

Book Two Introductory Summary

To The First Fall of Jerusalem

(Bath-Sheba and David to Nehushta and Jehoiakim)

No maternal data is available for king David or his seven male siblings. They all are given as sons of one "Jesse of Bethlehem-Ephrathah," who appears in the official lineage as grandson of Ruth and Boaz.¹

Two of David's female relatives, "Abigail" and "Zeruiah," commonly are taken to be his full-blooded sisters. However, although they are referenced as "sisters of the sons of Jesse," they are not described directly as daughters of Jesse. Abigail and Zeruiah evidently were considerably older than David, given his peer age with their named soldier sons.

There is nothing in the texts to prevent equating "sister" Abigail with "Abigail, wife of Nabal of Carmel,"² who became one of David's first three wives. (Nabal met an unspecified death during David's rise to power.) David's other first-named wives were (a) a Saul daughter named Michal (last-mentioned female in the dwindling House of [Ner(i)-] Kish³), received by David when he was soldiering for Saul; and (b) Ahinoam, Saul's wife, later "taken from Jezreel" by David during his warring with Saul.⁴

Before Saul's vanquishment, he is reported to have retrieved Michal from David and given her to one Phalti/Palti, from whom David later reacquired her. Biblical text leaves unclear whether it was Michal or her older sister, Merab, who was mother of five Saul grandsons. The only other ancient source states that "Michal...when she was married to [undesignated] *him* whom Saul her father had given her...bare five children." David, upon his establishment in Jerusalem, turned over the five Saul grandsons, together with two sons of Rizpah by Saul, to certain Saul enemies, who put all seven to death.⁵

Royal mothers and their children--princesses and potential successor-princes--numbered among the king's chief properties. The size and makeup of a royal harem, besides reflecting personal choice, mirrored the crown power in political and military resources. The harem variously could include (a) women inherited and retained from the preceding king, (b) women married by the current king to seal alliances with other dynasties and rulers, and (c) selected females from the harem of a vanquished foe.⁶ Ages of females are not given.⁷

¹ See Appendix 2A, Attachment 1, "Jesse, Descendancy of," and Appendix 1E, "Saul Through Solomon." Bethlehem-Ephrathah, some five miles SE of Jerusalem is distinguished from a second Bethlehem some 7 miles W/NW of Nazareth-- see Appendix 1B, "Ephrath and Ephrathah." (Bethlehem-Ephrathah is referred to as "David's city," *i.e.* hometown, as opposed to "The City of David," the royal residence he later built on Mount Zion; see Appendix 2A, "Jebusites.")

² Besides "Jesse, Descendancy of," see Appendix 2A, "Nahash;" Appendix 1E *at and following* fn. 25; and 2 *Samuel* 5:4.

³ Certain questions remain unanswerable with respect to David's affiances over the period of the shift of supremacy from Saul to him; *but* see Appendix 2A, Attachment 2, "Saul, Descendancy of," and Appendix 1E for David's acquisition of Ahinoam (*at* fn. 26), Abigail (*at* fn. 25), and Michal (*following* fn. 12 ff.). (*Refer to* Saul Descendancy concerning the *Ner/i* 'contradictions.')

⁴ Appendix 1E, "Saul Through Solomon," details data given in this summary, including David's rise to power, his reign, and Solomon's succession.

⁵ *Josephus*, AJ VII.IV.3 quotation re Michal, italics supplied; 1 *Samuel* 18:19; 2 *Samuel* 21:8.

⁶ Sometimes taken with their offspring (who not always were allowed to survive, as demonstrated *en passim* in all books of this work)—*e.g.*, Nebuchadnezzar's removal of queen mother, Nehushta, and "wives of the king" (*Jeremiah* 29:2; see *at* fn. 21, below), coupled with reports of captured princes at Babylon's court who later became involved with Cyrus and Darius, as later discussed.

Tamar, whose mother is not named, is the only named “daughter” of king David, although *Chronicles* indicates that David had more than one female child. Traditionally, Tamar has been taken both as David’s biological daughter and Absalom’s full-blooded sister; but that is not conclusive from the record, in that Tamar’s lineage primarily is inferred circuitously via *Samuel* and *Chronicles*, which partial lists refer to David’s offspring in varying terms.⁸ Mothers are named for only half of David’s 20⁹ reported “sons.” Four are treated with detail. They were (in the order in which their births are reported): (1) Amnon, son of Ahinoam; (3) Absalom, son of Maachah; (4) Adonijah, son of Haggith; and (9 or 10) Solomon, son of Bath-sheba.

