u>Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah</u>, kings of Judah, and in the days of <u>Jeroboam</u>, son of Joash, <u>king of Israel</u>.</p>	<p>¹ The words of Amos, who came to be among the herdsmen of Tekoa, which he <u>perceived concerning Israel</u> in the days of <u>Uzziah</u> king of Judah, and in the days of <u>Jeroboam</u>, son of Joash, <u>king of Israel</u>, two years <u>before</u> the earthquake. [end text]</p>

The first thing you notice in these verses is the similarity and repetition of expression one to another that is intentional. Hosea’s first verse connects with the opening verses of Isaiah and Amos by obvious but different expressions. Isaiah is a major prophet while Hosea and Amos are two of the early so-called “Minor Prophets,” minor because they are shorter than Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.^h (Review the chart on page 2 of this article.)

^g The apostle Paul wrote about Old Testament events, including the failures of the leaders, kingdoms and people of Israel and Judah. They are written down for our benefit (Romans 15:4):

“For whatever was written before, was written for this teaching of ours, that through the endurance and the consolation of the scriptures we may have expectation [hope].”

Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 10:11 about the sins and judgments upon the people of Israel after the Exodus:

“Now all this befalls them typically. Yet it was written for our admonition, to whom the consummations of the eons have attained.”

^h See the four articles “[Introduction to Isaiah](#)” (which contains an outline of the Book of Isaiah), “[Isaiah, Part 2](#)”, “[Isaiah, Part 3](#)”, “[Isaiah, Part 4](#),” and then the articles on “[The Book of Hosea](#)” (with outline), and “[The Book of Amos](#)” (with outline).

Isaiah's prophetic ministry lasted at least 50 years (some think as many as 80 years), with several decades in the Assyrian Period before the destruction of the Kingdom of Israel,ⁱ and an equal time in the Babylonian Period. The Book of Isaiah is a complete life's study in itself. The depth and range of topics in Isaiah is staggering. The range of topics in the Minor Prophets is also surprising, covering hundreds of years.

Isaiah 1:1 and Hosea 1:1. The prophetic ministries of these two prophets deal with the period of the same kings of Judah. Their names are similar: *Isaiah* means "YHWH saves," *Hosea* means "YHWH is salvation" or "YHWH helps." Isaiah and Hosea both had children whose names had prophetic significance (Isaiah 8:1–4, Hosea 1:3–11).

Twice Isaiah gives specific years when his prophecies relate to the death of kings (Isaiah 6:1, 14:28) and two other times he dates his prophecies to other events (20:1, 36:1).

Isaiah's prophecies are mostly about aspects of the sins of the people and rulers of Judah. Hosea's prophecies concern the northern kingdom of Israel almost exclusively. However, while Hosea's prophecies are for and about Israel, they were compiled (perhaps by Isaiah) for the purpose of educating the people of Judah so they would not make the same mistakes Israel made.^j God's point of view is perfectly expressed by the Minor Prophet Zechariah regarding the general disobedience to God, their disregard for the specifics toward their Covenant with God, and their blatant idolatry (in both Israel and Judah):

11 "Yet **they** refused to attend [be attentive], and **they** turned a stubborn shoulder, and **they** made **their** ears heavy against hearing,¹² and **they** made **their** hearts like corundum [a hard stone] against hearing the law and the words which Yahweh of hosts sent by His spirit, by means of the former prophets.

So great wrath came from Yahweh of hosts.¹³ And it came to be, just as He called and **they** would not hear, so let **them** call, and I shall not hear, says Yahweh of hosts."

• *Zechariah 7:11–13*

Those words are ominous for us to read today, but did they have an impact on the audience of Zechariah? Probably not. The people of all twelve tribes of Israel were a stiff-necked people. God called, "**they would not hear**"; when they called in their suffering, God eventually said, "**I shall not hear.**" And He did not hear.

Isaiah 1:1 and Amos 1:1. Isaiah's prophecies spoke mostly to Judah and Jerusalem. Amos was a prophet to Israel, although he was from Tekoa in Judah about 11 miles south of Jerusalem, beyond Bethlehem.

There is no connection between *Amoz* in Isaiah 1:1 and *Amos* in Amos 1:1. They are different people spelled with different Hebrew consonants at the end of each name.

