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# Israel and Judah:

## 39. Kings Manasseh and Amon

by David Sielaff, November 2020

Read the accompanying [Newsletter for November 2020](#)

Israel and Judah: 39

Kings  
Manasseh  
and  
Amon

**THE SITUATION:** Good King Hezekiah has died and Manasseh his son became ruler of Judah (2 Kings 20:21 and 2 Chronicles 32:33). Manasseh had a long reign — fifty-five years.<sup>a</sup> Manasseh was more evil than any king who ruled the people of Judah or Israel. Manasseh was followed by his son Amon. He too was evil and ruled only two years. The reigns of these kings were not good for the people of Judah. YHWH's anger increased, and the harshest of judgments of YHWH upon Judah became inevitable. Judah would suffer for violating their covenant with YHWH.

Beginning at age 12, Manasseh became the personification of an evil ruler. It has been said **“People get the government they deserve.”**<sup>b</sup> God gave the people of the Kingdom of Judah a king they deserved. King David wrote about YHWH's opinion about people:

**“Yahweh is in His holy temple; Yahweh — His throne is in the heavens. His eyes are perceiving; His eyelids are testing the sons of humanity. Yahweh, He is testing the righteous one, Yet the wicked one and the one loving wrong, His soul [YHWH] hates.”**

• *Psalm 11:4–5, Concordant Literal Version*

A different evil king, the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar suffered a judgment from YHWH, seven years living as an animal. At the end of the seven years Nebuchadnezzar wrote a public letter to all his subjects:

**“... the Supreme is in authority in the kingdom of mortals, and He gives it to whomsoever He will, and He sets up over it a lowly one of mortals”**

• *Daniel 4:17*

The KJV has the phrase **“the basest of men.”** These words were written long after Manasseh and Amon were chosen by God to be kings of Judah. They were chosen because they were “lowly” (read that “evil”) mortals.

<sup>a</sup> Manasseh ruled longer than any king of Judah or Israel.

<sup>b</sup> The first person to make this statement is disputed. Some say it was Alexander Hamilton, others say it was the French philosopher and political writer Joseph de Maistre.

***TEXT: Manasseh's Sins and Evils Committed as King of Judah***

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**2 Kings 21:1–10**

<sup>1</sup> Twelve years old was Manasseh when he became king, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem; his mother's name was Hephzi-bah.

<sup>2</sup> [1] He did what was evil in the eyes of Yahweh, according to the abhorrences of the nations which Yahweh had evicted from before the sons of Israel.

<sup>3</sup> [2] So he rebuilt again the high-places that his father Hezekiah had destroyed;

[3] he set up altars for Baal and

[4] made an Asherah pole just as king Ahab of Israel had done.

[5] He bowed himself down to all the host of the heavens and

[6] served them.

<sup>4</sup> [7] He built altars for them in the house of Yahweh of which Yahweh had said,

**“In Jerusalem I shall place My Name.”**

<sup>5</sup> [8] He built altars to all the host of the heavens in the two courts of the house of Yahweh.

<sup>6</sup> [9] He also caused his own son to pass through fire;

[10] he consulted clouds,

[11] practiced augury

[no #12] and

[13] dealt with mediums and wizards.

[14] He performed much more to do what was evil in the eyes of Yahweh to provoke Him to vexation.

<sup>7</sup> [15] The carved Asherah pole that he had made, he placed in the house of which Yahweh had said to David and to Solomon his son:

**“In this house and in Jerusalem which I have chosen from all the tribes of Israel, I shall place My Name for the eon.**

<sup>8</sup> **And I shall not again cause the foot of Israel to wander from the ground that I gave to their fathers, but only if they observe to do according to all that I instructed them, according to the whole law that My servant Moses enjoined on them.”**

<sup>9</sup> Yet they did not hearken, and

[16] Manasseh led them astray to do greater evil than the nations which Yahweh had exterminated from before the sons of Israel.

**2 Chronicles 33:1–10**

<sup>1</sup> Twelve years old was Manasseh when he became king, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem.

<sup>2</sup> [1] He did what was evil in the eyes of Yahweh, according to the abhorrences of the nations which Yahweh had evicted from before the sons of Israel.

<sup>3</sup> [2] So he rebuilt again the high-places that his father Hezekiah had torn down;

[3] he set up altars for the Baalim and

[4] made Asherah poles.

[5] He bowed himself down to all the host of the heavens and

[6] served them.

<sup>4</sup> [7] He built altars for them in the house of Yahweh of which Yahweh had said,

**“My Name shall be in Jerusalem for the eon.”**

<sup>5</sup> [8] He built altars to all the host of the heavens in the two courts of the house of Yahweh.

<sup>6</sup> [9] He also caused his sons to pass through fire in the ravine of the son of Hinnom;

[10] he consulted clouds,

[11] practiced augury,

[12] practiced enchantment and

[13] dealt with mediums and wizards.

[14] He performed much more to do what was evil in the eyes of Yahweh to provoke Him to vexation.

<sup>7</sup> [15] The carved figure that he had made, he placed in the house of the One, Elohim, of which Elohim had said to David and to Solomon his son:

**“In this house and in Jerusalem which I have chosen from all the tribes of Israel, I shall place My Name for the eon.**

<sup>8</sup> **And I shall not again cause the foot of Israel to withdraw from the ground that I affirmed to your fathers, but only if they observe to do all that I instructed them, according to the whole law *and statutes and ordinances by the hand of Moses*.”**

<sup>9</sup> Yet

[16] Manasseh led Judah and the dwellers of Jerusalem astray to do greater evil than the nations which Yahweh had exterminated from before the sons of Israel.

<sup>10</sup> So Yahweh spoke by means of His servants the prophets, saying, ...

