

The Historical Reliability of the Old Testament

Part 1 - The Divided Kingdom

Review of Historical Setting

- The New Testament focusses on one Jewish man Jesus, the Son of God
- The Old Testament focusses on the entire Jewish nation from which he came
 - The patriarchs (fathers) of Israel - Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Genesis 12-25)
 - The Exodus from Egypt - Moses (Exodus - Deuteronomy)
 - The Conquest and Settlement of the land of Canaan (Joshua - 1 Samuel 7)
 - The United Kingdom of Israel - Saul, David and Solomon (1 Samuel 8 - 1 Kings 11; 1 Chronicles 1 - 2 Chronicles 9)
 - The Divided Kingdoms of Israel (Samaria, Ephraim) and Judah (Jerusalem) (1 Kings 12-25; 2 Chronicles 10-36)
 - The Exile and the Return (Ezra - Esther)
- We will not be able to cover all these periods in detail. Today we will consider the period of the divided kingdoms (c. 10th-6th centuries BC)

External Attestation of Kings and other Officials

- The Bible names 20 kings of Israel, and 20 kings of Judah (plus one Queen Regent, Athaliah).
 - Judah had one dynasty, the house of David. All the Kings were his descendants.
 - Israel was not ruled by David's descendants and had several dynasties (e.g. Houses of Jeroboam, Baasha, Omri, Jehu)
- The Bible also names foreign rulers or officials who interacted with Israel and Judah at this time (e.g. Shishak of Egypt, Mesha of Moab, Hazael of Aram-Damascus, Sennacherib of Assyria, Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon etc.)
- Many of these rulers, local and foreign, are independently attested through archaeological evidence and the written histories of other nations.
- For example, many "Bullae" have been uncovered. These are small seals used by officials for authentication. They bear inscriptions referring the name of the official, and the name of the reigning King.