Isaiah 1:1. This "**vision**," singular, refers to judgments upon Judah contained in the first five chapters.

Hosea 1:1 and Amos 1:1. The prophecies of Hosea cover a longer time than those of Amos, but both cover periods during the reigns of Uzziah of Judah and Jeroboam II of Israel. Both are directed to Israel.

Hosea 1:1. Hosea speaks to Israel, not Judah, often referring to Israel as "Ephraim." The sites for pagan worship multiplied from the first idolater of the kingdom of Israel, the founder Jeroboam I. By Hosea's time, sanctuaries to pagan gods (and to YHWH) were in the additional cities of Bethaven, Ephraim, Gibeah, Gilead, Gilgal, Mizpah, Ramah, Samaria, and Tabor.^k

Amos 1:1. The written prophecies of Amos began "**Two years before the earthquake.**" The name Amos means "burden" in Hebrew. This refers to a noteworthy and powerful seismic event. It was a judgment from YHWH that occurred during the reigns of Uzziah of Judah and Jeroboam II of Israel.

ⁱ The prophet Micah was also contemporary with Isaiah but toward the latter part of Isaiah's prophetic ministry. Jeremiah and Ezekiel's prophetic ministries occurred exclusively within the Babylonian Period.

^j Most every biblical writing had several hands who touched the text that we have today, and all had the authority to do so (2 Timothy 3:16). After the initial writers there were editors who chose and arranged the writings.

^k Ingram Cobbin, *The Bible Remembrancer: Containing an Analysis of the Whole Bible* (London: 1848), 71.

Amos and Bethel, an Event in the Reign of Jeroboam II

The city of Bethel is mentioned 7 times in the Book of Amos (Amos 3:14, 4:4, 5:5–6, 7:10, 13). At a time toward the end of the reign of Jeroboam II during the prophetic ministry of Amos, an encounter occurred between YHWH's prophet and a pagan priest at or near a pagan sanctuary in the city of Bethel (*beth-el* means "house of god" in Hebrew). Bethel is south of the capital of Samaria in the northern kingdom of Israel, but is closer to Jerusalem to the south.

Additional background information on the situation in the northern kingdom of Israel at the time is concisely given in an article that mentions Jeroboam II¹

"The sanctuary at Beth-el was kept up in royal state (Amos 7:13), while drunkenness, licentiousness, and oppression prevailed in the country (Amos 2:6–8, 4:1, 6:6; Hosea 4:12–14, 1:2), and idolatry was united with the worship of Jehovah (Hosea 4:13, 13:6).

During this reign [of Jeroboam II] lived the prophets Hosea (Hosea 1:1), Joel (compare Joel 3:16 with Amos 1:12), Amos (Amos 1:1), and Jonah (2 Kings 14:25)."

- **"Jeroboam," McClintock and Strong Biblical Cyclopaedia**

The god (or gods) worshipped in Bethel is not specified. It may have been a sanctuary or temple of YHWH, which was against Mosaic, Davidic and God's decrees. Remember that YHWH was worshipped in the kingdom of Israel along with pagan gods in several sanctuaries which was intolerable to God.

TEXT: The Vision of Amos and His Confrontation with a Pagan Priest

Amos 7:7–17

⁷ Thus Yahweh shows me: And behold, my Lord is stationed on a plumbline wall. And in His hand is a plumbline. ⁸ And Yahweh is saying to me, **"What are you seeing, Amos?"** and I am saying, **"A plumbline."** And my Lord is saying,

"Behold Me placing a plumbline in the midst of My people Israel; I shall not continue to pass by them any longer.

- ⁹ [1] **The high-places of Isaac will be made desolate,**
 [2] **And the grand sanctuary of Israel shall be deserted. And**
 [3] **I rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword."**

¹⁰ Amaziah, priest of Bethel, is sending to Jeroboam, king of Israel, saying:

"Amos conspires against you in the midst of the house of Israel. The land is not able to contain all his words. ¹¹ For thus says Amos, 'By the sword shall Jeroboam die. And Israel shall be carried away, yea carried away into exile off his ground.'"

¹² And Amaziah is saying to Amos,

"Vision seer, go! Run your way to the land of Judah, and there eat your bread, and there you shall prophesy. ¹³ Yet at Bethel you shall not continue to prophesy further, [why?] for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is the royal palace."

