

## **The Divided Monarchy Period**

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## 1. Introduction

The biblical record about Israel's divided monarchy is well supplemented by ancient texts and other archaeological findings. It is a big task to discuss not only the direct but also all the various pieces of indirect (or 'circumstantial') evidence related to this time period. For this reason the limited scope of this essay requires a clear definition of the given task. First of all, we try to confine this work to the *main* evidence related to Israel's history. Then, focusing on the time period of the divided monarchy, this essay will not treat the events beyond the fall of Samaria in 722 BC. Much could be added about the further development of the southern kingdom. Moreover, while concentrating on the relationships between the nations, we will *not* discuss the *inner* relationship of ancient Israel. Instead, we will recall the history of (northern) Israel and (southern) Judah with special regard to their surrounding neighbours, so providing the framework for discussion of the archaeological evidence. To some extent we will see how such data illuminates biblical history. However, above all, archaeological evidence discussed in this essay provides some good arguments for the historicity of the biblical records. We will mention the evidence but also refer to some points of debate for further discussion. References will help the reader to study deeper in order to draw his own reasonable conclusions.

## 2. The Early Divided Kingdom (931-841)

### a. Egyptian Impact

Jeroboam, the first king of the Northern Kingdom, established two worship sites in the region, one at Dan and the other at Bethel. There he set up ‘golden calves’ possibly similar to the one Aaron made in the wilderness. (cf. 1 Ki 12:28f.; Ex 32:4) Such images (e.g. the *bull god Apis*) were also found in Egypt, and probably Jeroboam followed the religion of his protector Pharaoh Shishak.<sup>1</sup>

Besides, calves also functioned as ‘pedestals’ for other gods<sup>2</sup>, and “similar practices involving the worship of the Canaanite god Baal Hadad are well documented in the literature and art of Ugarit.”<sup>3</sup>



Egyptian infiltration came along with enmity. Twice Egypt campaigned in Palestine at the beginning of the divided monarchy. At first, the Bible records that Pharaoh Shishak captured the fortified cities of Judah and then attacked Jerusalem in the days of Jeroboam’s contemporary Rehoboam. (cf. 1 Ki 14:25-26; 2 Chr 12:1-4)

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<sup>1</sup> Earlier, Jeroboam fled from Solomon to Pharaoh Shishak’s court. (1 Ki 11:40)

<sup>2</sup> Alfred J. Hoerth, *Archaeology and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 300 and 174f.

<sup>3</sup> Richard D. Patterson and Hermann J. Austel, “1, 2 Kings,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, *1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job*, ed. Frank E. Gæbelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 118; cf. Joel F. Drinkard Jr., “Religious Practices Reflected in the Book of Hosea,” *Review and Expositor* 90 (Spring 1993): 207.

Scholars commonly identify biblical Shishak with the 22<sup>nd</sup> dynasty ruler Shoshenk I.<sup>4</sup> Beside the linguistic similarities, Shoshenk recorded his Palestinian campaign on the ‘Karnak Stele’.<sup>5</sup> Interestingly, Kitchen found a reference to David on this stele.<sup>6</sup>

The next Egyptian raid into Palestine was led by Zerah the Cushite, possibly commander of the army of Osorkon I son of Shoshenk I.<sup>7</sup> Zerah attacked Asa king of Judah according to 2 Chr 14:9ff. Extrabiblical evidence has not been found so far, but inscriptions tell us that Egypt used Cushite mercenary troops for raids in Asiatic territory as early as the sixth dynasty.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, the Amarna Letters mention Cushite troops serving in Egyptian garrisons in Canaan, e.g. in Jerusalem.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Contra David Rohl, *A Test of Time. Volume I: The Bible – From Myth to History* (London: Arrow Books, 1995), 175-201.

<sup>5</sup> James H. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt: Historical Documents from the Earliest Times to the Persian Conquest, vol. 4, The Twentieth to the Twenty Sixth Dynasties* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1906), 354, no. 716.