<sup>10</sup> So Yahweh spoke to Manasseh and to his people, but they paid no attention. ... [end text]

**2 Kings 21:1 and 2 Chronicles 33:1.** Manasseh was just twelve years old when he began his reign of 55 years. He was born after Hezekiah was healed from his illness. YHWH extended Hezekiah's life for 15 years. Review these verses on Hezekiah praying in the Temple:

**“Hezekiah turned his face around to the sidewall and prayed to Yahweh ...**  
[YHWH heard, and instructed the prophet Isaiah]

**... ‘Turn back and say to Hezekiah, the governor of My people, Thus speaks Yahweh, the Elohim of your father David:**

**I have heard your prayer; I have seen your tears. Behold,  
I am healing you; on the third day you shall go up to the house of Yahweh. And  
I will **add to your days fifteen years**; and from the palm of the king of Assyria  
I shall rescue you and this city.  
I will protect this city on My own account and on account of My servant David.”**

• **2 Kings 20:2, 5–6**

Manasseh was born three years after Hezekiah began his 15-year life extension and was 12 when he became king. See my November 2020 Commentary, “[When Did Isaiah Die?](#)”

There is no indication that Manasseh had a trusted teacher, a moral guide, counselor, or advisor as other young royal princes in Scripture had to teach them religion, ethics, and leadership.<sup>c</sup> Manasseh did not have someone explaining how a good king rules. Certainly, the writings of Kings David and Solomon, and the histories of Judean and Israelite kings were all available to Manasseh. Righteousness and doing good bring blessing; sin and evil bring punishment. He could have read the warnings of the Prophets beginning with Moses through Isaiah and Micah in his own time. Manasseh could have had Hezekiah's writings read to him.

The name Manasseh means “who makes to forget.” Manasseh forgot his family roots of good kings like David, Jehoash, and his father Hezekiah.

The name “Manasseh” was first given in Genesis 41:51 for the first of twin sons born to the patriarch Joseph (the son of Jacob). In Hebrew, the word *nashshani* means “forget.” Note:

**“Two sons were born to Joseph ere the year of the famine came. Asenath, daughter of Potiphara priest of On, bore them for him. Joseph called the name of the firstborn **Manasseh**: For Elohim has made me oblivious of [1] all my toil and [2] all my father's house. He called the name of the second Ephraim [meaning “fruitful”]: For Elohim has made me fruitful in the land of my humiliation [Egypt].”**

• **Genesis 41:51**

Why did Hezekiah name his son Manasseh? Perhaps Hezekiah hoped Manasseh would unify the people Israel and Judah, an act that would lead all people of Israel to “forget” their divisions and tribal rivalries, unified by a faithful worship of YHWH.

In 2 Kings 21:1 there is an additional line not in 2 Chronicles verses. It says, “**his mother's name was Hephzi-bah.**” Her Hebrew name means “My delight is in her.” She was the wife and queen of Hezekiah. She had a major responsibility for raising this king who committed great sins and great evil during his reign, but there are no words written against her in judgment. In fact, her name Hephzi-bah (without the dash in the King James Version) appears as a positive descriptive term for the city of Jerusalem at a future time of peace:

<sup>c</sup> Good King Jehoash of Judah began his reign when he was 7 years old. He reigned a 40 years. “**Jehoash did what was upright in the eyes of Yahweh all the days in which Jehoiada the priest directed him**” (2 Kings 11:21–12:2).

After Kings Manasseh and Amon, Josiah is anointed to the throne of Judah at age 8, but he was guided by his mother, Jedidiah, and others, including the prophets Jeremiah and Zephaniah (Jeremiah 1:1 and Zephaniah 1:1).

**“It shall no longer be said of you, ‘Forsaken,’ And of your land it shall no longer be said, ‘Desolation’; For you shall be called Hephzi-bah [“My delight is in her”], And your land, Beulah [“Married], For Yahweh delights in you, And your land shall be espoused. For as a choice youth espouses a virgin, Your sons shall espouse you; And with the elation of a bridegroom over the bride, Your Elohim shall be elated over you.”**

• *Isaiah 62:4–5*

This may indicate to those familiar with Isaiah’s work, as most were during Hezekiah’s reign and later during Manasseh’s reign, that the name of Manasseh’s mother relates to Manasseh’s future repentance.

Note another interesting fact. No prophets who ministered to Manasseh during his 55-year reign are named in Scripture. Not one. Isaiah died before Manasseh became king. I think Isaiah did have an indirect influence on Manasseh, yet there is no mention of confronting the young king in any way. Isaiah’s prophetic ministry was during the reigns of four kings and not Manasseh:

**“The vision of Isaiah son of Amoz which he perceived concerning Judah and Jerusalem, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.”**

• *Isaiah 1:1*

If Manasseh learned anything from Isaiah as a young heir to the throne of Judah, the teaching did not become part of his character. The first of the twelve Minor Prophets, Hosea, prophesied to the northern Kingdom of Israel during the reigns of the same kings Isaiah ministered to (Hosea 1:1), but the Kingdom of Israel was destroyed by Assyria during Hezekiah’s reign before Manasseh was born. The prophet Micah preached and prophesied during the reigns of three kings of Judah:

**“The word of Yahweh which came to Micah the Morashite in the days of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he perceived concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.”**

• *Micah 1:1*

J. Davies gives a reasonable explanation as to what happened to Manasseh:

**“The idolatrous party in Judah had been repressed, but not destroyed, under Hezekiah. Its influential members would seem to have taken advantage of Manasseh’s youth to prevail upon him to restore all the abominations of which his father had cleansed the land.”**

**Having allowed himself to listen to their counsels, he entered upon, and pursued, the course of evil with all the ardor of youth and of an evidently enthusiastic and energetic temperament, so that he shortly outstripped all his predecessors, and even the infamous Ahab, of Israel.”**

• *J. Davies, Notes on 2 Kings, 108*

Or perhaps Manasseh was just plain evil.

### ***Back to the Verse by Verse Analysis***

**2 Kings 21:2 and 2 Chronicles 33:2** (item [1]). The evils Manasseh did were the same as those committed by the nations YHWH had Israel drive out from the land He promised and gave to them.

**Verses 2 to 9, and 2 to 9 in both texts.** The sins and crimes by Manasseh, his officials at court, the Aaronic priests perhaps, the Levites perhaps, certainly the people of Judah and remnants of the people of Israel, are itemized and listed in these verses. There is little ambiguity. The crimes are public. Most of the people of the kingdom joined with Manasseh in their own way to perform the evils and idolatries. Those who opposed Manasseh’s actions were punished without pity and subject to violence.