¹⁴ Yet Amos is answering and saying to Amaziah,

"I am not a prophet, nor am I a son of a prophet. For I am a herder and a puncturer of sycamore figs. ¹⁵ And Yahweh is taking me from following the flock, and Yahweh is saying to me, 'Go, prophesy to My people Israel.'

¹⁶ **And now, hear the word of Yahweh: You are saying [to me Amos], 'You shall not prophesy against**

¹ Jeroboam II followed the evil activities of his ancestor Jeroboam I who founded the kingdom of Israel about 150+ years before when YHWH spoke to and gave him rule over the northern 10 tribes as first king of the first dynasty (1 Kings chapter 12).

Israel, nor shall you preach against the house of Isaac.’¹⁷ Therefore, thus says Yahweh:

‘Your wife shall commit prostitution in the city,
your sons and your daughters shall fall by the sword, And
your ground shall be split up by the line, And
you shall die on unclean ground;

For Israel shall be carried away, yea carried away into exile off his ground.’”

[end text]

Amos 7:7–8. We know from Amos 1:1 that all his visions occurred during the reign of King Jeroboam II of Israel. In this verse Amos has a vision and describes YHWH at the top of a wall. The vision relates to a confrontation later Amos has with a pagan high priest named Amaziah.^m Amos is asked what he sees in the vision. He gives an answer but does not understand what he saw, so YHWH explains it to him. If a wall is not vertically straight it cannot support itself for long and must to be pulled down. It is like saying the kingdom of Israel is so weak it must be dismantled. God is not willing to overlook Israel’s sins any longer. The time of forbearance and patience is over. **“I shall not continue to pass by them any longer.”**

Amos 7:9. YHWH announces three targets of doom upon two places and one group of people. This is a beginning. More judgment will come to Amaziah personally in verse 17. Amos openly taught the people of Israel about the message of the vision. That was part of what he did as a prophet.

Amos 7:10–11. After the vision, a short but sharp dialogue occurs between a priest of Bethel named Amaziah (whose name means “YHWH is mighty”) who heard reports of what Amos preached and prophesied to the people of Israel about their sins and future punishment for those sins by YHWH. God shall also judge and punish the king and kingdom of Israel.

Amaziah sent a message to Jeroboam II about the message of Amos. Amaziah only appears in this brief passage. There is likely an interesting but missing backstory of prior encounters between Amaziah and Amos.

Amaziah lied about the death of Jeroboam. Kings and Chronicles are silent about how Jeroboam died. As far as we know he died of natural causes. Jeroboam’s heir, Zechariah, began a peaceful transition to reign after his father, for a short time at least. Amos said that YHWH would **“rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.”** Amos did not say that Jeroboam himself would die, as Amaziah incorrectly said.

Instead, God through Amos meant that a descendant of **“the house of Jeroboam”** would die, which happened. Amaziah lied to prejudice Jeroboam so Amos would be killed for the good of the kingdom. Amaziah knew the prophecy of 2 Kings 10:30 (given to Jehu). Amaziah correctly reported Amos saying, **“Israel shall be carried away ... into exile.”** Amos likely reminded all who would listen about the prophecy against Jehu’s descendants. Jeroboam II was the third generation of Jehu. YHWH’s prophecy happened as God said.

Amos 7:12–13. Amaziah knew Amos was a visionary prophet, one who was probably well known. Amaziah spoke directly to Amos, warning him to run away to Judah and prophesy there. Amos was from Judah, an outsider whose words were not welcome in Israel. The pagan sanctuary was under Jeroboam’s protection and Jeroboam had a royal palace in the city of Bethel.

Amos 7:14–15. Amos answered Amaziah, defending himself and giving a well-known statement, **“I am not a prophet, nor am I a son of a prophet.”** The latter phrase meant that he was not one who was taught at the school of prophets (perhaps more than one) in Israel. The ministry of Amos came from God, not from human teachers. He said I, Amos, am doing as YHWH commands. His self-identification as **“a herder and a puncturer of sycamore figs”** has some commentators thinking Amos was a man of substance and perhaps wealthy. His words could mean he had herds of cattle and orchards. Was Amos complaining about the threatened punishment or death by Amaziah or Jeroboam? Perhaps. Being a prophet was dangerous work.