<sup>6</sup> Kenneth A. Kitchen, “A Possible Mention of David in the Late Tenth Century BCE, and Deity \*Dod as Dead as the Dodo?” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 76 (December 1997): 40.

<sup>7</sup> J. Daniel Hays, “The Cushites: A Black Nation in the Bible,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 153 (October 1996): 401f.; see also Alfred J. Hoerth, *Archaeology and the Old Testament*, 303.

<sup>8</sup> J. Daniel Hays, “The Cushites: A Black Nation in Ancient History,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 153 (July 1996): 275, n. 25; he refers to John A. Wilson who cites James H. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt: Historical Documents from the Earliest Times to the Persian Conquest, vol. 1, The First to the Seventeenth Dynasties* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1906), 142, no. 311 (‘Wawat’= Cushites).

<sup>9</sup> J. Daniel Hays, “The Cushites: A Black Nation in Ancient History,” 276; cf. James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 488.

## b. Syrian Pressure

From 1 Ki 15:18-19 we know that Ben-Hadad I king of Syria (city: Damascus) had treaty alliances with Judah and Israel. Asa king of Judah bribed him with gifts to make a treaty as their fathers had done before. Ben-Hadad agreed, abandoned his treaty with Baasha king of Israel and in 883 BC<sup>10</sup> conquered the cities in the North (v. 20), so gaining “access to the international caravan routes that led from Egypt through Phoenicia and on to Damascus.”<sup>11</sup> International treaties were common at this time (as before) and abundantly found among the many ancient texts. Kitchen states that “today we can establish an outline of history of treaty, law, and covenant through some two thousand years, from circa 2500 down to circa 650.”<sup>12</sup> To mention one example we refer to the peace treaty between Ramesses II and Hattusilis of Hatti.<sup>13</sup>

Another significant item discovered was the ‘Melqarth Stele’ probably written by Ben-Hadad II at about 850 BC in honour of Melqarth the Tyrian deity, most likely after a positive outcome of a battle with Shalmaneser III.<sup>14</sup> The stele proves the his-

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<sup>10</sup> H. Jacob Katzenstein, *The History of Tyre* (Jerusalem: Goldberg’s Press, 1997), 137.

<sup>11</sup> Richard D. Patterson and Hermann J. Austel, “1, 2 Kings,” 129.

<sup>12</sup> Kenneth A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 283.

<sup>13</sup> H. Jacob Katzenstein, *The History of Tyre*, 50.

<sup>14</sup> F. M. Cross, “The Stele Dedicated to Melcarth by Ben-Hadad of Damascus,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 205 (1972): 42; Unger and Katzenstein argue for the identity of Ben-Hadad I and II, see. Merrill F. Unger, “Archaeology and the Israelite-Aramaean Wars,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 106 (April and July

toricity of Ben-Hadad and also confirms the accuracy of the king list in 1 Ki 15:18.<sup>15</sup>

Even though, we must add Kitchen's opinion who argues that this piece of evidence should be rejected since it is "heavily damaged as to be virtually illegible."<sup>16</sup>

Syria's role as an ally diminished with Israel's powerful reigns of Omri and his son Ahab. Probably driven by the Assyrian threat, Ben-Hadad (I or II; see p. 5, n. 14) attacked Samaria twice (in 855 and 854 BC) but was defeated by Ahab. (cf. 1 Ki 20:1-34). Ahab spared Ben-Hadad's life on basis of another treaty, possibly related to the previous one made by King Baasha. Ahab's decision might be understood in light of the rising Assyrian threat, facing the Battle of Karkar in 853 BC.<sup>17</sup> Ahab's power is revealed in the 'Monolith Inscription' of Shalmaneser III about this battle. The record shows how Assyria was confronted by a coalition of twelve kings, Ahab's army being the second largest after the Syrians, providing half of the chariots. Shalmaneser recorded "2.000 chariots, 10.000 foot soldiers of Ahab, the Israelite."<sup>18</sup>

Despite the treaty relationship, it appears that Ben-Hadad did not restore the Israelite towns as agreed upon. (cf. 1 Ki 20:34) And so, with the help of Judah, Ahab attacked his 'ally' to gain control over Ramoth-Gilead but failed and met his death.

