

KINGDOM OF ISRAEL

CULTURAL INSIGHT

After the reign of Solomon, the kingdom of Israel split into two kingdoms, with Judah in the south and Israel in the north. The first king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel was Jeroboam I, who had been an officer in the administration of Solomon (see 1 Kings 11:28). Ahijah, a prophet, met Jeroboam and tore his clothing off him, ripping it into twelve pieces. He gave Jeroboam the twelve pieces with the promise that he would have a kingdom with ten tribes, leaving out Judah for David's sake (1 Kings 11:31). The kingdom of Israel was, therefore, associated with the ten tribes. According to the biblical record, the tribes revolted against the strict rule of Solomon and Rehoboam and the favorable policies they had toward the tribe of Judah (1 Kings 12:1–18).

Although the Kingdom of Israel did not worship in ways the biblical authors approved of (see, for example, 1 Kings 12:26–33), the national god of the Kingdom of Israel was Jehovah. Israel continued to share linguistic, cultural, and religious connections with its neighbors to the south. Israel was politically and economically more powerful than Judah and at times seemed to dominate the region. While Judah had a single relatively stable dynasty under the house of David, Israel had numerous dynastic changes and succession wars. The dominant tribes in the Kingdom of Israel were the Josephite tribes, which is why the kingdom is sometimes poetically referred to as Ephraim, as in Isaiah 7:2. The ministries of the prophets Elijah and Elisha were in the Kingdom of Israel. Although most of the literary prophets in the Bible came from the Southern Kingdom of Judah, Hosea was from Israel, and Amos traveled from Judah to prophesy in Israel.

When the Kingdom of Israel first split from Judah, Jeroboam I built his capital at the famous ancestral site of Shechem. During the reign of King Omri (one of the most powerful of the kings of Israel), the capital was moved to Samaria (see 1 Kings 16:24). In the same way that Jerusalem is poetically associated with

the Kingdom of Judah, Samaria is poetically associated with the Kingdom of Israel (see Ezekiel 16:46). In 721 BC, the Neo-Assyrian army destroyed Samaria and carried Israel into captivity. This is the source of what we now call the lost ten tribes. It is possible that the Samaritans, familiar to us from the New Testament, descended from Israelites left in the land of Israel after the Neo-Assyrian destruction.

Related verses

1 Kings 11:31–40	Isaiah 7:1–9	Ezekiel 16:44–63
1 Kings 12:1–33	Isaiah 9:7–9	Ezekiel 37:19
1 Kings 14:14–16	Isaiah 10:10	Amos 1:1
1 Kings 15:16–19, 30	Isaiah 11:13	Amos 2:6
1 Kings 16:21–24	Jeremiah 13:11	Amos 3:12
1 Kings 18:17–18	Jeremiah 23:6, 13	Amos 7:9–11
1 Kings 20:21	Jeremiah 30:4	Micah 1:1, 5
2 Kings 17:6–23	Lamentations 2:5	Zechariah 11:14

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