Amos 7:16–17. Amos speaks YHWH’s words to Amaziah. They predict great personal disaster for Amaziah in every aspect of his life: for his wife, his sons and daughters (plurals indicate at least 4 children), the loss of his property, and his death in exile. The public announcement by Amos and the fulfillment put the fear of YHWH into the hearts of the people of Israel, but it was not enough to change their actions.

^m For background on Bethel and the pagan sanctuary there, see 1 Kings 12:32 and its context during the reign of Jeroboam I.

YHWH's prophecy meant that Amaziah would live to see the four events happen sometime before the end of the kingdom of Israel. For the phrase "**you shall die on unclean ground**" and Israel "**... carried away off his [YHWH's] ground,**" the repetition of the word "ground" may mean Amaziah will die outside of God's promised land as one of the early captives exiled by the Assyrians.

Note the last two words, "**his ground,**" meaning YHWH's land given to the northern kingdom. God was now resolved to remove them from "**his ground.**" The exile mentioned at the end of verse 17 may have referred to the first of several captivities. Amaziah being an important religious leader in Israel (or so the Assyrians would think) made him a candidate for early exile where he died "**on unclean ground.**"

Finally, YHWH gave Amos a message of a punishment that Israel will be "**carried away into exile.**" Amos preached that to the people (Amos 7:10 and 17) and repeated it to Amaziah (Amos 7: 17). The people of the kingdom of Israel, King Jeroboam, Amaziah all disbelieved God.

Below is a chart of the last six kings of Israel covered in 2 Kings 15:8–31 so you can better understand the chaos of the times. During this period the kingdom of Assyria was growing more powerful, winning victories most everywhere during a great expansion. No one expected Assyrian power to keep growing, but it did. God used Assyria as His tool to punish Israel. In ancient times events in the larger world happened at a much slower pace, unlike our present day world of sudden action and instant communication.

The Last 6 Kings of Israel	Reign	Cause of Death	Comments
Zechariah (son of Jeroboam II)	6 months	Assassinated by Shallum	38 th year of Uzziah, God's prophecy to Jehu fulfilled at Zechariah's death.
Shallum	1 month	Assassinated by Menahem	39 th year of Uzziah.
Menahem	10 years	Natural causes	39 th year of Uzziah, King Pul of Assyria invades, Menahem bribed Pul to depart.
Pekahiah (son of Menahem)	2 years	Assassinated by Pekah	50 th year of Uzziah.
Pekah	20 years	Assassinated by Hoshea	52 nd year of Uzziah (his last year).
Hoshea	9 years	Killed by Assyrians	Tiglath-pileser destroys Israelite kingdom, Israelites taken captive to Assyria.

The four kings whose names are in **bold text** murdered their predecessor and usurped the throne. **Shallum** had a short reign of 1 month, **Menahem** reigned 10 years, **Pekah** 20 years, and **Hoshea** 9 years. Pekah in his 20 years of rule, along with the Syrians, did great damage to the kingdom of Judah and began a series of events that led to the destruction of the kingdom of Israel.

Back to the Narrative of Israel and Judah

After a long but necessary explanation about the role of the prophets in the saga of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, we now begin the narrative part of Israel and Judah with Part 1 of a synopsis of the first three of the last six last kings of Northern Israel. The events of Part 1 cover a little over 11½ years. "**Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown**" (Shakespeare's *Henry IV*. Part II). This is especially true for the Israelite kings Zechariah, Shallum, Mehaem, and Pekahiah.ⁿ

We ended the last episode "[Israel and Judah: 30. Kings Amaziah & Uzziah of Judah](#)" with events of the long 52-year reign of Azariah/Uzziah, King of Judah and the 41-year reign of Jeroboam II, King of Israel.

ⁿ My article [Conspiracy in Scripture](#) tells of many conspiracies indicated in the Bible, so we should not be surprised when they occur in our day as well. Some conspiracies were against God, others were permitted by God against His people Israel, and still others were instigated by God against His enemies.

They were contemporaries for some 35 years. Some people think one or both of those kings were coregents with their fathers. The idea of coregencies, if any, is just one of many problems regarding the chronologies of the reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah that has not yet been solved. I believe this problem will be addressed by God in the “restitution” and “refreshing” to come in the future.