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1949): 182f.; also H. Jacob Katzenstein, *The History of Tyre*, 138; in our view, differentiation of Ben-Hadad I and II allows for the most natural reading of 1 Ki 20:34.

<sup>15</sup> Merrill F. Unger, "Archaeology and the Israelite-Aramaean Wars," 181.

<sup>16</sup> Kenneth A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 12.

<sup>17</sup> Richard D. Patterson and Hermann J. Austel, "1, 2 Kings," 157, n. 34.

<sup>18</sup> James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 278f.

(cf. 1 Ki 22:29-35) The Syrian pressure rapidly increased and soon Samaria was besieged, again. (cf. 2 Ki 6:24ff.) Later, Ahab's son Joram tried to recapture Ramoth-Gilead and fought against Ben-Hadad's successor Hazael. (cf. 2 Ki 8:28f.; 9:14f.)

The military decline of Israel is implicitly documented by Shalmaneser III, since "in 848 and 845 when the Assyrians made new thrusts into Syria, Israel is not named in the federation still headed by 'Hadadezer (Adadidri) of Damascus.'" <sup>19</sup> The biblical record about Hazael's murder of Ben-Hadad and his succession as king of Damascus is confirmed by ancient Assyrian records. <sup>20</sup> (cf. 2 Ki 8:15) Moreover, *bit-Hazail* ('house of Hazael') is mentioned alongside *bit-Omri* ('house of Omri') by the later king Tiglath-pileser III. <sup>21</sup> Ben-Hadad is commonly identified with '(H)adad-Ezer' ('Adad-idri') as recorded in the annals of Shalmaneser III. <sup>22</sup>

### c. Assyrian Power

The Assyrian influence on Israel and Judah during the period of the early divided monarchy is well summarized by Nichols:

A person reading the Bible will not find anything concerning the Assyrians until

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<sup>19</sup> Merrill F. Unger, "Archaeology and the Israelite-Aramaean Wars," 308.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 309; Unger refers to the *Archiv für Orientforschung*, XIII, 223f.; see also H. Jacob Katzenstein, *The History of Tyre*, 173, n. 33.

<sup>21</sup> Kenneth A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 14.

<sup>22</sup> See *ibid.*, 11; Richard D. Patterson and Hermann J. Austel, "1, 2 Kings," 153, n. 1; F. M. Cross, "The Stele Dedicated to Melcarth," 40; contra Nadav Na'aman, "The Contribution of Royal Inscriptions for a Re-evaluation of the Book of Kings as a Historical Source," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 82 (March 1999): 8.

the rise of Tiglath-Pileser III to power about 745 BC. Secular history, however, reveals that there was a definite Assyrian influence on Israel and Judah for over a century before the first scriptural mention of the Assyrians. Often it was an indirect influence by way of Syrian politics. It may not be expedient to know this to interpret the Bible's message, but to the ancient Hebrew living in this real world, it was a vital issue in his life.<sup>23</sup>

In 876 BC, during Omri's reign, Ashurnasirpal II (883-859 BC) marched westward and attacked cities like Carchemish, Tyre, Sidon and Byblos. He did not campaign in Israel but nonetheless already recognized *bit-Omri* ('house of Omri') as noted in his records.<sup>24</sup> The Assyrian texts document both the historicity of King Omri and the rise of the Assyrian threat. In 858 and 853 BC Assyria marched west again, this time at the command of successor Shalmaneser III. (858-824 BC) As mentioned, at his second raid he came no further than Karkar where he met the coalition including Ahab. The Assyrian series of battles (858, 853, 848, 845 BC) continued into the period of the late divided monarchy in 841 BC. The many ancient texts describing these raids show that Assyria was already a major player of that time.

#### **d. Phoenician Alliance**

Israel's relationship with Phoenicia (cities: Tyre and Sidon) was friendly since the time of David and Solomon. Abibaal king of Tyre made "some sort of pact with

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<sup>23</sup> David Nichols, "The Ancient Near East 853-745 B.C.," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 18 (Fall 1975): 244.