Altogether the royal harem constituted a household fraught with half-sibling rivalries, as mothers and sons jockeyed for position in the changing schemes of kings.¹⁰ Power struggles involving David’s lead sons began some time before he died. His waning days were presaged by a “violation” of Tamar by Amnon, and ended when Nathan and Bath-sheba unitedly secured David’s death-bed confirmation of Solomon as the monarchy’s heir-elect.

Birth of Bath-sheba’s and David’s son, Nathan, may have preceded Solomon’s.¹¹ Nathan, the son, is not discussed *per se*. In David’s royal household the name, “Nathan,” centers on a man of unrecounted origin depicted as a prophet or priest, who chastized David for his tactics in obtaining Bath-sheba. Nathan, depicted as a serious confidante of Bath-sheba, encouraged her to obtain David’s appointment of Solomon as successor, and himself also pressed David in that regard. Adonijah who had been expecting to succeed, went so far as to officiate at a competing assembly; but it was Solomon who ultimately gained the throne.¹²

Solomon reigned 39 years, to c. 926 b.c. During his reign he divided the northlands into administrative districts whose populations experienced increasing forced labor and oppression under the monarchy’s demands. Solomon designated Rehoboam, his son by Naamah “the Ammonitess,” as successor. Opponents favored Jeroboam, the son of Zeruah (a widowed “servant of Solomon”) and one Nebat, “an Ephrathite.”

Jeroboam previously had been chief administrator of “all the burden of the house of Joseph.” Competition between him and the monarchy is evident before Solomon’s death. Reportedly, Jeroboam had gone “out from Jerusalem” and met with a Shilonite priest/prophet named Ahijah, who professed to Jeroboam that, “Thus says [Tet.]...: ‘I am tearing the kingdom from the hand of Solomon and giving to you ten, the tribes...’”¹³ At that time Solomon had looked to kill the contending Jeroboam, but Jeroboam had taken refuge with King Shishak of Egypt.

After Solomon died, son Rehoboam presented himself for ratification as king at an assembly of “all Israel” held at Shechem. Jeroboam (who had been “sent and called for”)

⁷ it generally is impossible, as well, to discern relative ages of members of either gender, e.g. the fact that Saul’s lead son, Jonathan, was twice David’s stated age of 30 when David became king, is derivable only from combined data.

⁸ An indefinite “Tamar, their sister” appearing at the end of one such list; see David Descendancy.

⁹ (Excluding Bath-Sheba’s child born first after her acquisition by David, which child died in infancy.) Refer to Appendix 2A, Attachment 3, “David, Descendancy of.”

¹⁰ Such as between Absalom, Amnon and Adonijah, as detailed in Appendix 1E, “Saul Through Solomon.” (That syndrome was to be most dramatically reported in the Hasmonaean/Herodian complex—Appendix 4B.)

¹¹ One of the three scriptural accounts lists Solomon’s birth immediately following the death of the first child born to Bath-sheba after her appropriation by David (2 *Samuel* 12:15-24). Two list Nathan before Solomon (2 *Samuel* 5:13 and 1 *Chronicles* 3:5; quotations are given in Appendix 2A, Attachment 3, David Descendancy).

¹² Refer to Appendix 1E preceding fn. 83.

¹³ 1 *Kings* 11:26ff. (Refer to Appendix 2C, IV Narrative, “Through the Period of the Kings;” Appendix 3B, I, Ahijah, for all uses.)

returned from exile and was spokesman for the opposition. They petitioned Rehoboam for redress of civil and social grievances, including reductions of forced labor and taxes. Jeroboam gave Rehoboam three days to respond.

Rehoboam ignored advice from his elders. Taking counsel, instead, from “the young men who had grown up with him,” he refused to compromise. The opponents rebelled and “caused Jeroboam to reign over all Israel [the 10 tribes],” the only dissenting tribe being “the tribe of Judah.” Civil war threatened. Rehoboam “assembled all the house of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin,” “180,000 chosen makers of war, to fight with the house of Israel, to bring the kingdom to Rehoboam.” Overt civil warfare was averted by intervention of a prophet named Shemaiah, whose counsel against war was heeded.¹⁴ Nonetheless, the cohesive empire adroitly consolidated and maintained by king David dissolved and divided into separate kingdoms-- "Israel" and "Judah"--with their own rulers, capitals, and shrines.

