SECOND KINGS

Chapter 17

***Hoshea Last King of Israel***

**In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah, Hoshea son of Elah became king of Israel in Samaria, and he reigned nine years. 2 He did evil in the eyes of the Lord, but not like the kings of Israel who preceded him. 3 Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up to attack Hoshea, who had been Shalmaneser’s vassal and had paid him tribute. 4 But the king of Assyria discovered that Hoshea was a traitor, for he had sent envoys to So king of Egypt, and he no longer paid tribute to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year. Therefore Shalmaneser seized him and put him in prison. 5 The king of Assyria invaded the entire land, marched against Samaria and laid siege to it for three years. 6 In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria and deported the Israelites to Assyria. He settled them in Halah, in Gozan on the Habor River and in the towns of the Medes.**

**17:1** *twelfth year of Ahaz.* 732 b.c. (see note on 15:30), on the assumption that Ahaz began a co-regency with Azariah in 744/743 (see notes on 16:1–2). Some interpreters prefer to place the beginning of the reign of Ahaz in 735 on the assumption that the “twelfth” year of his reign in this text is a copyist’s error for the “fourth” year of his reign (i.e., 732). (CSB)

*nine years.* 732–723 (see Introduction to 1 Kings: Chronology). (CSB)

**17:3** *Shalmaneser.* Hoshea had become a vassal to Assyria under the rule of Tiglath-Pileser III (see note on 15:30). The latter was succeeded on the Assyrian throne by Shalmaneser V, who ruled 727–722 b.c. (CSB)

**17:5** *three years.* 725–722 b.c. Samaria was a strongly fortified city and extremely difficult to subdue (see note on 1Ki 16:24). (CSB)

**17:6** *ninth year of Hoshea.* 722 b.c. (see note on v. 1). (CSB)

*king of Assyria captured Samaria.* In the winter (December) of 722–721 Shalmaneser V died (possibly by assassination), and the Assyrian throne was seized by Sargon II (722/721–705). In his annals Sargon II lays claim to the capture of Samaria at the beginning of his reign, but it was hardly more than a mopping-up operation. (CSB)

*deported the Israelites.* Because the northern kingdom refused to be obedient to their covenant obligations, the Lord brought on them the judgment pronounced already by Ahijah during the reign of the northern kingdom’s first king, Jeroboam I (see note on 1Ki 14:15). In his annals Sargon II claims to have deported 27,290 Israelites. He then settled other captured people in the vacated towns of the northern kingdom (see v. 24). (CSB)

*Halah.* Location uncertain. (CSB)

*Gozan on the Habor River.* An Assyrian provincial capital located on a tributary of the Euphrates River. (CSB)

*towns of the Medes.* Towns located in the area south of the Caspian Sea and northeast of the Tigris River. (CSB)

***Israel Exiled Because of Sin***

**7 All this took place because the Israelites had sinned against the Lord their God, who had brought them up out of Egypt from under the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. They worshiped other gods 8 and followed the practices of the nations the Lord had driven out before them, as well as the practices that the kings of Israel had introduced. 9 The Israelites secretly did things against the Lord their God that were not right. From watchtower to fortified city they built themselves high places in all their towns. 10 They set up sacred stones and Asherah poles on every high hill and under every spreading tree. 11 At every high place they burned incense, as the nations whom the Lord had driven out before them had done. They did wicked things that provoked the Lord to anger. 12 They worshiped idols, though the Lord had said, “You shall not do this.” 13 The Lord warned Israel and Judah through all his prophets and seers: “Turn from your evil ways. Observe my commands and decrees, in accordance with the entire Law that I commanded your fathers to obey and that I delivered to you through my servants the prophets.” 14 But they would not listen and were as stiff-necked as their fathers, who did not trust in the Lord their God. 15 They rejected his decrees and the covenant he had made with their fathers and the warnings he had given them. They followed worthless idols and themselves became worthless. They imitated the nations around them although the Lord had ordered them, “Do not do as they do,” and they did the things the Lord had forbidden them to do. 16 They forsook all the commands of the Lord their God and made for themselves two idols cast in the shape of calves, and an Asherah pole. They bowed down to all the starry hosts, and they worshiped Baal. 17 They sacrificed their sons and daughters in the fire. They practiced divination and sorcery and sold themselves to do evil in the eyes of the Lord, provoking him to anger. 18 So the Lord was very angry with Israel and removed them from his presence. Only the tribe of Judah was left, 19 and even Judah did not keep the commands of the Lord their God. They followed the practices Israel had introduced. 20 Therefore the Lord rejected all the people of Israel; he afflicted them and gave them into the hands of plunderers, until he thrust them from his presence. 21 When he tore Israel away from the house of David, they made Jeroboam son of Nebat their king. Jeroboam enticed Israel away from following the Lord and caused them to commit a great sin. 22 The Israelites persisted in all the sins of Jeroboam and did not turn away from them 23 until the Lord removed them from his presence, as he had warned through all his servants the prophets. So the people of Israel were taken from their homeland into exile in Assyria, and they are still there.**