<sup>24</sup> Alfred J. Hoerth, *Archaeology and the Old Testament*, 308.

David”<sup>25</sup> (cf. 1 Ki 5:1), and certainly Solomon had a fruitful treaty relationship with Hiram I. (cf. 1 Ki 5:12) Israel enjoyed great benefit from Tyre’s trade and architecture.

According to Josephus, Hiram was Solomon’s friend. (*Against Apion*, 1.109)

Some decades later, Israel grew stronger again during the reign of Omri and his son Ahab even by way of a marriage alliance with Phoenicia. Such political marriages were common in the ancient Near East as shown by the examples of Tyre and By-



blos<sup>26</sup> as well as Solomon and Egypt. (cf. 1 Ki 3:1) The Bible says Ahab married “Jezebel daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and began to serve *Baal* and worship him.” (1 Ki 16:31) The treaty surely was both economic but also political in nature, “to counteract the growing power of

Damascus.”<sup>27</sup> Most significantly, Ahab’s decision led to the strong development of Baalism in Israel. He even built a Baal temple in Samaria, probably constructed by the Phoenicians.<sup>28</sup> (cf. 1 Ki 16:32) Besides, polytheistic worship of other gods or goddesses like Anath, Astarte and Asherah was also associated with Baal worship. Ancient texts reveal that the “goddesses were primarily connected with sex and war, es-

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<sup>25</sup> H. Jacob Katzenstein, *The History of Tyre*, 74.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.

<sup>28</sup> Excavations in Samaria, Hazor and Meggido revealed important Phoenician constructions of that time; see H. Jacob Katzenstein, *The History of Tyre*, 148.

pecially sex.”<sup>29</sup> Such idolatry brought about serious moral decline in Israel. It is noteworthy that, according to Josephus, Ethbaal (‘Ithobalos’) was not only king of Sidon but also a priest of Astarte (cf. *Against Apion*, 1.123), which explains his daughter Jezebel’s religious zeal as depicted in the Bible. (e.g. 1 Ki 19:1-2) The reality of Jezebel is attested by a Phoenician-style seal that bears ‘Yzbl.’<sup>30</sup>

Eventually, Phoenician idolatry also overpowered the southern kingdom Judah by way of another marriage alliance, this time between Jehoram prince of Judah and Athaliah daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. (cf. 2 Ki 8:18) The Book of Kings refers to another Baal temple built in Jerusalem. (cf. 2 Ki 11:18)

#### **e. Moabites, Edomites**

The historicity of Omri king of Israel (885-874 BC) is evidenced by the already mentioned inscriptions of Shalmaneser III and Tiglath-pileser III. In addition, Omri’s conflict with the Moabites (cf. 2 Ki 3) is inscribed on the ‘Mesha Stele’ (or ‘Moabite Stone’) found at Dhiban in 1868 and now displayed in the Louvre Museum. The stele records that Moab was oppressed under Omri and his son Ahab (874-853 BC) until Mesha’s insurrection.<sup>31</sup> The stele is paralleled by the biblical witness of 2 Ki 3:5-7.

Ahab probably did not dominate southern Moab in light of 2 Chr 20:1ff. In the North,

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<sup>29</sup> Merrill F. Unger, “Archaeology and the Religion of the Canaanites,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 107 (April 1950): 171.

<sup>30</sup> Kenneth A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 13.

<sup>31</sup> James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 320.

