

## A BRIEF HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE POWERS OF MESOPOTAMIA

(using dates based primarily on John Bright's *A History of Israel*, p. 462ff.)

### I. Assyrian Empire (Gen.10:11)

A. Religion and culture were greatly influenced by the Sumerian/Babylonian Empire.

B. Tentative list of rulers and approximate dates:

1. 1354-1318 - Asshur-Uballit I:
  - (a) conquered the Hittite city of Carchemish
  - (b) began to remove Hittite influence and allowed Assyria to develop
2. 1297-1266 - Adad-Nirari I (powerful king)
3. 1265-1235 - Shalmaneser I (powerful king)
4. 1234-1197 - Tukulti-Ninurta I
  - first conquest of Babylonian empire to the south
5. 1118-1078 - Tiglath-Pileser I
  - Assyria becomes a major power in Mesopotamia
6. 1012- 972 Ashur-Rabi II
7. 972- 967 - Ashur-Resh-Isui II
8. 966- 934 - Tiglath-Pileser II
9. 934- 912 - Ashur-Dan II
10. 912- 890 - Adad-Nirari II
11. 890- 884 - Tukulti-Ninurta II
12. 883- 859 - Asshur-Nasir-Apal II
13. 859- 824 - Shalmaneser III
  - Battle of Qarqar in 853
14. 824-811 - Shamashi-Adad V
15. 811-783 - Adad-Nirari III
16. 781-772 - Shalmaneser IV
17. 772-754 - Ashur-Dan III
18. 754-745 - Ashur-Nirari V
19. 745-727 - Tiglath-Pileser III:
  - a. called by his Babylonian throne name, Pul, in II Kings 15:19
  - b. very powerful king
  - c. started the policy of deporting conquered peoples
  - d. In 735 B.C.. there was the formation of the "Syro-Ephramatic League" which was an attempt to unify all the available military resources of the transjordan nations from the head waters of the Euphrates to Egypt for the purpose of neutralizing the rising military power of Assyria. King Ahaz of Judah refused to join and was invaded by Israel and Syria. He wrote to Tiglath-Pileser III for help against the advise of Isaiah (cf. II Kgs. 16; Isa. 7-12).
  - e. In 732 Tiglath-Pileser III invades and conquers Syria and Israel and places a vassal king on the throne of Israel, Hoshea (732-722). Thousands of Jews from the Northern Kingdom were exiled to Media (cf. II Kings 15).

20. 727-722                    - Shalmaneser V
- a. Hoshea forms an alliance with Egypt and is invaded by Assyria (cf. II Kgs.17)
  - b. besieged Samaria in 724 B.C.
21. 722-705                    - Sargon II:
- a. After a three year siege started by Shalmaneser V, his successor Sargon II conquers the capital of Israel, Samaria. Over 27,000 are deported to Media.
  - b. The Hittite empire is also conquered.
  - c. In 714-711 another coalition of transjordan nations and Egypt rebelled against Assyria. This coalition is known as “the Ashdod Rebellion.” Even Hezekiah of Judah originally was involved. Assyria invaded and destroyed several Philistine cities.
22. 705-681                    - Sennacherib:
- a. In 705 another coalition of transjordan nations and Egypt rebelled after the death of Sargon II. Hezekiah fully supported this rebellion. Sennacherib invaded in 701. The rebellion was crushed but Jerusalem was spared by an act of God (cf. Isa. 36-39 and II Kgs. 18-19).
  - b. Sennacherib also put down the rebellion in Elam and Babylon.
23. 681-669                    - Esarhaddon:
- a. first Assyrian ruler to attack and conquer Egypt
  - b. had great sympathy with Babylon and rebuilt its capital city
24. 669-633                    - Ashurbanipal:
- a. also called Osnappar in Ezra 4:10
  - b. His brother Shamash-shum-ukin was made king of Babylon (later demoted to viceroy). This brought several years of peace between Assyria and Babylon, but there was an undercurrent of independence which broke out in 652 led by his brother (who had been demoted to Viceroy).
  - c. fall of Thebes, 663 B.C.
  - d. defeated Elam, 653, 645 B.C.
25. 633-629                    - Asshur-Etil-Ilani
26. 629-612                    - Sin-Shar-Ishkun
27. 612-609                    - Asshur-Uballit II:
- a. enthroned king in exile in Haran
  - b. the fall of Asshur in 614 B.C. and Nineveh in 612 B.C.