**17:7–23** A theological explanation for the downfall of the northern kingdom. Israel had repeatedly spurned the Lord’s gracious acts, had refused to heed the prophets’ warnings of impending judgment (vv. 13–14, 23) and had failed to keep her covenant obligations (v. 15). The result was the implementation of the covenant curse precisely as it had been presented to the Israelites by Moses before they entered into Canaan (Dt 28:49–68; 32:1–47). (CSB)

**17:7** *brought them up out of Egypt.* The deliverance from Egypt was the fundamental redemptive event in Israel’s history. She owed her very existence as a nation to this gracious and mighty act of the Lord (see Ex 20:2; Dt 5:15; 26:8; Jos 24:5–7, 17; Jdg 10:11; 1Sa 12:6; Ne 9:9–13; Mic 6:4). (CSB)

*worshiped other gods.* A violation of the most basic obligation of Israel’s covenant with the Lord (see v. 35; Dt 5:7; 6:14; Jos 24:14–16, 20; Jer 1:16; 2:5–6; 25:6; 35:15). (CSB)

**17:8** *practices of the nations.* See Dt 18:9; Jdg 2:12–13. (CSB)

*practices that the kings of Israel had introduced.* See, e.g., 10:31 (Jehu); 14:24 (Jeroboam II); 1Ki 12:28–33 (Jeroboam I); 16:25–26 (Omri); 16:30–34 (Ahab). (CSB)

**17:9** *high places in all their towns.* See 14:4; 15:4, 35; see also notes on 16:4; 1Ki 3:2; 15:14. (CSB)

**17:10** *sacred stones.* See note on 1Ki 14:23. (CSB)

*Asherah poles.* See note on 1Ki 14:15. (CSB)

*on every high hill and under every spreading tree.* See 16:4; 1Ki 14:23; Jer 2:20; 3:6, 13; 17:2. (CSB)

**17:11** *wicked things.* Perhaps a reference to ritual prostitution (see note on 1Ki 14:24; see also Hos 4:13–14). (CSB)

**17:12** *You shall not do this.* See NIV text note; see also Ex 23:13; Lev 26:1; Dt 5:6–10. (CSB)

**17:13** *warned Israel and Judah through all his prophets.* Israel not only violated the requirements of the Sinai covenant, but she also spurned the words of prophets the Lord had graciously sent to call his people back to the covenant (see, e.g., 1Ki 13:1–3; 14:6–16; Jdg 6:8–10; 1Sa 3:19–21 as well as the ministries of Elijah, Elisha, Amos and Hosea). (CSB)

*seers.* See note on 1Sa 9:9. (CSB)

**17:14** *stiff-necked.* A figure derived from the obstinate resistance of an ox to being placed under a yoke (see Dt 10:16; Jer 2:20; 7:26; 17:23; 19:15; Hos 4:16). (CSB)