Mesha king of Moab rebelled after Ahab's death, and King Joram with the help of Judah tried to regain control. In the course of this battle, Mesha took his firstborn son and sacrificed him on the city wall. (2 Ki 3:27) Such desperate action is "amply paralleled in the literature of the ancient Near East."<sup>32</sup>

Rebellion of Edom against Judah is recorded in 2 Ki 8:20-22. Jehoram king of Judah (853-841 BC) met the Edomites at Zair and defeated them. The rebellion continued, however, and the semi-Philistine city 'Libnah' revolted at about the same time. Patterson and Austel relate the Philistine-Arab attack in 2 Chr 21:16f. to these events: "Due to the economic importance of established trade routes, Judean clashes with Edom usually triggered Philistine and Arabic military activities with Judah."<sup>33</sup> Another Edomite-Israelite war we will discuss below. (p.13)

### **3. The Late Divided Kingdom (841-722)**

#### **a. Israel's Isolation**

With the succession of Jehu as king of Israel and his wicked acts to establish his power, international relations changed dramatically. First Jehu killed Joram king of Israel to succeed him. With the murder of Jezebel, Joram's mother, he ended the long-standing alliance and provoked Phoenician enmity. His murder of Ahaziah king of

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<sup>32</sup> Richard D. Patterson and Hermann J. Austel, "1, 2 Kings," 182, n. 27.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 202, n. 22.

Judah separated Israel from her southern brothers. He killed the kings' relatives and so firmly secured his reign, but only at the expense of diplomatic friends. (2 Ki 9-10)

### **b. Syrian Oppression**

While Shalmaneser III was occupied with inner affairs<sup>34</sup>, Hazael king of Damascus firmly controlled the Israelites around Jehu's time as confirmed by the 'Tell Dan stele'.<sup>35</sup> (cf. 2 Ki 10:32-33) Probably he "arrogated Jehu's regicides to his own initiative and glory"<sup>36</sup>, namely the murder of Joram and Ahaziah. (cf. 2 Ki 9:14-29) The latter he designated as 'king of the House of David.' The stele is displayed in the Archaeological Museum in Jerusalem.

Hazael severely defeated Israel again at the reign of Jehoahaz son of Jehu. The Bible records that "nothing had been left of the army of Jehoahaz except fifty horsemen, ten chariots and ten thousand foot soldiers, for the king of Aram had destroyed the rest and made them like the dust at threshing time." (2 Ki 13:7) Syria even conquered Jerusalem. (cf. 2 Ki 12:17-18; 2 Chr 24:23-24) According to the Bible, Syrian oppression lasted until Jehoash's reign. (cf 2 Ki 13:24f.) When Syria afflicted Jerusa-

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 215, n. 28-32.

<sup>35</sup> Fragments explicitly refer to the Syrian King Hazael; cf. Alfred J. Hoerth, *Archaeology and the Old Testament*, 326; see also Kenneth A. Kitchen, "A Possible Mention of David in the Late Tenth Century BCE," 29-35.

<sup>36</sup> Kenneth A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 17; according to Kitchen, "it is commonplace for Near Eastern rulers to claim credit for actions by others"; *ibid.*, 37.

lem in the reign of Jehoahaz (father of Jehoash), God sent a ‘deliverer’ (cf. 2 Ki 13:5), probably Adad-Nirari III king of Assyria who marched against Damascus.<sup>37</sup>

Lastly, an interesting detail is related to 2 Ki 16:6: “Rezin king of Aram recovered Elath for Aram by driving out the men of Judah. Edomites then moved into Elath and have lived there to this day.” 2 Chr 28:17 reveals that the Edomites even joined forces with Syria. Excavations at Elath have unearthed jar handles with an Edomite name (‘Qausanal’). In the layer below, a *signet ring* incised with the words “Belonging to Jotham” was found.<sup>38</sup> King Jotham was the father of Ahaz who ruled at the time of Rezin’s campaign. The reality of Rezin king of Aram (Damascus) is attested by Assyrian texts. (see below)



### c. Israel’s Expansion

Hoerth describes the political condition that provided for Israel’s recovery: “Assyria was weakened and preoccupied with Armenia, and Syria had not yet recovered from Adad-nirari III’s earlier attacks.”<sup>39</sup> Eventually, Uzziah and Jeroboam II controlled about the same area as David and Solomon did before. On the other hand, their

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<sup>37</sup> Richard D. Patterson and Hermann J. Austel, “1, 2 Kings,” 224, n. 4-5.