## II. Neo-Babylon Empire:

- A. 703-? Merodach-Baladan
- Started several revolts against Assyrian rule

- B. 652 Shamash-shum-ukin:
1. Esarhaddon's son and Assurbanipal's brother
  2. he started a revolt against Assyria but was defeated
- C. 626-605 Nabopolassar:
1. was the first monarch of the Neo-Babylonian Empire
  2. he attacked Assyria from the south while Cyaxares of Media attacked from the northeast
  3. the old Assyrian capital of Asshur fell in 614 and the powerful new capital of Nineveh fell in 612 B.C.
  4. the remnant of the Assyrian army retreated to Haran. They even installed a king.
  5. In 608 Pharaoh Necho II (cf. II Kings 23:29) marched north to help the remnant of the Assyrian army for the purpose of forming a buffer zone against the rising power of Babylon. Josiah, the godly king of Judah (cf. II Kings 23), opposed the movement of the Egyptian army through Palestine. There was a minor skirmish at Megiddo. Josiah was wounded and died (II Kgs. 23:29-30). His son, Jehoahaz, was made king. Pharaoh Necho II arrived too late to stop the destruction of the Assyrian forces at Haran. He engaged the Babylonian forces commanded by the crown prince Nebuchadnezzar II and was soundly defeated in 605 B.C. at Carchemesh on the Euphrates River.  
On his way back to Egypt Pharaoh Necho stopped at Jerusalem and sacked the city. He replaced and deported Jehoahaz after only three months. He put another son of Josiah, Jehoiakim, on the throne (cf. II Kings 23:31-35).
  6. Nebuchadnezzar II chased the Egyptian army south through Palestine but he received word of his father's death and returned to Babylon to be crowned. Later, in the same year, he returned to Palestine. He left Jehoiakim on the throne of Judah but exiled several thousand of the leading citizens and several members of the royal family. Daniel and his friends were part of this deportation.
- D. 605-562 - Nebuchadnezzar II:
1. From 597-538 Babylon was in complete control of Palestine.
  2. In 597 another deportation from Jerusalem occurred because of Jehoakim's alliance with Egypt (II Kings 24). He died before the arrival of Nebuchadnezzar II. His son Jehoiachin was only king for three months when he was exiled to Babylon. Ten thousand citizens, including Ezekiel, were resettled close to the City of Babylon by the Canal Kebar.
  3. In 586, after continued flirtation with Egypt, the City of Jerusalem was completely destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar (II Kgs. 25) and a mass deportation occurred. Zedekiah, who replaced Jehoiachin, was exiled and Gedaliah was appointed governor.
  4. Gedaliah was killed by Jewish renegade military forces. These forces fled to Egypt and forced Jeremiah to go with them. Nebuchadnezzar invaded a

fourth time (605, 596, 586, 582) and deported all remaining Jews that he could find.

- E. 562-560 - Evil-merodach, Nebuchadnezzar's son, was also known as Amel-Marduk (Akkadian, "Man of Marduk")
  - He released Jehoiakim from prison but he had to remain in Babylon (cf. II Kings 25:27-30; Jer. 52:31).
- F. 560-556 - Neriglissar
  - He assassinated Evil-merodach, who was his brother-in-law
  - He was previously Nebuchadnezzar's general who destroyed Jerusalem (cf. Jer. 39:3,13)
- G. 556 - Labaski-Marduk
  - He was Neriglissar's son who assumed kingship as a boy, but was assassinated after only nine months (Berossos).
- H. 556-539 - Nabonidus (Akkadian, "Nebo is exalted"):
  - 1. Nabonidus was not related to the royal house so he married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar
  - 2. He spent most of the time building a temple to the moon god "Sin" in Tema. He was the son of the high priestess of this goddess. This earned him the enmity of the priests of Marduk, chief god of Babylon.
  - 3. He spent most of his time trying to put down revolts (in Syria and north Africa) and stabilize the kingdom.
  - 4. He moved to Tema and left the affairs of state to his son, Belshazzar, in the capital, Babylon (cf. Dan.5).
- I. ? - 539 - Belshazzar (co-reign)
  - The city of Babylon fell very quickly to the Persian Army under Gobryas of Gutium by diverting the waters of the Euphrates and entering the city unopposed. The priests and people of the city saw the Persians as liberators and restorers of Marduk. Gobryas was made Governor of Babylon by Cyrus II. Gobryas may have been the Darius the Mede of Dan. 5:31; 6:1. "Darius" means "royal one."

III. Medio-Persian Empire: Survey of the Rise of Cyrus II (Isa. 41:2,25;44:28-45:7; 46:11; 48:15):

- A. 625-585 - Cyaxares was the king of Media that helped Babylon defeat Assyria.
- B. 585-550 - Astyages was king of Media (capital was Ecbatana). Cyrus II was his grandson by Cambyses I (600-559, Persian) and Mandane (daughter of Astyages, Median).
- C. 550-530 - Cyrus II of Ansham (eastern Elam) was a vassal king who revolted:
  - 1. Nabonidus, the Babylonian king, supported Cyrus.
  - 2. Astyages' general, Harpagus, led his army to join Cyrus' revolt