The ensuing nearly 400-years (the ‘period of the kings’) was a complicated time involving fluctuating ‘south’/‘north’ contentions, external aggression, and internal power struggles within each kingdom. The events of the centuries of the divided kingdoms, including tenures of kings, prophets and high priests, are sequenced brokenly in *Kings* and *Chronicles*. Generational progressions often bewilder with overlaps of identical and/or similar names. Occasionally-- reminiscent of the era of *Judges*--there came to the fore powerful prophets/priest commanders, primarily Elijah, Elisha, and high priest Jehoiada. Only a handful of chief or high priests are named, however, and writings are not extant of all scribing prophets to whom the texts refer.

At times, differences between the two kingdoms gave way to allied combat against foreign aggression. The texts reveal greater degrees of alliance in certain periods marked by solid intermarriages between Judah and Israel royal and priestly houses.¹⁵ Both kingdoms progressively became ensnared by foreign parties competing for world power--first by Aram/Syria; then, Assyria; finally, Babylonia. Aram/Syria constituted the primary regional foe throughout the first two centuries of the ‘period of the kings.’ Over that time, south and north are reported alternately covenanting with and/or paying tribute to Aram/Syria, interspersed with battles to keep or regain territory, and sometimes uniting in their efforts. Data is insufficient, however, for discerning actual political relationships between the respective kingdoms and Aram/Syria--such as when Ahab-N (north) agreed to unite with Jehoshaphat-S (south), later involvements of Elisha, and the advent of Jehu-N.¹⁶

Egypt (initially under Ethiopian/Libyan domination) made one serious incursion into Judah during Rehoboam’s reign,¹⁷ and south king Asa is reported battling Ethiopians some two decades later. Assyria, resurging from a decline, gained dominance of Media and Elam in the east and then struck westward against Aram/Syria, and eventually into ‘Palestine.’ The texts report that approximately 225 years into the period (by the time of the reign of king Pekah-N c. 735 b.c.), Assyria had taken all of the Israel kingdom’s major cities east and west of the Jordan River, effected deportations, and was in occupation of “Samaria.”¹⁸

Israel’s king Pekah entered a coalition with Aram/Syria, which besieged Jerusalem and took a captivity. Judah’s king Ahaz emptied his treasury to engage Assyrian assistance

¹⁴ Rehoboam’s successor-son would prove more aggressive; *refer to* Appendix 2C, IV.

¹⁵ Appendix 2C, IV narrates and cites the period that is summarized briefly here; its precise length is uncertain--*refer to* the global comparative chronology of events given in Appendix 2D, “Calendar Year Comparison Timeline.” (References for the preceding paragraphs are *1 Kings* 12 and *2 Chronicles* 11.)

¹⁶ In all this, *refer to* Appendix 2C, IV narrative, “Through the Period of the Kings.”

¹⁷ Rehoboam lost some cities, and Shishak looted the Jerusalem temple.

¹⁸ The reader cannot be reminded too often of the overall uncertainty of datings. For Samaria/ Samaritan, see Appendix 3A, VI, Attachment 3.

against the Pekah/Aram combine. Assyria complied. It put an end to Aram/Syria, seizing Damascus c. 732, and absorbed the Syrian territories; but in the process Assyria conquered Galilee areas as well. Judah's king Ahaz remained servile to Assyria. Then, in the reign of his successor-son, king Hezekiah, Assyria conquered the north's capital of Samaria City, c. 723/722--the "ninth and final year" of Israel's last king, Hoshea. That event/date traditionally is taken as the end of the northern kingdom, "Israel."

By Hezekiah's fourteenth year (c. the mid-600's b.c.), Assyria had captured Judah's fortified cities. Hezekiah (who it appears was looking to Egypt for assistance) became an Assyrian vassal. Judah paid a heavy tribute; nevertheless, Assyria afterwards persisted in camping against Jerusalem. The Assyrian camp mysteriously was struck, however, by a force in the night--all who were not killed retreated. Judah continued as a vassal of Assyria for another six to seven decades, through the long reign of Hezekiah's successor, Manasseh, and possibly two years into the reign of Manasseh's successor, Amon. At that point, the Assyrian empire was at its peak, dominating Egypt and ruling parts of Arabia, (present-day) Turkey, and Persia (Susa and Elam), as well as all of Syria/Aram and original Davidic kingdom territories. But combined forces in Media and Babylon were eroding the far-flung, greater Assyrian empire. All too soon, taking advantage of growing anarchy within, they would bring it to a close.

