

Who was King Hoshea in the Bible?

Hoshea son of Elah became king of the northern kingdom of Israel in 732 BC after assassinating King Pekah, son of Remaliah. Hoshea reigned 9 years. He was a wicked king, but not as wicked as previous kings of Israel (2 Kings 17:2). Hoshea was the last king of Israel before the nation's destruction by Assyria.

King Pekah had fought with the Assyrians but lost territory to Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria. So when Hoshea took the throne from Pekah, he was a vassal to Shalmaneser king of Assyria and was required to pay heavy tribute (2 Kings 17:3). In a bid for freedom and independence, Hoshea rebelled against Assyria and stopped paying the tribute, appealing to Egypt for help. This move was a failure. When Shalmaneser discovered King Hoshea's treachery, he threw Hoshea into prison (verse 4). The Assyrian army then invaded all of Hoshea's land. The capital, Samaria, was besieged for three years and eventually captured. The Israelites were then deported to Assyria and settled in Halah, Gozen on the Harbor River, and in the towns of the Medes. As most of the northern kingdom of Israel had already been conquered, this deportation effectively destroyed the entire kingdom. Israel's destruction partly fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 7:16.

On the surface this may sound like the usual intrigues of kings, but the Bible makes it clear that the Assyrians' takeover of Israel and the Israelites' subsequent exile was God's judgment on His people for their great sin. In spite of all the Lord had done for them, the Israelites had turned from God and worshiped false gods, setting up high places and burning incense to idols (2 Kings 17:7-11). God had sent prophets, including Elijah and Elisha, to warn the Israelites, but the people persisted in their idolatry. God had meant for Israel to be set apart as a holy people (Leviticus 20:26; 2 Kings 17:15), but instead they had assimilated the idolatrous practices of the societies they

had conquered. God had given them many chances to turn back to Him, but they ignored all the prophets who warned them to turn from their evil ways. Because of their rebelliousness, “the LORD removed them from His presence” (2 Kings 17:23) in fulfillment of Moses’ warning in Deuteronomy 30:17-18.

Several years after the capture of King Hoshea and the destruction of the northern kingdom, the southern kingdom of Judah fell to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon (2 Kings 25:1-4). The capital city of Jerusalem was destroyed, including its walls and the temple of the Lord (verses 8-10). Judah was taken into captivity and exiled for 70 years, just as the Lord had promised as judgment for sin. However, in His mercy, God promised to preserve His people and eventually bring them back to the land He had promised them (Ezekiel 11:14-17).