<sup>38</sup> Stephen Caesar, “Wars and Rumors of Wars: Evidence of Ancient Edomite/Israelite War Strengthened by New Finds,” *Bible and Spade* 10 (Autumn 1997): 77.

<sup>39</sup> Alfred J. Hoerth, *Archaeology and the Old Testament*, 329; on pp. 327f. Hoerth refers to the annals of Adad-Nariri III.

outward success was paralleled by an inward decline that eventually led to God's punishment. 'Ostraca' of that time have been found in Samaria testifying about the prosperity, e.g. "bills of lading for delivery of fine oil and barley sent to Samaria from the royal estates."<sup>40</sup>

Besides, the 'Samaria Ostraca' (and a few seals) also show that names with Baal elements were known in Israel.<sup>41</sup> The book of Hosea dates to this period and is full of references to Baal worship. (cf. Hos 2:13; 11:2) Drinkard refers to Old Testament passages with Baal-names such as 1 Chr 8:34 ('Merib-baal'), Judg 6:32 ('Jerubbaal'), 1 Chr 8:33 ('Esh-baal'), 1 Chr 12:5 ('Bealiah'), and 1 Chr 14:7 ('Beeliada'). These names reveal the strong influence of Canaanite Baal worship, implicitly referring to Israel's apostasy which resulted in God's punishment through Assyria.

#### **d. Assyrian Conquest**

Shalmaneser III came west again in 841 BC when Jehu became king of Israel. Evidence was found with the inscription of Shalmaneser III on the 'Black Obelisk', discovered in the palace at Calah (Nimrud) and now displayed in the British Museum:

The tribute of Jehu, son of Omri; I received from him silver, gold, a golden *saplu*-bowl, a golden vase with pointed bottom, golden tumblers, golden buckets, tin, a staff for a king, and wooden *puruhtu*.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Richard D. Patterson and Hermann J. Austel, "1, 2 Kings," 232, n. 28.

<sup>41</sup> Joel F. Drinkard Jr., "Religious Practices," 206.

<sup>42</sup> James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 281.

The inscription provides evidence for the reality of both Omri and Jehu. Below the inscription, the obelisk shows an Israelite, probably Jehu, kneeling before Shalmaneser



III. Wood gives a vivid description of the picture:

All 14 of the Israelites are bearded, have long hair and wear a pointed cap. They also wear a belted tunic that has a fringe at the bottom. In addition, the Israelite porters wear a mantle or cloak over the tunic that extends over the shoulders and is fringed or tasseled down the front on both sides. The kneeling figure, however, does not wear the outer cloak. His position before Shalmaneser may explain its absence. He is bowing in obeisance on his hands and knees before the Assyrian king with his chin and beard towards the ground. As a part of this humiliation, it seems that he had to remove his outer garment, thus forcing him to bow before the emperor of the world in what amounts to his underwear!<sup>43</sup>

Jehu's weakness and tribute to Assyria corresponds with his political isolation as shown in the biblical records. Katzenstein says "Jehu hurried to pay his respects to Shalmaneser III in the hope of buying a protector."<sup>44</sup> One can also interpret his submission as manipulation for desired selfish ends.<sup>45</sup> Interestingly, Hosea's warning reference to 'Shalman' might be related to this event.<sup>46</sup> (cf. Hos 10:14-15)

Another inscription reveals that around 800 BC Adad-Nirari III (811-782 BC)

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<sup>43</sup> Bryant G. Wood, "Israelite Kings in Assyrian Inscriptions," *Bible and Spade* 4 (Summer 1991): 79.

<sup>44</sup> H. Jacob Katzenstein, *The History of Tyre*, 178f.

<sup>45</sup> Richard D. Patterson and Hermann J. Austel, "1, 2 Kings," 215, n. 28-32.

<sup>46</sup> Bryant G. Wood, "Israelite Kings in Assyrian Inscriptions," 78.

marched west and collected tribute from “Iu’asu (Jehoash) the Samarian.” as well as from the rulers of Tyre and Sidon. The Pharaoh erected a stele found in 1967 at Tell al-Rimah (modern Iraq).<sup>47</sup> This source supplements the biblical record about King Jehoash, who was, on the other hand, successful against Syria as noted above.