**Verses 3 and 3** (items [2], [3], [4], [5], and [6]). All these items are given in a compressed form.

(Item [2]). The high places outside of Jerusalem, and all over Judah, were places that pagan rituals took place. These were semi-private locations where sacrifices took place, as well as fertility (sexual) rituals and group worship. Apparently spirits or gods would appear at these locations or would speak through designated individuals for give and take communications with a “deity.”

(Items [3] and [4]). The 2 Kings verse has “Baal,” while the 2 Chronicles verse says “Baalim,” plural.

“Baal” singular refers to the god Baal, while the plural “Baalim” refers to the multiple places where Baal was worshipped. Asherah are carvings of an undetermined nature. However, it is certain that religious sexual rituals were performed at the high places. Pagan religion most often involved aberrant sexuality. Besides warnings in the Law of Moses,<sup>d</sup> YHWH gave direct warnings through leaders in the time of the Judges:

**“They took their [the nations’] daughters as their wives and gave their own daughters to their sons, and they served their elohim. The sons of Israel did what was evil in the eyes of Yahweh. When they forgot Yahweh their Elohim and served the Baalim and the Asheroth.”**

• *Judges 3:6–7*

(Items [5] and [6]). Manasseh himself actively worshipped Baal and other gods, including **“the host of the heavens.”** He actively participated in the sacrifices (plant, animal, human) and fertility rites. See Deuteronomy 4:19, 17:3; and 2 Kings 17:5–22, particularly verse 16.<sup>e</sup>

**“The host of the heavens”** are those spirit beings the apostle Paul refers to in Ephesians and Colossians:

**“... that now may be made known to [1] the sovereignties and [2] the authorities among the celestials [heavenlies], through the ecclesia, the multifarious wisdom of God, in accord with the purpose of the eons, which He makes in Christ Jesus, our Lord.”**

• *Ephesians 3:10–11*

**“... for in Him is all created, that in the heavens and that on the earth, the visible and the invisible, whether [1] thrones, or [2] lordships, or [3] sovereignties, or [4] authorities, all is created through Him and for Him, and He is before all, and all has its cohesion in Him.”**

• *Colossians 1:16–17*

**Verses 4 and 4** (item [7]). Altars to pagan gods were constructed within the Temple, **“the House of YHWH.”** This was likely within the Holy Place and not in the innermost Holy of Holies, but perhaps in both locations! This was a serious infraction. Sacrifices to pagan gods were made at the altars Manasseh constructed within the Temple of YHWH. The “place” of YHWH’s name means it is a place of His presence. YHWH now shares His glory within His Temple with inferior deities.

**Verses 5 and 5** (item [8]). Manasseh’s **“altars** (plural) **to all the host of the heavens”** means the King of Judah honored and worshipped celestial beings in the courts to the east outside of the Temple. Remember, spiritual beings were already represented inside the Temple. The cherubim were in the Holy of Holies where YHWH’s presence is represented (Exodus 25:18–20, 26:1, 31; 1 Samuel 6:4; 2 Samuel 6:2; 1 Kings chapter 6, and elsewhere). Other creatures are referred to represented in 1 Kings 7:29, 36. Do such beings live in God’s heavenly Temple? Probably so, because they are represented as being in God’s presence in the Temple.

**Verses 6 and 6.** These verses tell us several items: [9], [10], [11], [12 in Chronicles only], [13], and [14]).

(Item [9]). Regarding human sacrifice, 2 Kings says **“son”** singular while 2 Chronicles says **“sons”** plural. For descriptions of what the people did (not just Manasseh) decades after Manasseh, read 2 Kings 23:10 and Jeremiah 7:31, 19:4–6 and 32:35 as well as my article [“Human Sacrifice in the Bible”](#) for a better understanding of what took place in those days. Human depravity has gotten worse since those days.

We are not told whether Amon, Manasseh’s successor to the throne of Judah, was his firstborn son. Sometimes the firstborn was sacrificed to the “god” as a first fruits offering.

<sup>d</sup> See the article [“The Laws of the Bible.”](#)

<sup>e</sup> 2 Kings 17:16–18 is about the sins and evils of the people of the northern Kingdom of Israel before YHWH had the Assyrians destroy and exile them:

**“They forsook all instructions of Yahweh their Elohim; they made molten images for themselves — two calves — and made an Asherah pole, and they bowed themselves down to all the host of the heavens, and they served Baal. They caused their sons and their daughters to pass through fire and divined by divinations; they practiced augury and sold themselves to do what was evil in the eyes of Yahweh to provoke Him to vexation. So Yahweh showed Himself exceedingly angered with Israel and put them away, out of His presence. None remained but the tribe of Judah by itself alone.”**

(Item [10]). **“He consulted clouds”** (**“observed times”** in the King James Version)

(Item [11]). He **“practiced augury”** which has a technical term, ornithomancy, which is divination by observation of the flight of birds. No, I do not understand how that method was supposed to work.

(Item [12]). This occurs only in 2 Chronicles 33:6, “enchantment” means the act of sorcery and or magic.

(Item [13]). Mediums and wizards are practitioners of the various forms of magic listed in these verses, I explain more in my article, [“Magic in the Bible.”](#)

(Item [14]). Manasseh did all these things to specifically violate the Law of Moses in every way possible. He did so **“to provoke Him [YHWH] to vexation [to anger].”** That is extremely dangerous to do, as Manasseh would soon learn. Manasseh is an example of what the apostle Paul wrote (in a different context, but also applicable to Manasseh):

**“Be not deceived, God is not to be sneered at, for whatsoever a man may be sowing, this shall he be reaping also.”**

• *Galatians 6:7, Concordant Literal Version*

The King James translation is good also: **“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap.”** Therefore, do not be stupid and show contempt for God as Manasseh did. If you have negative thoughts about God, keep them to yourself. Manasseh, the ruler of God’s chosen people, had a unique responsibility of leadership and instruction. Manasseh was not ignorant. He showed public contempt for YHWH’s laws, deliberately provoking YHWH to anger, daring God to respond.