**17:15** *followed worthless idols.* See Dt 32:21; Jer 2:5; 8:19; 10:8; 14:22; 51:18. (CSB)

**17:16** *two idols cast in the shape of calves.* The golden calves of Bethel and Dan (see 1Ki 12:28–30). (CSB)

*Asherah pole.* See note on 1Ki 14:15. (CSB)

*all the starry hosts.* Israel had been commanded not to follow the astral cults of her pagan neighbors (see Dt 4:19; 17:3). Although this form of idolatry is not mentioned previously in 1,2 Kings, the prophet Amos apparently alludes to its practice in the northern kingdom during the reign of Jeroboam II (see note on Am 5:26). It was later introduced in the southern kingdom during the reign of Manasseh (see 21:3, 5) and abolished during the reformation of Josiah (see 23:4–5, 12; see also Eze 8:16). (CSB)

**17:17** *sacrificed their sons and daughters.* See note on 16:3. (CSB)

*divination and sorcery.* Such practices were forbidden in the Mosaic covenant (see note on 16:15; see also Lev 19:26; Dt 18:10). (CSB)

**17:18** *removed them from his presence.* The exile of the northern kingdom (see v. 6; 23:27). (CSB)

*Only the tribe of Judah was left.* The southern kingdom included elements of the tribes of Simeon and Benjamin, but Judah was the only tribe in the south to retain its complete integrity (see notes on 1Ki 11:31–32; see also note on 2Ki 19:4). (CSB)

**17:20** *afflicted them and gave them into the hands of plunderers.* See 10:32–33; 13:3, 20; 24:2; 2Ch 21:16; 28:18; Am 1:13. (CSB)

**17:21** *tore Israel away from the house of David.* See 1Ki 11:11, 31; 12:24. The division of the kingdom was of the Lord, but it came to the nation as a punishment for their sins. (CSB)

*Jeroboam … caused them to commit a great sin.* See 1Ki 12:26–32; 13:33–34. (CSB)

**17:23** *warned through all his servants the prophets.* See 1Ki 14:15–16; Hos 10:1–7; 11:5; Am 5:27. (CSB)

***Samaria Resettled***

**24 The king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath and Sepharvaim and settled them in the towns of Samaria to replace the Israelites. They took over Samaria and lived in its towns. 25 When they first lived there, they did not worship the Lord; so he sent lions among them and they killed some of the people. 26 It was reported to the king of Assyria: “The people you deported and resettled in the towns of Samaria do not know what the god of that country requires. He has sent lions among them, which are killing them off, because the people do not know what he requires.” 27 Then the king of Assyria gave this order: “Have one of the priests you took captive from Samaria go back to live there and teach the people what the god of the land requires.” 28 So one of the priests who had been exiled from Samaria came to live in Bethel and taught them how to worship the Lord. 29 Nevertheless, each national group made its own gods in the several towns where they settled, and set them up in the shrines the people of Samaria had made at the high places. 30 The men from Babylon made Succoth Benoth, the men from Cuthah made Nergal, and the men from Hamath made Ashima; 31 the Avvites made Nibhaz and Tartak, and the Sepharvites burned their children in the fire as sacrifices to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim. 32 They worshiped the Lord, but they also appointed all sorts of their own people to officiate for them as priests in the shrines at the high places. 33 They worshiped the Lord, but they also served their own gods in accordance with the customs of the nations from which they had been brought. 34 To this day they persist in their former practices. They neither worship the Lord nor adhere to the decrees and ordinances, the laws and commands that the Lord gave the descendants of Jacob, whom he named Israel. 35 When the Lord made a covenant with the Israelites, he commanded them: “Do not worship any other gods or bow down to them, serve them or sacrifice to them. 36 But the Lord, who brought you up out of Egypt with mighty power and outstretched arm, is the one you must worship. To him you shall bow down and to him offer sacrifices. 37 You must always be careful to keep the decrees and ordinances, the laws and commands he wrote for you. Do not worship other gods. 38 Do not forget the covenant I have made with you, and do not worship other gods. 39 Rather, worship the Lord your God; it is he who will deliver you from the hand of all your enemies.” 40 They would not listen, however, but persisted in their former practices. 41 Even while these people were worshiping the Lord, they were serving their idols. To this day their children and grandchildren continue to do as their fathers did.**