TEXT: A Summary of the Last Kings of Israel, Part 1

2 Kings 15:8–22

⁸ In the thirty-eighth year of Azariah [Uzziah] (king of Judah), **Zechariah** son of Jeroboam became king over Israel in Samaria for **six months**. ⁹ Yet he did what was evil in the eyes of Yahweh, just as his fathers had done. He did not withdraw from the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, with which he caused Israel to sin.

¹⁰ **Shallum** son of Jabesh conspired against him and smote him at Ibleam. He put him to death and reigned in his stead.

¹¹ As for the rest of the affairs of **Zechariah**, behold they are written on the scroll of the annals of the days of the kings of Israel. ¹² This was in accord with the word of Yahweh that He had spoken to Jehu, saying, “**Sons of yours to the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel.**” And so it came to pass.

¹³ As for **Shallum** son of Jabesh, he became king in the thirty-ninth year of Azariah [Uzziah] (king of Judah), and he reigned a month of days in Samaria. ¹⁴ Then **Menahem** son of Gadi marched up from Tirzah, came to Samaria and smote Shallum son of Jabesh in Samaria. He put him to death and reigned in his stead.

¹⁵ The rest of the affairs of **Shallum** and his conspiracy in which he conspired, behold, they are written on the scroll of the annals of the days of the kings of Israel.

¹⁶ Then, out from Tirzah, **Menahem** smote Tiphshah and all who were in it, and its territories; because it did not open up to him, he smote its people and rent open all its pregnant women.¹⁷ In the thirty-ninth year of Azariah [Uzziah] (king of Judah), **Menahem** son of Gadi became king over Israel for ten years in Samaria. ¹⁸ He did what was evil in the eyes of Yahweh; and he did not withdraw from all the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, with which he caused Israel to sin.

In his days ¹⁹ King Pul of Assyria invaded the land; and **Menahem** gave Pul a thousand talents of silver, so that his hands might be with him to hold the kingdom fast in his own hand. ²⁰ **Menahem** took forth the silver from Israel, from all the masters of ability, to give to the king of Assyria fifty shekels of silver from each one. So the king of Assyria turned back and did not stay there in the land.

²¹ As for the rest of the affairs of Menahem and all that he did, are they not written on the scroll of the annals of the days of the kings of Israel? ²² Then **Menahem** lay down with his fathers, and his son **Pekahiah** reigned in his stead. [end text]

2 Kings 15:8–9. Zechariah of Israel had a short reign of six months, yet he was judged to have done “**what was evil**” according to the judgment of Second Kings. Zechariah’s short reign continued the same pattern set by Jeroboam’s reign as the first King of Israel. One after another, all kings of Israel were evil even when they did useful things to strengthen their kingdom. Only a few experienced brief periods of repentance, none took serious action against idolatry and great evil such as human sacrifice. Dynasties came and went, the evil continued.

Verse 10. No detail is given, just that Shallum murdered Zechariah.

Verse 11. What important “affairs” could Zechariah have accomplished in six months?

Verse 12. The name Zechariah means “YHWH remembers,” and indeed God does remember. In 2 Kings 10:30 God prophesied that Jehu’s dynasty would last to the 4th generation and then it would end. God had Zechariah, the 4th king of Jehu’s dynasty, reign for only six months.

I wonder if Amaziah was beginning to get nervous when Zechariah died? His death and the fulfillment of the prophecy must have been big news in the kingdom of Israel. YHWH remembered His prophecy to Jehu and He will remember all the words He gave to Amos about Amaziah.

Verse 13–14. Shallum’s one-month reign was even shorter than Zechariah’s was. Menahem apparently had a body of men who marched to the capital city of Samaria and murdered Shallum, whose name means “retribution.” YHWH remembered and took retribution against Jehu’s 4th generation by ending Zechariah’s life by an appropriately named man.

As you read these accounts, consider how every person named was probably a notable person in the kingdom of Israel, even their fathers are mentioned. The fathers were also probably important people, otherwise they would not be mentioned. In the days of the prophets, people reading these accounts, or having the stories read to them, knew who all these people were. These were destabilizing events in their time.

Verse 15. Apparently, the details about Shallum’s conspiracy were not important or interesting enough to include in the biblical text of Second Kings.