Manasseh must have heard the stories of YHWH’s rescue of Jerusalem and the Kingdom of Judah from the Assyrians. He must have been aware of discussions Hezekiah and Isaiah had about God and His laws. Manasseh also knew that his father wrote wonderful poetry included in the Psalms. Some speculate Hezekiah (and not Solomon) wrote the Book of Ecclesiastes. (I discuss that possibility in a Commentary, [“Who Wrote Ecclesiastes?”](#))

Hezekiah ordered elimination of idolatrous worship within the kingdom of Judah. Manasseh knew about his father’s 15-year life extension. If so, Manasseh’s actions as king would also be a total repudiation of his father, his religion, and his God. Truly, verses 6 and 6 tell us much about Manasseh’s hatred of YHWH.

**Verses 7 and 7** (item [15]). What does Manasseh do? He put idols inside the Temple! These carvings of Asherah were placed inside the Temple, perhaps even in the Holy of Holies, although its placement within the Holy Place is more likely. It is unclear whether Asherah are phallic-shaped wood carvings, carvings with female form, or both.

**Verses 8 and 8.** God’s covenant with Israel was always conditional on their obedience to His law. Strict observance was demanded **“according to ALL”** of God’s instructions and **“according to the whole law”** told to the people by Moses.<sup>f</sup>

**Verses 9 and 9** (item [16]). The final indictment of Manasseh is surprising. YHWH says that Manasseh was an effective leader of his people. However, Manasseh intentionally and successfully **“led them astray”** from YHWH to do evil greater than the nations YHWH **“exterminated.”**

**2 Kings 21:10 and 2 Chronicles 33:10.** These verses differ from those above in what they communicate. They each change from the several indictments of sin and evil to introducing the punishment YHWH will impose. Note that the Kings verse focuses on the means YHWH communicated His message; it was from His prophets. The Chronicles verse focuses on the audience of YHWH’s message. It goes to Manasseh and all the people, who ignored YHWH’s words.

All the indictments above in verses 1–9 in both accounts were communicated by YHWH to Manasseh and the people of Judah through YHWH’s servants the prophets. The 2 Kings verse specifically mentions **“His servants the prophets.”** It seems YHWH only communicated to the King of Judah. However, the 2 Chronicles verse tells that **“YHWH spoke”** to Manasseh and the people of Judah but did not mention how YHWH

<sup>f</sup> For an explanation why it was impossible for the people of Israel to keep YHWH’s law due to deficiencies in the law itself, see the article, [“The Ten Commandments.”](#)

communicated. We learn the full information by reading them together, something that would be difficult for those who cannot read and only learn by hearing. However, I believe in the past people had better memories for spoken information. See my July 2015 Commentary, "[Thoughts About Babel](#)."

I repeat these two verses as introductions to the next two separate sections of 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles.

The next passages in the Book of Second Kings (and not in Second Chronicles) is another list. This list itemizes YHWH's punishments that will befall everyone in the Kingdom of Judah. Again, these also are in numbered brackets "[ ]" in the passage below.

### ***TEXT: YHWH Announces Punishments to the People Through His Prophets***

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#### **2 Kings 21:10–16**

<sup>10</sup> So Yahweh spoke by means of His servants **the prophets**, saying,

<sup>11</sup> **"Because Manasseh king of Judah has committed these abhorrences and has done more evil than all that the Amorite did before him, and has caused even Judah to sin with his idol clods,<sup>12</sup> wherefore thus speaks Yahweh Elohim of Israel:**

**'Behold,**

[1] **I am bringing such evil on Jerusalem and Judah, if anyone hears of it, both his ears shall tingle.**

<sup>13</sup> [2] **I will stretch out over Jerusalem the measuring tape of Samaria and the plummet of the house of Ahab.**

[3] **I will wipe out Jerusalem just as one wipes a pan, wiping it and turning it on its face.**

<sup>14</sup> [4] **I will abandon the remnant of My allotment and will give them into the hand of their enemies; and they will come to be for plunder and for robbery to all their enemies,**

<sup>15</sup> [WHY?] **because they have done what is evil in My eyes and were provoking Me to vexation from the day when their fathers came forth from Egypt, even until this day."**

<sup>16</sup> Moreover Manasseh shed very much innocent blood, until he had filled Jerusalem from end to end, besides his sin with which **he caused Judah to sin** by doing what was evil in the eyes of Yahweh. **[end text]**

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**2 Kings 21:10.** (Verse 10 is repeated from the prior section.) Again, Manasseh likely sat in Hezekiah's court when the prophet Isaiah spoke with his father. Manasseh knew right from wrong. He also likely heard about YHWH's pronouncement to Solomon when YHWH warned his direct ancestor:

**"But if you yourselves should turn away and forsake My statutes and My instructions that I have set before you, so that you go and serve other elohim and bow down to them, then I will pluck them up off My ground that I have given to them, and I shall fling away from My face this house that I have sanctified for My Name, and I shall make it a proverb and a byword among all the peoples."**

**• 2 Chronicles 7:19–20**

This punishment is exactly what YHWH does to Manasseh — removing him from Jerusalem and taking him to a foreign land.

**Verse 11.** Some idols were carved from wood or stone, or formed in metal, some idols were fashioned from clay, hence the translation **"idol clods."**

**Verses 12–15.** YHWH warned of four judgments upon Jerusalem and Judah.

**Verse 12.** (Item [1]) The judgments will be so horrible, people will not want to hear about them.

**Verse 13.** (Items [2] and [3]) YHWH will do to Jerusalem what he did to Samaria, the capital city of the northern Kingdom of Israel. It will be laid flat. (The same thing would happen to Jerusalem in 70 AD.) It will be wiped clean. He will do to the ruling house of Manasseh what He did to the dynasty of Ahab of Israel. It will cease to rule.

**Verse 14.** (Item [4]) The remnant of God's people will be given to their enemies, thoroughly plundered

and robbed, and sent into exile, just like the northern Kingdom of Israel.

**Verse 15.** All this is punishment for their evil deeds, continuing the same behavior that began when they came out from Egypt to the current moment.

**Verse 16.** This verse says **“Manasseh shed very much innocent blood.”** The king himself killed many people, not just that he ordered people to be killed. Manasseh’s grandfather Ahab committed many of the same sins (2 Kings chapter 16), but Manasseh’s acts were even worse.<sup>8</sup> King David wrote in Psalm 5:6: **“A man of bloodshed and deceit Yahweh abhors.”** Manasseh **“shed very much innocent blood”** of righteous men and women.

