

WHAT WENT WRONG?

According to the prophet Nathan, Yahweh made a promise to his servant David:

Thus says the LORD of hosts: . . . I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring [viz. Solomon] after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. When he commits iniquity, I will punish him with a rod such as mortals use, with blows inflicted by human beings. But I will not take my steadfast love [Heb. *chesed*] from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. **Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.**

(2 Samuel 7:8-16)

This promise is known as the Davidic Covenant.

What is a Covenant?

What Covenants have we learned about so far?

After David's death, he was succeeded by his son, Solomon, and God renewed his promise: **“if** you will walk before me, as David your father walked, with integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you, and keeping my statutes and my ordinances, then I will establish your royal throne over Israel forever, as I promised your father David, saying, ‘There shall not fail you a successor on the throne of Israel’” (1 Kings 9:4-5).

But the promise is now **conditional** rather than absolute.

And God becomes angry with Solomon. Why?

Solomon was then judged by the Deuteronomic historian: he “did what was evil in the sight of the Lord” (1Kings 11:6).

Solomon's “evil” became archetypal for the Kings of Judah and Israel:

EVIL = ADULTERY = IDOLATRY

What is adultery?

What is idolatry?

When Solomon died in 922 B.C.E, the people in northern Israel, led by Jeroboam (an Ephraimite), appealed to his son and successor, Rehoboam, for relief from conscription and taxation. When their petition was denied, they rebelled against the house of David (a Judahite), and the kingdom was divided: “So Israel has been rebellion against the house of David to this day [c. 610 B.C.E.]” (10:19).

Jeroboam became the first king of Israel, and he immediately went wrong: He made two calves of gold—IDOLS—and he also “appointed priests . . . who were not Levites” (12:31).

The Deuteronomic historian pronounces judgment on every succeeding king of Israel and Judah, not according to his success or failure as a political leader, but by his fidelity, or (usually) infidelity to Yahweh. All of the Kings of Israel are judged to have failed; the prophet Abijah, who had inspired Jeroboam’s rebellion, tells his wife to tell Jeroboam: “you have done evil above all those who were before you” (14:8).

And so it goes, every king of Israel, and with only two exceptions, every king of Judah, is judged to have done what is evil in the sight of Yahweh.

In about 721 B.C.E., Israel/Samaria fell to the Assyrian Empire. According to the Deuteronomic historian, “This occurred because the people of Israel had sinned against the LORD” (2 Kings 17:7).

Many of the survivors fled south, into Judah, and perhaps partly as a consequence, during the reign of Hezekiah (715-687), there was a great religious revival; Hezekiah “did what was right in the sight of the LORD, centralizing worship in Jerusalem (and successfully withstanding attacks by Assyria).

The other King who did right in the sight of the LORD was Josiah (640-609). In 621 B.C.E., the book of the law (the core of Deuteronomy) was discovered in the Temple and became the basis of even more sweeping reforms.

Nonetheless, in 587, Jerusalem and Judah fell to the neo-Babylonian empire, and the people were driven into exile.

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