Plate II

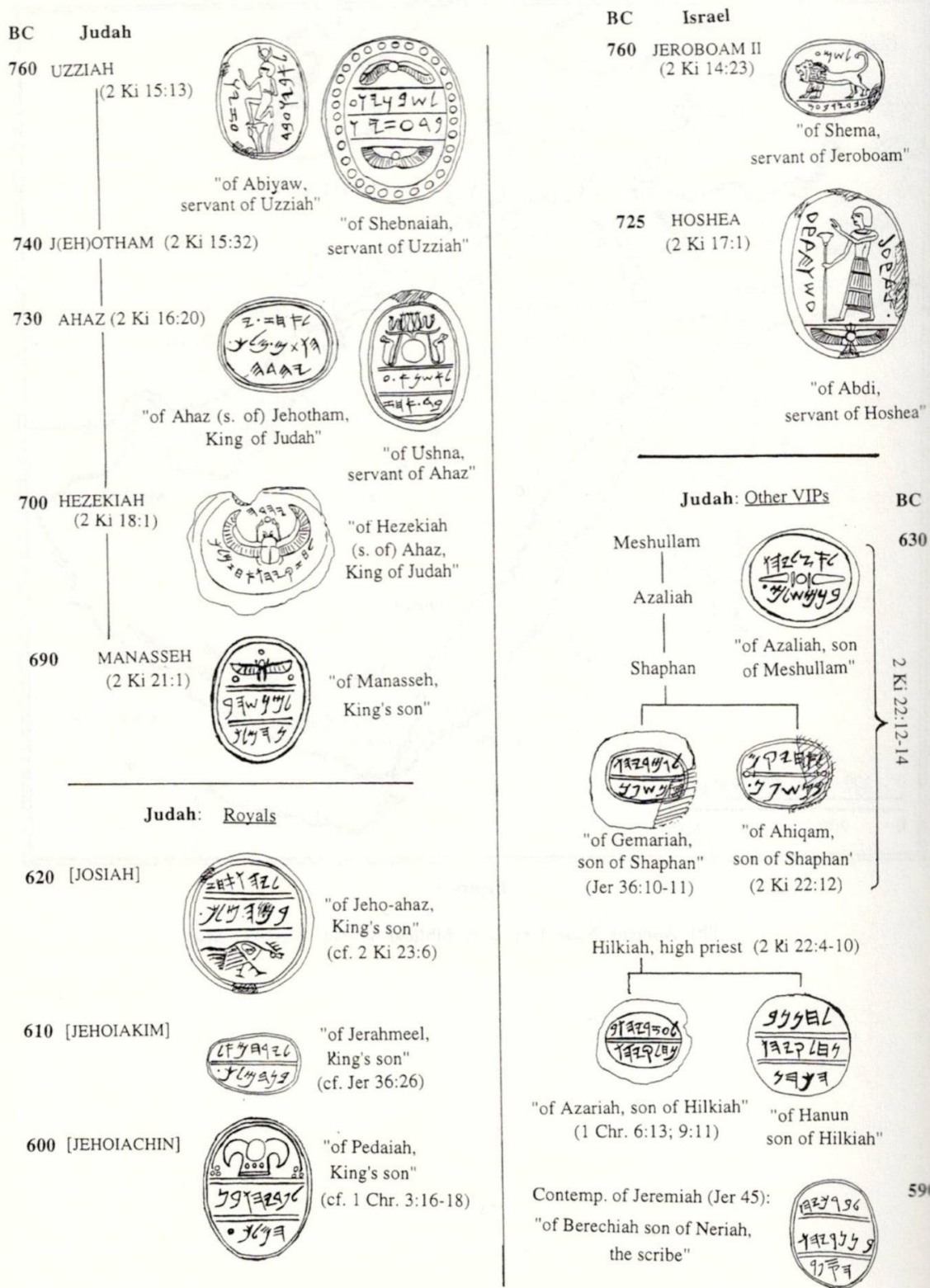


Figure 2

"Happy Families" - Signed and sealed

Hebrew seals & impressions ('bullae'), 8th-6th centuries BC

Chronological Agreement with extra-biblical sources

- The books of Kings in the Bible provides detailed records of the length of each king's reign, and of who succeeded them.
- We also have excellent chronologies of rulers preserved by the Assyrians, Babylonians and Egyptians during this period.
- We find that the sequence of local and foreign rulers presented in the bible matches the sequence of rulers as recorded in these other sources.
- More than that, we find that we are able to show (with only a few unexplained difficulties) that the years given in the Bible match very precisely with those of the Assyrians and Egyptians.
- This means we are able to construct a well-defined timeline (with only a few minor uncertainties) of the whole period
- Kitchen. *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*. pp.29,32
"...we find in Kings a very remarkably preserved royal chronology, mainly very accurate in fine detail, that agrees very closely with the dates given by Mesopotamian and other sources... It cannot well be the free creation of some much later writer's imagination that just happens (miraculously!) to coincide almost throughout with the data then preserved only in documents buried inaccessibly in the ruin mounds of Assyrian cities long since abandoned and largely lost to view."

ON THE RELIABILITY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Table 3. Kings of Israel and Judah, 931-586 B.C.: Basic Dates