**17:24** *king of Assyria.* Primarily Sargon II (722–705 b.c.), though later Assyrian rulers, including Esarhaddon (681–669) and Ashurbanipal (669–627), settled additional non-Israelites in Samaria (see Ezr 4:2, 9–10). (CSB)

*Babylon, Cuthah.* Babylon and Cuthah (located about eight miles northeast of Babylon) were forced to submit to Assyrian rule by Sargon II in 709. *Avva.* Probably the same as Ivvah (see 18:34; 19:13). Its association with Hamath, Arpad and Sepharvaim suggests a location somewhere in Aram (Syria). (CSB)

*Hamath.* Located on the Orontes River (see 14:25; 18:34; see also note on Eze 47:15). In 720 Sargon II made the kingdom of Hamath into an Assyrian province. (CSB)

*Sepharvaim.* Perhaps located in Aramean territory, possibly between Damascus and Hamath. (CSB)

*Samaria.* Here a designation for the entire northern kingdom (see note on 1Ki 13:32). (CSB)

**17:25** *did not worship the Lord*. They worshiped their own national deities. (CSB)

*sent lions among them.* Lions had always been present in Canaan (see 1Ki 13:24; 20:36; Jdg 14:5; 1Sa 17:34; Am 3:12). In the aftermath of the disruption and depopulation caused by the conflict with the Assyrians, the lions greatly increased in number (see Ex 23:29). This was viewed by the inhabitants of the land and the writer of Kings as a punishment from the Lord (see Lev 26:21–22). (CSB)

**17:26** *king of Assyria.* Sargon II. *what the god of that country requires.* According to the religious ideas of that time, each regional deity required special ritual observances, which, if ignored or violated, would bring disaster on the land. (CSB)

**17:27** *one of the priests.* Of the golden calf cult established in the northern kingdom by Jeroboam I (see 1Ki 12:31 and note). (CSB)

**17:28** *came to live in Bethel.* Bethel continued to be the center for the apostate form of Yahweh worship that had been promoted in the northern kingdom since the time of Jeroboam I (see notes on 1Ki 12:28–30). (CSB)

**17:29** *people of Samaria.* The mixed population of the former territory of the northern kingdom. These people of mixed ancestry eventually came to be known as Samaritans. In later times the Samaritans rejected the idolatry of their polytheistic origins and followed the teachings of Moses, including monotheism. In NT times Jesus testified to a Samaritan woman (Jn 4:4–26), and many Samaritans were converted under the ministry of Philip (Ac 8:4–25). (CSB)

**17:32** *officiate for them as priests.* See note on 1Ki 12:31. (CSB)

**17:33** *They worshiped the Lord, but they also served their own gods.* A classic statement of syncretistic religion. (CSB)

**17:34** *To this day.* Until the time of the writing of 1,2 Kings. (CSB)

*worship the Lord*. Here used in the sense of faithful worship. In vv. 32–33 “worship the Lord” refers to a paganized worship. (CSB)

**17:35** *Do not worship any other gods.* The Mosaic covenant demanded exclusive worship of the Lord (Ex 20:5; Dt 5:9). This was the first and great commandment, and it was to distinguish Israel from all other peoples. (CSB)

**17:36** *the Lord, who brought you up out of Egypt … you must worship.* Here, as in v. 7, the deliverance from Egypt is cited as the gracious act of the Lord par excellence that entitled him to exclusive claim on Israel’s loyalty. (CSB)

**17:39** *will deliver you from … all your enemies.* See Ex 23:22; Dt 20:1–4; 23:14. (CSB)

**17:41** *To this day.* See note on v. 34. (CSB)