

# SECOND KINGS

## Chapter 17

*Hoshea Reigns in Israel*

**In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah, Hoshea the son of Elah began to reign in Samaria over Israel, and he reigned nine years. 2 And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, yet not as the kings of Israel who were before him. 3 Against him came up Shalmaneser king of Assyria. And Hoshea became his vassal and paid him tribute. 4 But the king of Assyria found treachery in Hoshea, for he had sent messengers to So, king of Egypt, and offered no tribute to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year. Therefore the king of Assyria shut him up and bound him in prison. 5 Then the king of Assyria invaded all the land and came to Samaria, and for three years he besieged it.**

**17:1** *twelfth year of Ahaz.* 732 B.C., on the assumption that Ahaz began a co-regency with Azariah in 744/743. 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. (CSB)

**17:2** *not as the kings of Israel.* How Hoshea’s evil differed is not explained. Likely, he did not practice the religion introduced by Jeroboam. (TLSB)

**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)

**17:4** *treachery.* According to Assyrian records, Hoshea’s conspiracy against Pekah succeeded because he accepted support from Tiglath-pileser (15:29–30). When the latter’s son Shalmaneser came to the throne, the Israelite puppet king did not remain a tribute-paying vassal for long. Misled by a promise of help from Egypt (which never came), he threw off the Assyrian yoke. (TLSB)

*So.* No pharaoh by that name has been found in Egyptian records. It may represent a transliterated Egyptian common noun meaning “vizier”; the sentence would then read “he had sent messengers to the vizier of the king of Egypt.” (TLSB)

*king ... prison.* Shalmaneser lost no time in putting down the insurrection by imprisoning Hoshea. (TLSB)

**17:5** *three years.* 725–722 B.C. Samaria was a strongly fortified city and extremely difficult to subdue. (CSB)

Archaeological surveys of Samaria and its major cities attest to the total destruction wrought by the Assyrians. (TLSB)

**17:1–5** Hoshea, the last king of Israel, placates the Assyrians, conspires against them, and even resists them for three years. All of these strategies fail to save the kingdom. All human efforts to hold on to God’s blessings and promises—embodied here in the Promised Land—are doomed to fail. Israel received God’s call and blessings by grace through faith, which is the only way we receive God’s blessings still

today. • O Lord, I cannot by my own reason or strength attain and hold Your blessings. Grant them all to me by grace in Christ. Amen. (TLSB)

*The Fall of Israel*

**6 In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria, and he carried the Israelites away to Assyria and placed them in Halah, and on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.**

**17:6** *ninth year of Hoshea. 722 B.C. (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)

In his annals, Shalmaneser’s successor, Sargon (721–705 BC), takes credit for destroying Samaria. He claims to have taken 27,280 captives into exile, no doubt the upper social stratum. Broader calculations from Assyrian records for Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon II total c 50,000 deportees from Israel to Mesopotamia. (TLSB)

*Halah.* Unidentifiable site. (TLSB)

*carried the Israelites away to Assyria.* 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. 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)

City on the Habor River, which empties into the middle Euphrates. (TLSB)

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

South of the Caspian Sea. Here, the so-called “lost tribes” lost their national identity. Most of them were integrated with the population of their new homes. (TLSB)

**17:6** Settled in distant lands, the northern tribes are more or less lost to history. Speculators have proposed numerous accounts of what happened to them. Some groups have even claimed to be Israel’s descendants. All such theories have proven false and fruitless. The Lord has erased the heritage of these rebellious people. The enduring heritage of the OT passed from Judah, through Jesus, the Son of David, to all people who would receive the promises and blessings of God by grace. • Preserve Your Word and heritage among us, O Lord, from generation to generation. Amen. (TLSB)