After some time of weakness during the reigns of Shalmaneser IV (782-774 BC), Assur Dan III (773-756 BC) and Assur Nirari V (755-746 BC), Assyria’s power grew again under the strong leadership of Tiglath-pileser III. (745-727 BC) In 743 BC he campaigned and, according to his annals, received tribute from Rezin of Damascus and Menahem of Samaria.<sup>48</sup> His record is supplemented by the biblical passage about Menahem’s submission. (cf. 2 Ki 15:19f.; also Hos 8:8-10 ?) Later, Menahem and Rezin of Damascus attacked Ahaz of Judah who asked Tiglath-pileser III for help. The tribute from Ahaz (‘Azriau from Iuda’) is documented in the Assyrian annals.<sup>49</sup> Assyria interfered and Rezin was eventually put to death. (cf. 2 Ki 16:9)

Tiglath-pileser III also recorded the appointment of Hoshea as king of Israel.<sup>50</sup> His successor Shalmaneser V (727-722 BC) confirmed Hoshea’s vassal state and responded to his rebellion with the siege of Samaria. Samaria fell after three years. The

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 79f.; Richard D. Patterson and Hermann J. Austel, “1, 2 Kings,” 227.

<sup>48</sup> Alfred J. Hoerth, *Archaeology and the Old Testament*, 333.

<sup>49</sup> James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 282.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 284.

victory is claimed in the annals of Sargon II<sup>51</sup> (721-705 BC), and the biblical counterpart is found in 2 Ki 17:3-6, 24. Sargon II wrote:

At the beginning of my royal rule, I... the town of the Samaritans I besieged, conquered... for the god... who let me achieve this my triumph... I led away as prisoners 27,290 inhabitants of it and equipped from among them soldiers to man 50 chariots for my royal corps... The town I rebuilt better than it was before and settled therein people from countries which I myself had conquered. I placed an officer of mine as governor over them and imposed upon them tribute as is customary for Assyrian citizens.<sup>52</sup>

Excavations revealed that “occupation of settlements in Galilee was drastically reduced in the late eighth century”<sup>53</sup>, in correspondence with the biblical and Assyrian war records. At Hazor was found a related layer of black ash one meter thick.<sup>54</sup>

About Sargon it is preserved that he also attacked and captured Ashdod as recorded in Isaiah 20:1. A text was found at his palace in Khorsabad (northern Iraq) which says: “Ashdod’s king, Azuri, plotted to avoid paying me. In anger I marched against Ashdod with my captain, conquering.”<sup>55</sup>

Finally we should note that comparison between the biblical Assyrian names

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<sup>51</sup> He subsequently claimed victory for propaganda purposes; cf. Kenneth A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 39; the inscription is displayed in the British Museum.

<sup>52</sup> James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 284.

<sup>53</sup> Kenneth A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 38.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Translation by Bob Boyd, “Assyrian Brutality,” *Bible and Spade* 3 (Spring 1990): 62; cf. James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 286.

and those on the Assyrian tablets has shown remarkable conformity. The Hebrew writers apparently wrote them down near the times of the various episodes.<sup>56</sup> This adds to the impression that the biblical texts are historically accurate.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Overall, we conclude in agreement with Kenneth A. Kitchen that the Bible is a reliable historical source about the period of the divided monarchy. The biblical records are not contradicted but, on the contrary, well supplemented by external sources such as the various inscriptions mentioned in this essay. As Kitchen puts it,

The basic presentation of almost 350 years of the story of the Hebrew twin kingdoms comes out under factual examination as a highly reliable one, with mention of own and foreign rulers who were real, in the right order, at the right date, and sharing a common history that usually dovetails together well, when both Hebrew and external sources are available.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Bryant G. Wood, "Assyrian Kings in the Bible," *Bible and Spade* 4 (Spring 1991): 50f.

<sup>57</sup> Kenneth A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 64.

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