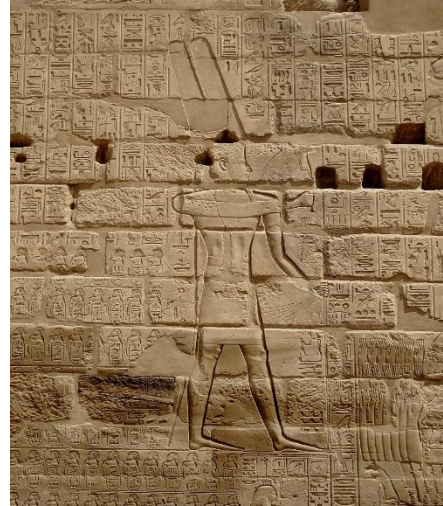
| B.C. | Judah | B.C. | Israel |
|------------------------------|--|-----------------|--|
| 931/930-915/914 | <i>Rehoboam</i> , 17 full yrs; 926/925 1 Kings 14:21 | 931/930-911/910 | <i>Jeroboam I</i> , 21 full yrs (to 22nd); 1 Kings 14:20 |
| 915/914-912/911 | <i>Abijam</i> , 3 full yrs; acc. Yr 18 <i>Jeroboam I</i> 1 Kings 15:1f. | 911/910-910/909 | <i>Nadab</i> , 1 full yr (>2nd); acc. Yr 2 <i>Asa</i> 1 Kings 15:25 |
| 912/911-871/870 | <i>Asa</i> , 41 full yrs; 1 Kings 15:9-10; acc. Yr 20 <i>Jeroboam I</i> | 910/909-887/886 | <i>Baasha</i> , 23 full yrs (>24th); acc. Yr 3 <i>Asa</i> ; 1 Kings 15:28, 33 |
| 871/870-849/848 (cr: 873ff.) | <i>Jehoshaphat</i> , 25 full yrs; 1 Kings 22:41; acc. Yr 4 <i>Ahab</i> | 887/886-886/885 | <i>Elah</i> , 1 full yr (>2nd); 1 Kings 16:8; acc. Yr 26 <i>Asa</i> |
| | | 886/885 | <i>Zimri</i> , 7 days; 1 Kings 16:10, 15 <i>Tibni</i> , 5 full yrs (>6th); 1 Kings 16:21f. (rival to <i>Omri</i>) |
| | | 886/885-875/874 | <i>Omri</i> , 11 full yrs (>12th); (sole) acc. Yr 31 <i>Asa</i> (881/880); 1 Kings 16:23 |
| | | 875/874-853 | <i>Ahab</i> , 21 full yrs (>22nd); 853 acc. Yr 38 <i>Asa</i> ; 1 Kings 16:29 |
| 849/848-842 | <i>J(eh)oram II</i> , 7 full yrs (>8th); 2 Kings 8:16; acc. Yr 5 <i>Joram I</i> | 853-852 | <i>Ahaziah I</i> , 1 full yr (>2nd); acc. Yr 17 <i>Jehoshaphat</i> ; 1 Kings 22:51 |
| 842-841 | <i>Ahaziah II</i> , 1 full yr (>2nd); acc. Yr 11/12 <i>Joram I</i> ; 2 Kings 9:29; 8:25-26 | 852-841 | <i>J(eh)oram I</i> , 11 full yrs (<12th); acc. Yr 18 <i>Jehoshaphat</i> /2 <i>Joram II</i> ; 2 Kings 3:1; 1:17 |
| 841-835 | <i>Queen Athaliah</i> , 6 yrs; 2 Kings 11:34 | 841-814/813 | <i>Jehu</i> , 27 (28?) full yrs (>28/29?); (no acc. link); 2 Kings 10:36; 841 |