*Exile Because of Idolatry*

**7** And this occurred because the people of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods **8** and walked in the customs of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel, and in the customs that the kings of Israel had practiced. **9** And the people of Israel did secretly against the LORD their God things that were not right. They built for themselves high places in all their towns, from watchtower to fortified city. **10** They set up for themselves pillars and Asherim on every high hill and under every green tree, **11** and there they made offerings on all the high places, as the nations did whom the LORD carried away before them. And they did wicked things, provoking the LORD to anger, **12** and they served idols, of which the LORD had said to them, “You shall not do this.” **13** Yet the LORD warned Israel and Judah by every prophet and every seer, saying, “Turn from your evil ways and keep my commandments and my statutes, in accordance with all the Law that I commanded your fathers, and that I sent to you by my servants the prophets.” **14** But they would not listen, but were stubborn, as their fathers had been, who did not believe in the LORD their God. **15** They despised his statutes and his covenant that he made with their fathers and the warnings that he gave them. They went after false idols and became false, and they followed the nations that were around them, concerning whom the LORD had commanded them that they should not do like them. **16** And they abandoned all the commandments of the LORD their God, and made for themselves metal images of two calves; and they made an Asherah and worshiped all the host of heaven and served Baal. **17** And they burned their sons and their daughters as offerings and used divination and omens and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger. **18** Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them out of his sight. None was left but the tribe of Judah only. **19** Judah also did not keep the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the customs that Israel had introduced. **20** And the LORD rejected all the descendants of Israel and afflicted them and gave them into the hand of plunderers, until he had cast them out of his sight. **21** When he had torn Israel from the house of David, they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king. And Jeroboam drove Israel from following the LORD and made them commit great sin. **22** The people of Israel walked in all the sins that Jeroboam did. They did not depart from them, **23** until the LORD removed Israel out of his sight, as he had spoken by all his servants the prophets. So Israel was exiled from their own land to Assyria until this day.

**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)

**17:7–23** Summarizes major issues and theological themes. (TLSB)

**17:7** *this occurred*. Disappearance of Northern Kingdom and later the fall of Jerusalem (vv 19–20) were the result of God’s direction of world history. Proud, cruel Assyria was unaware that it served God’s purpose. It was the rod of His anger on a people who did not keep His covenant (Is 10:5–19). (TLSB)

*brought them up out of the land 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)

*feared 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** *customs of the nations.* See Dt 18:9; Jdg 2:12–13. (CSB)

*customs 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)

**17:13** *warned Israel and Judah through every prophet.* 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)

Not only the preaching but also the writings that would finally be gathered as Scripture. This summarizes the appeal for repentance that the prophets consistently preached, a message firmly rooted in God’s Word as recorded in the Books of Moses (Scripture at that time) and the Lord’s revelations in connection with Scripture. (TLSB)

**17:14** *stubborn.* 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** *went after false iudols.* See Dt 32:21; Jer 2:5; 8:19; 10:8; 14:22; 51:18. (CSB)

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

*host of heaven.* 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 and abolished during the reformation of Josiah (see 23:4–5, 12; see also Eze 8:16). (CSB)

Astral deities; worship of them was forbidden. Cf Dt 17:3. (TLSB)

**17:17** *divination and omens.* Such practices were forbidden in the Mosaic covenant. (CSB)

*sold themselves.* Free people could sell themselves as slaves to pay off debt. (TLSB)

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

*none was left but the tribe of Judah only.* 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. (CSB)

Tribes of Benjamin and Simeon were more or less absorbed by Judah to form the Southern Kingdom called “Judah.” Many Levites would also have dwelt there because of the Jerusalem temple. (TLSB)

Not just in punishment by the Assyrians but throughout Israel’s history. (TLSB)

**17:21** *torn 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)

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

*Israel was exiled.* Main group was taken in 722 BC. (TLSB)

*until this day.* Time when record was written on which the author of Kings drew for this account. (TLSB)

**17:7–23** The Lord allowed Israel to fall and go into exile as a warning to all generations of believers. The NT, too, warns us to guard our doctrine and life lest we fall away from the Lord. God calls us to teach His Word faithfully to each generation, emphasizing His Law (by which the Lord leads us to daily repentance) and His promises of the covenant in Christ (by which He grants us everlasting salvation). • “Help us Your holy Law to learn, To mourn our sin and from it turn In faith to You and to Your Son And Holy Spirit, Three in One.” Amen. (LSB 865:2). (TLSB)