Media had commenced unification under a monarchy c. 700 b.c. Its third king, Cyaxares I, ascended the throne c. 626, about the same time that one Nabopolassar--who had been a general for Assyria's Assurbanipal--revolted and established himself in Babylon. In approximately 614 b.c. Cyaxares I and his Medes conquered Asshur, the most ancient Assyrian capital, and pushed the Assyrians downriver to Nineveh. Nabopolassar arrived too late to do battle, but he met up with Cyaxares I and they formed an alliance. The Medes and 'Babylonians' together, joined by Scythians in the final assault, conquered Nineveh c. 612. The last Assyrian faction fled to Harran, some 100 miles to the west, where to some extent they were supported by the Egyptians. Cyaxares I returned to his own dominions. About two years later, Nabopolassar defeated the Egypto-Assyrian force at Harran and established a Babylonian/Scythian garrison there.¹⁹

The record is silent for the next few years, during which time it appears that Nabopolassar went into retirement and left the major command of his armies to his son, Nebuchadnezzar.²⁰ Meanwhile, Pharaoh Necho II of Egypt undertook a major expedition to counter the Babylonian-led expansion. Judah's then-king Josiah chose to oppose Necho's march (the texts do not state a clear purpose why); and Josiah was killed in a defeat of his forces at Megiddo. Egypt established a stronghold at Carchemish, and Judah became vassal of Egypt.

In the year generally taken as 605 b.c., Carchemish was taken by then-prince Nebuchadnezzar. There is uncertainty in sequencing events of Nebuchadnezzar's ensuing lordship over the core biblical territories, as to his assaults on it, exactly how many were made, and his ultimate conquest of Jerusalem and Judah. He is said to have lain a long siege at Philistia's Ashkelon, and c. 609 to have installed Eliakim/Jehoiakim as vassal king in Judah. *Daniel* reports that Nebuchadnezzar surrounded Jerusalem and took both spoil and some "sons...of the royal seed" to his Babylon court, following a rebellion by Eliakim/Jehoiakim "in the third year of the reign of [Eliakim/]Jehoiakim."²¹

¹⁹"The Assyrian nation, as such, passed away in Syria." *Ibid.*, p. 130. Refer to book three for the Neo-Babylonian and Media/Persia dynasties and related events.

²⁰aka Nebuchadrezzar and sometimes designated Nebuchadnezzar II, to distinguish him from an earlier namesake. (Portions of the data in this section are from *Cambridge*, v. III, pp. 130 and 207.)

²¹Alternately, *Jeremiah* reports that Nebuchadnezzar struck Carchemish in Jehoiakim's "fourth year."

Within another few years, Nebuchadnezzar had crushed all rebellion, and king Jehoiakim was dead. Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiakim's wife, queen-mother Nehushta, and her young successor-son, Jehoiachin, to Babylon with other captives.²²

At some previous time, Nebuchadnezzar had married Amytis, who it appears was a daughter of (Cyaxares I -) Astyages.²³

The last vassal king installed at Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar was Mattaniah/Zedekiah. Zedekiah, too, finally rebelled, in his tenth or eleventh year (c. 586 b.c., according to common dating); and Nebuchadnezzar waged another siege of Jerusalem. The city was breached at the end of two years, another exile was made, and Judah became a Babylonian province. Shortly thereafter, Jerusalem was destroyed by a Babylonian force commanded by Nebuzaradan, captain of Nebuchadnezzar's army.

Farther east, a third new force was emerging in the *Achaemenid* dynasty, of the region of Anshan/Elam,²⁴ which was connected to Media by royal marriage. Anshan's Cambyses I (son of Cyrus I) was married to a second (Cyaxares I -) Astyages' daughter, named Mandane. Their son was Cyrus II, later to be known as 'Cyrus the Great.' Cambyses I initially was a vassal of Astyages. Then, c. 550 b.c., Cyrus II--apparently with the blessing of his uncle, Cyaxares II of Media--dethroned Astyages, heralding the advent of the Persian empire.

Meanwhile, queen Nehushta's bloodline, enduring in exile, was about to reflowerish.

²² The biblical texts state that Jehoiakim was taken in fetters to Babylon, while *Josephus* states Nebuchadnezzar had Jehoiakim killed and his body thrown before Jerusalem's wall. (Regarding all of the within brief summary, refer to Appendix 2C, IV Narrative, and Appendix 2D, Calendar Year Comparison.)

²³ Astyages succeeded his father as king of Media c. 585/584 b.c. It is not known at what point the Amytis/ Nebuchadnezzar marriage (per *Berossus* and *Abydenus*) took place; some would make Amytis Cyaxares I's daughter, which timewise would discount her as the unnamed queen at Belshazzar's feast; *but see* Appendix 3A, II, "Descendancy Chart/Neo-Babylonians," at C, "Exploration of Issues." (Appendix 3A, Parts I - III provide details of the Median, Babylonian and Persian dynasties and relations.)

²⁴ See Appendix 2A, Elam.