Manasseh killed so many innocent people that **“he had filled Jerusalem from end to end.”** This could be added [see **Verses 9 and 9** (item [16], page 6 above)], to the list of 2 Kings 21:1–9 and 2 Chronicles 33:1–9 above. Many of those Manasseh killed were likely Aaronic priests, Levites, and some (perhaps many) of the prophets, all of whom would have spoken out against the actions of their king. Some have even thought that Manasseh killed the prophet Isaiah, but that suggestion is strongly refuted by J. Davis.<sup>h</sup>

In Second Chronicles (but not in Second Kings) we are told God uses the Assyrians as a tool to punish Manasseh.

## ***TEXT: Manasseh Is Imprisoned, Repents, Is Restored, and Restores Worship of YHWH***

### **2 Chronicles 33:10–17**

<sup>10</sup> So Yahweh spoke to Manasseh and to his people, but they paid no attention.

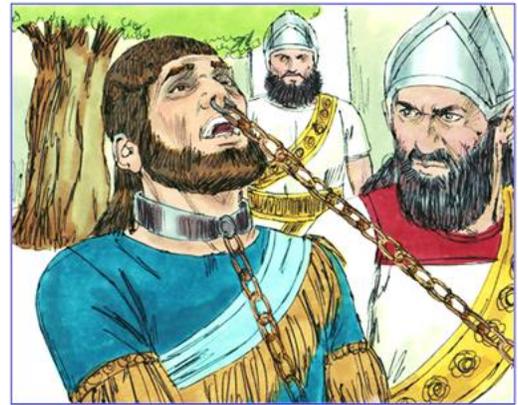
<sup>11</sup> Hence Yahweh brought against them the chiefs of the military host of the king of Assyria; they seized Manasseh with gaffs, bound him with two bronze fetters, and led him off to Babylon.<sup>i</sup>

<sup>12</sup> As soon as he was in travail, he besought the face of Yahweh his Elohim and was exceedingly submissive before the Elohim of his fathers.<sup>13</sup> He prayed to Him, and

- He [YHWH] let Himself be entreated by him;
- He hearkened to his [Manasseh’s] supplication, and
- He restored him to his kingdom in Jerusalem.

Then Manasseh knew that Yahweh, He alone, was the One Elohim.

<sup>14</sup> Afterward he rebuilt the wall outside the city of David west of Gihon in the wadi to the entrance of the Fish Gate, and it surrounded Ophel; he made it very lofty. He also placed army



**King Manasseh in Bondage**



**King Manasseh’s Route to Babylon**

<sup>8</sup> David was also a bloody man; he was a ruthless killer. But David’s killing occurred in combat, in battles. The exception was when David ordered the death of his loyal soldier Uriah the Hittite and his first son with Bathsheba died, and David repented.

<sup>h</sup> There are two Pseudepigrapha documents, one is **“The Martyrdom of Isaiah”** which is a Greek writing (not Hebrew) with an undetermined date, and the other is **“The Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah,”** dated from the New Testament period or later. The two writings are different and both were written long after the Old Testament period.

<sup>i</sup> The graphic images from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/king-manasseh/>, are courtesy of Sweet Publishing, copyright holder, accessed October 10, 2020. Babylon was over 1,000 miles walking distance between Jerusalem and Babylon through the arc of the Fertile Crescent. At the time of Manasseh’s imprisonment, the King of Assyria, Esarhaddon, ruled and resided in Babylon.

chiefs in all the fortified cities in Judah.

<sup>15</sup> [1] He put away the foreign elohim and the figure from the house of Yahweh and

[2] [put away] all the altars that he had built on the mount of the house of Yahweh and in Jerusalem and

[3] had them flung outside the city.

<sup>16</sup> [4] He rebuilt the altar of Yahweh and sacrificed on it peace offerings and acclamation sacrifices; moreover

[5] he **ordered** Judah to serve Yahweh Elohim of Israel.

<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless the people were still sacrificing at the high-places, though **only to Yahweh** their Elohim.

[end text]

**2 Chronicles 33:10.** (Verse 10 is repeated from before on page 3 above). There is a large amount of background history that we are not told in Scripture. There certainly were significant events that occurred during the life and long reign of Manasseh that impacted the Kingdom of Judah, but they are not important to what God wants us to know in Scripture. YHWH communicated with both Manasseh and the people, but neither gave heed to YHWH's words.

**Verse 11.** The text does not indicate what Manasseh did to offend the Assyrian military chiefs. He certainly was caught doing something that was serious enough that they put a chain or rope through his nose, slapped him in chains, and transported him to Babylon. Manasseh was a vassal king who (perhaps) violated a provision of the vassal trust owed to a superior ruler. He violated a trust of some kind. Perhaps he spoke ill of the Assyrian king.

Whatever the case, this is the only mention of an event external to the religious life of the Kingdom of Judah and the 55-year reign of Manasseh.

**“We hear of no important events, of no victory over enemies, of no extension of the frontier, of no new beneficent institutions, during this time. The only event recorded is that an Assyrian army took Manasseh prisoner and carried him away in chains to Babylon (2 Chronicles 33:11). The nation had never before sunk so low, religiously and morally, as at this time.”**

• *Peter Lange, 2 Kings, 249<sup>j</sup>*

God moved to personally punish Manasseh. Some unstated offense occurred that caused Manasseh to offend some rule of Assyria. The King of Assyria was not with the troops, so far as we can tell. The text specifies it was on the authority of **“the chiefs of the military host of the king of Assyria”** that caused Manasseh to be taken prisoner and be tortured. It was likely an example to other vassal kings.

What are gaffs? A gaff is a stick with a hook attached, often used to land large fish. A gaff can be used to puncture a hole in soft tissue like the nose as the graphic illustration shows. Bulls have a hole put through their noses with a gaff so they can be controlled and led around. The biblical text seems to say that the capture of Manasseh was violent.