Verse 16–17. Menahem (whose name ironically means “comforter”) killed everyone in the city of Tiphshah and the surrounding territory to terrorize the rest of the people of Israel. Menahem set an example, and it worked. He ruled for ten years.

Verse 19–20. An important insert is presented here, the invasion of Israel by Pul, king of Assyria. This may have been related to the destruction of Tiphshah, but we cannot be sure. The Assyrian attacks began but Menahem bribed King Pul and became an Assyrian vassal king. Pul returned to Assyria with his army — and Israel’s silver.

Verse 22. Menahem died a natural death, as far as we know. The fact that his son began to reign without further comment seems to confirm that supposition.

Part 2 is a synopsis of the last three kings of northern kings of Israel. The events cover 22 years.

TEXT: A Summary of the Last Kings of Israel, Part 2

2 Kings 15:23–31

²³ In the fiftieth year of Azariah [Uzziah] (king of Judah), **Pekahiah** son of Menahem became king over Israel in Samaria for **two years**. ²⁴ He did what was evil in the eyes of Yahweh; he did not withdraw from the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, with which he caused Israel to sin. ²⁵ His adjutant **Pekah** son of Remaliah conspired against him and smote him in the citadel of the king’s house in Samaria along with Argob and Arieah. And with him were fifty men from the sons of the Gileadites. He put him to death and reigned in his stead. ²⁶ As for the rest of the affairs of **Pekahiah** and all that he did, behold, they are written on the scroll of the annals of the days of the kings of Israel.

²⁷ In the fifty-second year of Azariah [Uzziah] (king of Judah), **Pekah** son of Remaliah became king over Israel in Samaria for **twenty years**. ²⁸ He did what was evil in the eyes of Yahweh; he did not withdraw from the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, with which he caused Israel to sin. ²⁹ In the days of **Pekah** king of Israel, Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria came and took Ijon, Abelbeth-maacah, Janoah, Kedesh, Hazor, Gilead and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali; and he deported them to Assyria.

³⁰ **Hoshea** son of Elah conspired in a conspiracy against **Pekah** son of Remaliah and smote him. He put him to death and reigned in his stead, in the twentieth year of Jotham son of Azariah [Uzziah].

³¹ As for the rest of the affairs of **Pekah** and all that he did, behold, they are written on the scroll of the annals of the days of the kings of Israel. **[end text]**

2 Kings 15:23. Pekahiah, whose name means “YHWH sees,” he inherited the throne from his father Menahem, but he reigned only two years.

Verse 25. Pekah, King Pekahiah’s “adjutant” or trusted aide of some sort, conspired against his king with 50 other men and killed Pekahiah. Two of Pekahiah’s officials are noted, Argob (whose name means *clod*) and Arieah (whose name means *lion*). They were killed along with the king.

Verse 27. Pekah reigned 20 years, a long reign for those times. His name means “opened.” As we will read in the next episode of “Israel and Judah: 32,” Pekah and the king and army of Syria do great injury to the

kingdom of Judah. Judah calls on Assyria to help, but does not call on God to help, a grave mistake.

Verse 29. The Assyrians under King Tiglath-pileser returned, captured, and plundered seven cities or fortresses. Then the Assyrians left. Apparently Assyria did not like one of its vassals acting independently. Considering the meaning of Pekah's name, did this signal the "opening" of Israel to Assyrian judgment?

Verse 30. Pekah was murdered by Hoshea, the last king of Israel. The story of Hoshea's reign will be told in 2 Kings chapter 17. The name Hoshea in Hebrew is the same as Hosea the prophet. His name means "salvation," but things do not work out well for this last king of Israel.

Judah Invaded by Syria and Israel, Assyria Intervenes

The complicated narrative shifts to an extremely busy and complex period during the reigns of Jotham (son of Azariah/Uzziah), King of Judah, when Pekah of Israel and Rezin of Syria invade Judah. Jotham invites Assyria to intervene on behalf of Judah but at a heavy price.

YHWH uses Assyria as His agent to punish Israel as will be detailed and explained next time in the extended saga of 2 Kings 17:1–41 and 18:9–11. The northern kingdom of Israel ended, but before their demise they had great and destructive interactions with the southern kingdom of Judah. Judah survived about 150 years after the fall of the kingdom of Israel.

David Sielaff, August 2018