Excluding the first three kings from the early books of the Bible—Saul, David, and Solomon—there were nineteen kings who ruled over the northern kingdom of Israel after the united monarchy split (1 Kings 12). Unlike Judah, which had queens who ruled at times, Israel never had a queen reigning as king.

Among these nineteen kings, none were entirely faithful or righteous before God. The Bible consistently describes them as doing evil in the sight of the Lord (a recurring phrase in 1 and 2 Kings), failing to lead the people in covenantal obedience. The sole exception was King Jehu, who “did what was right in the eyes of the Lord” to some extent (2 Kings 10:30, ESV), although even he did not fully abandon the sins of Jeroboam, the founder of the northern kingdom’s idolatrous practices (1 Kings 12:26-33).

Summary of the Kings of Israel

Name Years Reigned Character of Reign Biblical Reference

> 1. Jeroboam 22 Evil – established golden calves, leading Israel into idolatry 1 Kings 12:25-33; 2 Kings 17:21

2. Nadab 2 Evil – continued Jeroboam’s sins 1 Kings 15:25-31

3. Baasha 24 Evil – utterly destroyed Jeroboam’s house but did not turn from evil 1 Kings 15:33-16:7

4. Ela 2 Evil – followed Baasha’s evil path 1 Kings 16:8-14

5. Zimri 7 days Evil – reigned only briefly, notorious for wickedness 1 Kings 16:15-20

6. Omri 12 Evil – more evil than all before him, established Samaria as capital 1 Kings 16:21-27

7. Ahab 22 Evil – married Jezebel, promoted Baal worship, opposed Elijah 1 Kings 16:29-33; 18:16-40

8. Ahaziah 2 Evil – followed Ahab’s sinful ways 1 Kings 22:51-53

9. Joram 12 Evil – walked in the ways of Ahab 2 Kings 1:17; 3:1-3

10. Jehu 28 Mixed – zealously destroyed Baal worship but failed to remove Jeroboam’s golden calves 2 Kings 9:30;

10:30-36

11. Jehoahaz 17 Evil – did evil, Israel suffered oppression 2 Kings 13:1-9

12. Jehoash 16 Evil – did evil but had moments of repentance 2 Kings 13:10-25

13. Jeroboam II 41 Evil – restored some borders but did not depart from sin 2 Kings 14:23-29

14. Zechariah 6 Evil – continued in sin 2 Kings 15:8-12

15. Shallum 1 month Evil – assassinated predecessor, ruled briefly 2 Kings 15:13-16

16. Menahem 10 Evil – oppressed people, paid tribute to Assyria 2 Kings 15:17-22

17. Pekahiah 2 Evil – followed in his father’s footsteps 2 Kings 15:23-26

18. Pekah 20 Evil – led Israel into alliance and conflict with Assyria 2 Kings 15:27-31

> 19. Hoshea 9 Evil – last king, reigned during Assyrian conquest 2 Kings 17:1-6

Theological Reflections:

The reigns of Israel’s kings demonstrate the consequences of rejecting God’s covenant and following idolatry. Jeroboam’s establishment of golden calves at Bethel and Dan (1 Kings 12:28-30) symbolized a clear rejection of the centralized worship of Yahweh in Jerusalem, a sin that plagued Israel’s kings and people throughout their history.

Despite occasional reforms, none fully restored covenant faithfulness, unlike some kings of Judah such as Hezekiah or Josiah. Israel’s persistent sin eventually led to its destruction and exile by the Assyrians (2 Kings 17), fulfilling the warnings given through the prophets.

Jehu’s reign illustrates that even partial obedience is insufficient for full restoration. His violent purge of Baal worshippers was commendable but incomplete, as he tolerated the idolatrous calves (2 Kings 10:29-31).

This historical and theological narrative underscores God’s holiness and the necessity of wholehearted faithfulness. The kings of Israel serve as a sober reminder of the dangers of syncretism, political expediency, and spiritual compromise.

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