**Verse 12.** Manasseh prayed immediately as he began suffering, **“in travail.”** He knew the power of prayer. His father Hezekiah's prayed to YHWH to rescue Jerusalem from an Assyrian siege. YHWH answered the prayer by killing every soldier in the besieging army. The Assyrian King Sennacherib went back to Assyria as recorded in 2 Kings chapters 18–20; Isaiah chapters 29, and 36–29; and 2 Chronicles chapters 29 and 32.<sup>k</sup>

Manasseh also knew about his father's illness when YHWH declared through Isaiah that Hezekiah would surely die. Again Hezekiah prayed to YHWH for mercy. YHWH granted him healing and 15 added years of life. The wonderful story must have been interesting to Manasseh when he became King, especially because

<sup>j</sup> John Peter Lange, et al., *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: 2 Kings* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008), 249.

<sup>k</sup> A sequential narrative of these events during Hezekiah's reign is given in the articles [“Israel and Judah: 35. Reforms of King Hezekiah,”](#) [“Israel and Judah: 36. King Hezekiah and Assyria,”](#) [“Israel and Judah: 37. Hezekiah and God's Salvation,”](#) and [“Israel and Judah: 38. Hezekiah's Reign Ends.”](#)

Manasseh would not be alive and would not be king, had YHWH not extended his father's life. Manasseh was **"exceedingly submissive"** to YHWH as he had been to his Assyrian overlord.

**Verse 13.** God's response to Manasseh's prayer was three-fold: [1] YHWH listened to Manasseh's plea even though his great sins affected all of Judah. [2] He heard his appeal. [3] He restored him on the throne of Judah.

When did Manasseh know YHWH heard and would help him? It was probably when he was released from custody in Babylon and he traveled back to Judah. Manasseh knew that YHWH was the one "true" God.

**Verse 14.** Manasseh got to work rebuilding the fortifications of the City of David, and he reinforced the leadership and the garrisons in fortress cities.

**Verse 15.** Then he began religious reforms, ending the most overt pagan practices, particularly (Item [1]) removing idols from the Temple and its precincts. (Item [2]) He tore down **"all the altars"** used for pagan sacrifice, those inside the Temple, in the courts of the Temple, and pagan altars throughout Jerusalem. The materials of the altars were (Item [3]) thrown outside the City of David, but were not burned.

**Verse 16.** (Item [4]) Manasseh built again a qualified and dedicated altar to YHWH and properly sacrificed offerings on it, renewing the cycle of daily and other offerings as well as the extra offerings on the feast days. Although not stated, he must have ordered a stop to all human sacrifice in Judah.

Then in a surprising turn around, (Item [5]), Manasseh **"ordered"** the people of Judah **"to serve YHWH"** and Him only. This order must have been a shock to the population of Judah, and particularly as a shock to the pagan priests.

**Verse 17.** Before his captivity, King Manasseh was leading and promoting pagan worship around his kingdom. For several decades. He was open to worshipping most any god, anywhere, while he formerly acted with hatred toward YHWH.

His order to worship YHWH only (as the Mosaic law demands) was not properly followed by the people of Judah. They disobeyed YHWH and Manasseh by not sacrificing exclusively in Jerusalem as Moses required. They sacrificed (supposedly only to YHWH) on altars all around the kingdom. We do not know if Manasseh gave them further orders.

### **Manasseh In Assyrian Records**

There are two mentions in Assyrian records of Manasseh interacting with his Assyrian overlords. The first record tells us that Manasseh, as a vassal king, was required to bring specific building materials from within his kingdom for a future Assyrian Royal Palace in Nineveh. This record is by Esarhaddon, son and successor of Sennacherib (whose army besieged Jerusalem). This record is at: "(4) From the Prism B, published by R. Campbell Thompson, *op.cit.* Translation: *ibid.*, pp. 25 f. (v 54–vi 1)":

**"I called up the kings of the country Hatti and (of the region) on the other [the west] side of the river (Euphrates) (to wit): Ba'lu, king of Tyre, Manasseh (Me-na-si-i), king of Judah (la-ú-di), Qaushgabri, king of Edom, Musuri, king of Moab, Sil-Bel, king of Gaza, Metinti, king of Ashkelon, [other kings are listed]**

**... all these [kings] I sent out and made them transport under terrible difficulties, to Nineveh, the town (where I exercise) my rulership, as building material for my palace: big logs, long beams (and) thin boards from cedar and pine trees, products of the Sirara and Lebanon (Lab-na-na) mountains, which had grown for a long time into tall and strong timber, (also) from their quarries (lit.: place of creation) in the mountains, statues of protective deities (lit.: of Lamassû and Shêdu) made of ašnan-stone, statues of (female) abzattu, limestone, [and other ...] stone ..."**

***Pritchard, Ancient Near Eastern Texts, 291***

In a second mention of Manasseh in Assyrian records, he was required to accompany the Assyrian army, probably with troops of Judah's army. King Assurbanipal succeeded his father Esarhaddon on the throne of Assyria. Assurbanipal remained in Babylon and sent his **"chiefs of the military host"** to campaign in Egypt. Again vassal kings are listed in the text, telling of preparations for the invasion of Egypt. Ashurbanipal's

Cylinder C, is composed of various fragments by M. Streck, *op.cit.*, pp. 139 ff. Translation: Luckenbill, AR, ii, §876. (i 24–46).<sup>1</sup> Note how Assurbanipal boasts of his victories and invokes his gods.

“Ba’al, king of Tyre, **Manasseh** (*Mi-in-si-e*), **king of Judah** (*la-ú-di*), Qaushgabri, king of Edom, Musuri, king of Moab, Sil-Bel, king of Gaza, Mitinti, king of Ashkelon, [other kings are listed]

... servants who belong to me, brought heavy gifts (*tâmartu*) to me and kissed my feet. **I made these kings accompany my army over the land** — as well as (over) the sea-route with their armed forces and their ships (respectively). Quickly I advanced as far as Kar-Baniti to bring speedy relief **to the kings and regents in Egypt**, servants who belong to me.

Tirhakah, king of Egypt (*Mušur*) and Nubia, heard in Memphis of the coming of my expedition and he called up his warriors for a decisive battle against me. Upon a trust (-inspiring) oracle (given) by Ashur, Bel, Nebo, the great gods, my lords, who (always) march at my side, I defeated the battle(-experienced) soldiers of his army in a great open battle.”