"In Medias Res" — the Era of the Hebrew Kingdoms

| | | | |
|----------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|--|
| 841/835-796/795 | <i>Joash I</i> , 39 full yrs (>40) acc. (sole) 7th yr <i>Jehu</i> ; 2 Kings 12:1 | 814/813-806/805 (cr: 822/21) | <i>Jehoahaz I</i> , 16 full yrs (>17); acc. Yr 23 <i>Joash I</i> ; 2 Kings 13:1 |
| 796/795-776/775 (cr: 805/804ff.) | <i>Amaziah</i> , 29 full yrs; 2 Kings 14:1-2; acc. Yr 2 <i>Jehoash II</i> | 806/805-791/790 | <i>Joash II</i> , 15 full yrs (>16); 796; acc. Yr 37 <i>Joash I</i> ; 2 Kings 13:10 |
| 776/775-736/735 (cr: 787ff.) | <i>Uzziah (Azariah)</i> , 52 full yrs (not active 75off.) 2 Kings 15:1-2; acc. as cr, Yr "27" (17?) <i>Jeroboam II</i> | 791/790-750/749 cr: *804/803 | <i>Jeroboam II</i> , 41 full yrs; acc. (sole) Yr 15 <i>Amaziah</i> ; 2 Kings 14:23 |
| 750-735/730 | <i>Jotham</i> , 16/20 full yrs; acc. "Yr 2" <i>Pekah</i> ; 2 Kings 15:32-33, cf. 30 | 750/749 | <i>Zachariah</i> , 6 mos; 2 Kings 15:8; acc. Yr 38 <i>Uzziah</i> |
| | | 749 | <i>Shallum</i> , 1 mo; 2 Kings 15:13; acc. Yr 39 <i>Uzziah</i> |
| | | 749/748-739/738 | <i>Menahem</i> , 10 full yrs; 2 Kings 15:17; acc. Yr 39 <i>Uzziah</i> 738 → uncertain |
| | | 739/738-737/736 | <i>Pekahiah</i> , 2 full yrs; 2 Kings 15:23; acc. Yr 50, <i>Uzziah</i> |
| 735/734 or 731/730-715 | <i>Ahaz</i> , 16/(20) yrs; 2 Kings 16:1-2; acc. "Yr 17" <i>Pekah</i> ; 734 | 737/736-732/731 ("751/750"ff.) | <i>Pekah</i> , 5 yrs ("20" back-dated); real acc. Yr 52 <i>Uzziah</i> ; 733 2 Kings 15:27 |
| 715-687/686 (cr: 728ff.) | <i>Hezekiah</i> , 29 full yrs; 701 2 Kings 18:1-2; acc. Yr 3 <i>Hoshea</i> | 732/731-722 | <i>Hoshea</i> , 9 full yrs; 732 acc. Yr 20 <i>Jotham</i> /Yr 12 <i>Ahaz</i> ; 2 Kings 15:30/17:1 Fall of Samaria, 722 |
| 687/686-642 (cr: 697/696ff.) | <i>Manasseh</i> , 55 full yrs; 2 Kings 21:1; 676; ca. 666 | | |
| 642-640 | <i>Amon</i> , 2 full yrs; 2 Kings 21:19 | | |

Shishak of Egypt

- 1 Kings 14:25-26 (cf. 1 Kings 11:40; 2 Chronicles 12)
 - Shishak attacks Jerusalem and takes loot in the 5th year of Rehoboam
- Remember that names can sound very different from language to language. The Hebrew Shishak is equivalent to the Libyan name Shoshenq.
- There were a number of Pharaohs of Egypt called Shoshenq around this time, but the Shikak of the Bible is certainly Shoshenq I (c. 945-924).
- The Bubastite Portal contains inscriptions that enumerate towns captured by Shoshenq in a campaign into Palestine, which agrees with the biblical account.
- One account is dated to Shoshenq's 21st year, with the campaign having been soon before that. Based on the chronology mentioned previously, we can show that this lines up perfectly with the 5th year of Rehoboam.



Mesha of Moab

- 2 Kings 3:4-5,24-27
 - Moab rebels against Joram
 - Moab is largely destroyed, but eventually victorious. The Israelites go back to their own land.



- The Mesha Stele provides extra-biblical support for this event.
 - It names its author as King Mesha of Moab.
 - He attributes the subjugation of his people to their god being angry with them.
 - But with their god's help, Mesha was able to regain independence.
 - He names "Omri and his sons". He also names the "house of David"
 - Mesha also recounts many building projects (which makes an interesting coincidence with the destruction mentioned in the Bible)

Hazael of Aram-Damascus

- 2 Kings 9:14-16,24,27
 - While Joram king of Israel is recovering from war with Hazael, Jehu comes and kills him as well as Ahaziah the King of Israel.
 - This is an important point in the chronology, because two kings die at the same time.
- Tel Dan Stela
 - A stone fragment found in Dan. Some of the lines read...
"...and I killed two power[ful] kin[gs], who harnessed two thou[sand cha-]
]riots and two thousand horsemen.
[I killed Jo]ram son of [Ahab] king of Israel, and I killed [Ahaz]iah son of
[Joram king] of the House of David"
 - The fragment does not identify its author, but it is almost certainly the work of a king of Aram-Damascus.
 - Because the stela directly names the 2 kings who were killed (with some reasonable assumptions), we can identify the king as Hazael of Damascus.
 - Hazael may then have claimed credit for killing the kings because he had been at war with them, and he may have seen Jehu as his vassal.