### *Assyria Resettles Samaria*

**24** And the king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the people of Israel. And they took possession of Samaria and lived in its cities. **25** And at the beginning of their dwelling there, they did not fear the LORD. Therefore the LORD sent lions among them, which killed some of them. **26** So the king of Assyria was told, “The nations that you have carried away and placed in the cities of Samaria do not know the law of the god of the land. Therefore he has sent lions among them, and behold, they are killing them, because they do not know the law of the god of the land.” **27** Then the king of Assyria commanded, “Send there one of the priests whom you carried away from there, and let him go and dwell there and teach them the law of the god of the land.” **28** So one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and lived in Bethel and taught them how they should fear the LORD. **29** But every nation still made gods of its own and put them in the shrines of the high places that the Samaritans had made, every nation in the cities in which they lived. **30** The men of Babylon made Succoth-benoth, the men of Cuth made Nergal, the men of Hamath made Ashima, **31** and the Avvites made Nibhaz and Tartak; and the Sepharvites burned their children in the fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim. **32** They also feared the LORD and appointed from among themselves all sorts of people as priests of the high places, who sacrificed for them in the shrines of the high places. **33** So they feared the LORD but also served their own gods, after the manner of the nations from among whom they had been carried away. **34** To this day they do according to the former manner. They do not fear the LORD, and they do not follow the statutes or the rules or the law or the commandment that the LORD commanded the children of Jacob, whom he named Israel. **35** The LORD made a covenant with them and commanded them, “You shall not fear other gods or bow yourselves to them or serve them or sacrifice to them, **36** but you shall fear the LORD, who brought you out of the land of Egypt with great power and with an outstretched arm. You shall bow yourselves to him, and to him you shall sacrifice. **37** And the statutes and the rules and the law and the commandment that he wrote for you, you shall always be careful to do. You shall not fear other gods, **38** and you shall not forget the covenant that I have made with you. You shall not fear other gods, **39** but you shall fear the LORD your God, and he will deliver you out of the hand of all your enemies.” **40** However, they would not listen, but they did according to their former manner. **41** So these nations feared the LORD and also served their carved images. Their children did likewise, and their children's children—as their fathers did, so they do to this day.

**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)

*brought people.* Deportation of the inhabitants and importation of foreigners was designed to break the spirit of nationalism in occupied countries. Archaeological surveys at Samaria show the

Assyrians ending their policy of destruction and beginning reconstruction for the new settlers. Inter-marriage between the remaining Israelites and the heathen newcomers produced “the Samaritans” (v 29). (TLSB)

*Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim.* Eastern regions conquered by the Assyrians. Some locations are unknown. (TLSB)

*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. (CSB)

**17:25** *did not fear 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)

Asiatic lions. Through creation, God displays His displeasure with the pagan settlers. (TLSB)

**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)

Ancient people typically believed in local deities or spirits, which inhabited a place. Though the Promised Land was special to the Lord, the people failed to see that He was also Lord of all creation. (TLSB)

**17:27–28** The Lord tolerates and works with the foreigners’ misunderstanding, that they might learn His Word. (TLSB)

**17:27** *one of the priests.* Of the golden calf cult established in the northern kingdom by Jeroboam I. (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** *gods of its own.* Although the repatriated priest taught the immigrants how they should fear the LORD (v 32), they “also served their own gods” (v 33) whom they had worshiped in their homeland. They came from widely separated places: from Babylon south of Assyria to Hamath in northern Syria. Their gods also represented a motley assortment, some of whom have not been identified (vv 30–31). (TLSB)

*Samariitans*. 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)

**17:30–31** List includes Babylonian, Elamite, and unknown gods. (TLSB)

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

By their syncretistic religion, the new settlers thought “they feared the LORD,” but their religion was displeasing to Him, as was Israel’s age-long failure to have no other gods besides Him (Ex 20:3). (TLSB)

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

**17:35** *you shall not fear 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 land of Egypt ... you bow yourselves.* 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)

**17:35–40** An aside, rehearsing essential features of the covenant established under Moses with Israel, which the priest (v 28) would need to teach to the people. (TLSB)

**17:41** *these nations.* After condemning Israel’s past unfaithfulness (vv 34b–40), the writer returns briefly to the mixed worship of the Samaritans. By the time of Jesus, they no longer “served their carved images. (TLSB)

**17:24–41** Through a priest and teaching about the covenant, the Lord reaches out to the people settled in Israel. The Lord had commanded Israel to deal graciously with sojourners and to teach them the faith and practices of the true God (see note, Ex 12:19). He would have us deal kindly and patiently with sojourners and guests among us, proclaiming to them God’s Law and Gospel, by which the Lord consecrates for Himself a people. • Lord, grant me an open heart to share Your Word and patience with those who know little about You. Lead our congregations to focus on this important mission. Amen. (TLSB)