• Pritchard, [Ancient Near Eastern Texts](#), 294

### *TEXT: Manasseh’s Prayer, Repentance, Reforms, and Death*

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#### 2 Kings 21:17–18

<sup>17</sup> As for the rest of the affairs of Manasseh, all that he did, and his sin with which he sinned,

are they **not** written on the scroll of the annals of the days of the kings of Judah?

<sup>18</sup> Then Manasseh lay down with his fathers and was entombed in the garden of his house, in the garden of Uzza; and his son Amon reigned in his stead.

#### 2 Chronicles 33:18–20

<sup>18</sup> As for the rest of the affairs of Manasseh,

and his prayer to his Elohim, and the words of the vision seers who spoke to him in the Name of Yahweh Elohim of Israel, behold, they are written in the annals of the **kings of Israel**.

<sup>19</sup> As for his prayer, how Yahweh let Himself be entreated by him, and all his sin and his offense, and the places in which he built high-places and installed the Asherah poles and the carvings before he was submissive, behold, they are written in the annals of Hozai.

<sup>20</sup> Then Manasseh lay down with his fathers; they entombed *him* in the garden of his house;

and his son Amon reigned in his stead. [end text]

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**2 Kings 21:17 and 2 Chronicles 33:18.** The end-of-reign formula begins with a mention where the reader can go for more information, with sources being named. The verse 2 Chronicles 33:18 states that the prayer of Manasseh was preserved, and it tells the words he used. It also states enigmatically, “**the words of the vision seers who spoke to him in the name of Yahweh Israel.**” The phrase in the Concordant translation “**vision seers**” is translated just “**seers**” in the King James Version. It refers to human seers only (not supernatural beings) in 2 Samuel 24:11, 2 Kings 17:13, 1 Chronicles 21:9, 25:5, 29:29; 2 Chronicles 9:29, 12:15, 19:2, 29:25, 30, 33:18, 35:15; Amos 7:12; and Micah 3:7. These people communicated to Manasseh what YHWH told them to say. They apparently tell what they see, and not YHWH’s words.

YHWH tried a last time before He destroyed the Kingdom of Israel and exiled the people of Samaria to Assyria. The message is very similar to what YHWH gave to the people of Judah:

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<sup>1</sup> James Bennett Pritchard, ed., *The Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3rd ed. with Supplement (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969).

“Yahweh testified against Israel and against Judah by means of every prophet and every vision seer, saying, ‘Turn back from your evil ways, and keep My instructions and My statutes, according to all the law that I enjoined on your fathers and that I sent to you by means of My servants the prophets.’”

• 2 Kings 17:13

A question arises, are the “**the annals of the days of the kings of Judah**” from 2 Kings the same as “**the annals of the kings of Israel**” in Second Chronicles? Yes, that is likely the case. “**The kings of Israel**” cannot refer to kings of the dead Kingdom of Israel because the Assyrians destroyed that kingdom decades in the past. The phrase “**the kings of Israel**” at the end of 2 Chronicles 33:18 may also indicate the kings of Judah who are at the same time are also Israelites. The kings of Judah considered themselves to be representative kings over both Judah and remnants of Israelites who made their way to Judah.

**2 Chronicles 33:19.** This verse gives more information (more than we read in 2 Kings 21:13 above), telling of Manasseh’s repented sins, evils, and other offenses, and that he was “submissive,” a term used of a vassal to a superior lord. Manasseh submitted himself to YHWH as Lord. All these details are “**written in the annals of Hozai.**” Hozai is likely another form of “seers.” It is not a reference to Hosea.

**Verses 18 and 20.** The common formula of royal transfer is given. In verse 18 Manasseh is entombed in a “house,” a term sometimes used to mean a sepulcher or tomb, “**in the garden of Uzza.**” Another spelling is Uzziah. He was an earlier King of Judah whose presumptuous attitude toward YHWH caused Him to strike Uzziah with a sudden case of leprosy. His story is told in 2 Chronicles chapter 26.

### ***TEXT: The Two-Year Reign of Amon, King of Judah***

#### **2 Kings 21:19–26**

<sup>19</sup> Twenty-two years old was Amon when he became king; he reigned two years in Jerusalem, and his mother's name was Meshullemeth daughter of Haruz from Jotbah.

<sup>20</sup> He did what was evil in the eyes of Yahweh, just as his father Manasseh had done.

<sup>21</sup> He walked in all the way in which his father had walked; he served the idol clods that his father had served, and he bowed down to them.

<sup>22</sup> He **forsook** Yahweh Elohim of his fathers and did not walk in the way of Yahweh.

<sup>23</sup> Then Amon's courtiers conspired against him and put the king to death in his own house.

<sup>24</sup> But the people of the land smote all who had conspired against king Amon; and the people of the land proclaimed his son Josiah king in his stead.

<sup>25</sup> As for the rest of the affairs of Amon and all that he did, are they not written on the scroll of the annals of the days of the kings of Judah?

<sup>26</sup> They entombed him in his tomb in the garden of Uzza; and his son Josiah reigned in his stead.

#### **2 Chronicles 33:21–25**

<sup>21</sup> Twenty-two years old was Amon when he became king; he reigned two years in Jerusalem.

<sup>22</sup> He did what was evil in the eyes of Yahweh, just as his father Manasseh had done.

*Amon sacrificed to all the carvings that his father Manasseh had made and served them.*

<sup>23</sup> He was not submissive before Yahweh, as his father Manasseh had been submissive; instead, he, Amon, increased his guilt.

<sup>24</sup> Finally his courtiers conspired against him and put *him* to death in his own house.

<sup>25</sup> But the people of the land smote all who had conspired against king Amon; and the people of the land proclaimed his son Josiah king in his stead.

[end text]

**2 Kings 21:19 and 2 Chronicles 33:21.** Manasseh was 45 years old when Amon was born. We do not know if he was the firstborn. The name Amon means “skilled workman” or “master workman.” As king,

Amon was neither a skilled nor a master ruler. Amon was the only king of Judah to rule 2 years.<sup>m</sup>

**Verse 21:19 (only).** Names in Scripture often have meaning related to the story, but not in this case, except perhaps to show that the name of Amon, his mother, grandfather, and town they came from, all mean the opposite of what the story tells. Amon's mother's name was Meshullemeth, the feminine counterpart of the male Hebrew name "Meshullam." Both names mean "friend" or "devoted." Her father's name is given, Haruz (meaning "zealous") and she came from the town of Jotbah (meaning "pleasing"). Its site is unknown.

**2 Kings 21:20 and 2 Chronicles 33:22.** Amon did evil. His father Manasseh was evil most of his life, but he repented. From the time of his bondage, travel to Babylon, his release and return travel to Jerusalem, Manasseh's ordeal lasted perhaps 1 or 2 years. Amon was likely born after Manasseh's homecoming when Manasseh was around 45 years old. He became king at age 12, reigned 55 years, and died at age 67.

**2 Kings 21:21 and 2 Chronicles 33:22.** Amon was age 22 when he took the throne, reigned 2 years and died at age 24. While Manasseh did make religious reforms (2 Chronicles 33:15–16), he did not go all the way and destroy his idols and carvings **"that his father Manasseh had made and served them."** Very sad.

Amon saw and committed the same sins and evil as his father. Amon learned nothing from his father's example of repentance and religious renewal after he returned. Amon completely rejected his father's religious change of heart in favor of pagan worship of idols made by men. Was his mother the reason? We are not told in Scripture.

**2 Kings 21:22 and 2 Chronicles 33:23.** Amon **"forsook"** YHWH and never submitted to Him as Manasseh did. The text reads as if Amon knew what he was doing, and thereby **"increased his guilt."**

**2 Kings 21:23–24 and 2 Chronicles 33:24–25.** A conspiracy arose that led to Amon's murder by court officials called "courtiers." Courtiers were available to the royal court to advise the king. They may have been royalty themselves or nobility who sought to establish a new dynasty in Judah. Their assassination was successful; their attempt to seize power failed. We are not told their agenda, or if they had a religious motive. Read "[Conspiracy in Scripture](#)."

**"The people of the land"** sought justice and killed **"all who had conspired against king Amon."** This indicates more than a few people were involved in the conspiracy. Later, **"the people of the land"** proclaimed Amon's son, Josiah, to be king, not **"all those who had conspired."** The boy was anointed king at age 8 (2 Chronicles 34:1), meaning that Amon sired Josiah when he was about 16 years old.

**2 Kings 21:25–26 (only).** The usual formulaic end-of-life statement is given.

### ***Manasseh's Legacy After His Death***

Two years after Manasseh's death, his grandson, King Josiah ascended the throne as King of Judah. He was the last "good" kings of Judah. He began to rule at age 8 for 31 years (2 Kings 22:1; 2 Chronicles 34:1).

**"There was no king such as he before him who turned back to Yahweh with all his heart, with all his soul and with all his intensity according to all the law of Moses; nor did anyone such as he arise after him."**

• **2 Kings 23:25**

Partial reforms were done by Manasseh, then partially changed by Amon. Josiah turned from the evils of his grandfather, but they were not enough to change the mind of YHWH. Even though Josiah made reforms the people did not follow their good king's example.

YHWH already determined the people had gone so far astray that there was no repentance for them, no matter the reforms, no matter how good the king was. The trajectory of Judah was down toward inescapable punishment and total destruction of the kingdom. It would soon be too late for the people, as the prophets repeatedly warned.

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<sup>m</sup> Two kings of Judah ruled less than 1 year, one ruled 1 year, and one ruled 3 years. Four rulers of the northern kingdom of Israel ruled 2 years.

**“Yahweh did not turn back from the great heat of His anger when His anger burned hot against Judah on account of all the vexations with which Manasseh had provoked Him to vexation.”**

• *2 Kings 23:26*

This was the legacy of Manasseh and his sins and evils that led the people to do likewise, expressed over and over. Some 54 years after the death of Manasseh the punishment came to fruition:

**“In his days, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his servant for three years; yet he turned back and revolted against him. Yahweh sent Chaldean raiders and Syrian raiders, Moabite raiders and raiders of the sons of Ammon against him.**

**And He sent them against the land of Judah [why?] in order to destroy it, according to Yahweh's word that He had spoken by means of His servants the prophets.”**

• *2 Kings 24:2*

Why was this done? The reason was given in the next two verses ...

**“It was only at the bidding of Yahweh that this occurred to Judah, to put it away from His presence for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he had done, and also for the innocent blood which he had shed, so that he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood; and Yahweh would not pardon.”**

• *2 Kings 24:3–4*

YHWH gave the prophet Jeremiah a message about the people of Judah, using similar words that Moses said about the consequences of sin and disobedience to YHWH. Doom is coming:

**“Yet for this people there is a stubborn and rebellious heart; They have defected and continue to go away. And they do not say in their heart:**

**‘Now let us fear Yahweh our Elohim, Who gives the downpour, the former rain and the latter rain in its season; The weeks, these of the statutes for harvest, He safeguards for us.’**

**Your depravities, they have turned these things aside, And your sins, they have withheld the good from you.”**

• *Jeremiah 5:23–25*

Later YHWH tells Jeremiah to inform the people of Judah a different message of what would happen. The final countdown began with the actions of Manasseh:

**“I will make them a stirring horror to all the kingdoms of the earth, owing to Manasseh son of Hezekiah king of Judah, [Why?] because of what he did in Jerusalem.”**

Indeed,

**who shall take pity on you, Jerusalem? And  
who shall bemoan over you? And  
who shall withdraw to ask for your well-being?**

**It is you yourself who abandoned Me, averring [declaring] is Yahweh; You are going backward;  
So I shall stretch out My hand against you and lay you in ruins; I am tired of regretting.”**

• *Jeremiah 15:4–6*

God's punishment will be so terrible all kingdoms will recoil in horror when they see YHWH's punishment. That punishment included physical destruction of Jerusalem, death to most of the population of Judah, exile of a remnant to Babylon for 70 years, as told elsewhere in Jeremiah 25:11–12 and 29:10. Manasseh's reign was tragic for the himself, for the people of Jerusalem and Judah, and began a path to total destruction,