3. Cyrus II dethroned Astyages.
  4. Nabonidus, in order to restore a balance of power, made an alliance with:
    - a. Egypt
    - b. Croesus, King of Lydia (Asia Minor)
  5. 547 - Cyrus II marched against Sardis (capital of Lydia) and it fell in 546 B.C.
  6. 539 - In mid-October the general Ugbaru and Gobryas, both of Gutium, with Cyrus' army, took Babylon without resistance. Ugbaru was made governor, but died of war wounds within weeks, then Gobryas was made governor of Babylon.
  7. 539 - In late October Cyrus II "the Great" personally entered as liberator. His policy of kindness to national groups reversed years of deportation as a national policy.
  8. 538 - Jews and others (cf. the Cyrus Cylinder) were allowed to return home and rebuild their native temples (cf. II Chr. 36:22,23; Ezra 1:1-4). He also restored the vessels from YHWH's temple which Nebuchadnezzar had taken to Marduk's temple in Babylon (cf. Ezra 1:7-11; 6:5).
  9. 530 - Cyrus' son, Cambyses II, succeeded him briefly as co-regent, but later the same year Cyrus died while in a military campaign.
- D. 530-522 - reign of Cambyses II
1. added Egyptian empire in 525 B.C. to the Medo-Persian Empire;
  2. he had a short reign:
    - a. some say he committed suicide;
    - b. Herodotus said he cut himself with his own sword while mounting his horse and died of the resulting infection.
  3. brief usurpation of the throne by Pseudo-Smerdis (Gaumata) - 522
- E. 522-486 - Darius I (Hystapes) came to rule
1. He was not of the royal line but a military general.
  2. He organized the Persian Empire using Cyrus' plans for Satraps (cf. Ezra 5-6; also during Haggai's and Zechariah's time).
  3. He set up coinage like Lydia.
  4. He attempted to invade Greece, but was repulsed.
- F. 486-465 - Reign of Xerxes I:
1. put down Egyptian revolt
  2. intended to invade Greece and fulfill Persian dream but was defeated in the battle of Thermopyli in 480 B.C. and Salamis in 479 B.C.
  3. Esther's husband, who is called Ahasuerus in the Bible, was assassinated in 465 B.C.
- G. 465-424 - Artaxerxes I (Longimanus) reigned (cf. Ezra 7-10; Nehemiah; Malachi):
1. Greeks continued to advance until confronted with the Peloponnesian Civil Wars
    2. Greece divides (Athenian - Peloponnesian)
    3. Greek civil wars lasted about 20 years
    4. during this period the Jewish community is strengthened
    5. brief reign of Xerxes II and Sekydianos - 423

- H. 423-404 - Darius II (Nothos) reigned
- I. 404-358 - Artaxerxes II (Mnemon) reigned
- J. 358-338 - Artaxerxes III (Ochos) reigned
- K. 338-336 - Arses reigned
- L. 336-331 - Darius III (Codomannus) reigned until the Battle of Issus 331 and was defeated by Greece

IV. Survey of Egypt:

- A. Hyksos (Shepherd Kings - Semitic rulers)-1720/10-1550
- B. 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (1570-1310):
  - 1. 1570-1546 - Amosis
    - a. made Thebes the capital
    - b. invaded southern Canaan
  - 2. 1546-1525 - Amenophis I (Amenhotep I)
  - 3. 1525-1494 - Thutmosis I
  - 4. 1494-1490 - Thutmosis II - married Thutmosis I's daughter, Hatshepsut
  - 5. 1490-1435 - Thutmosis III (nephew of Hatshepsut)
  - 6. 1435-1414 - Amenophis II (Amenhotep II)
  - 7. 1414-1406 - Thutmosis IV
  - 8. 1406-1370 - Amenophis III (Amenhotep III)
  - 9. 1370-1353 - Amenophis IV (Akhenaten)
    - a. worshiped the Sun, Aten
    - b. instituted a form of high-god worship (monotheism)
    - c. Tel-El-Amarna letters are in this period
  - 10. ? Smenkhare
  - 11. ? Tutankhamun (Tutankhaten)
  - 12. ? Ay (Aye-Eye)
  - 13. 1340-1310 Haremhab
- C. 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (1310-1200):
  - 1. ? Rameses I (Ramses)
  - 2. 1309-1290 - Seti I (Sethos)
  - 3. 1290-1224 - Rameses II (Ramses II)
    - a. from archaeological evidence most likely Pharaoh of the exodus
    - b. built the cities of Avaris, Pithom and Ramses by Habaru (possibly Semites or Hebrew) slaves
  - 4. 1224-1216 - Marniptah (Merenptah)
  - 5. ? Amenmesses
  - 6. ? Seti II
  - 7. ? Siptah
  - 8. ? Tewosret
- D. 20<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (1180-1065)
  - 1. 1175-1144 - Rameses III

- 2. 1144-1065 - Rameses IV - XI
  
- E. 21<sup>st</sup> Dynasty (1065-935):
  - 1. ? Smendes
  - 2. ? Herihor
  
- F. 22<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty (935-725 - Libyan):
  - 1. 935-914 - Shishak (Shosenk I or Sheshong I)
    - a. protected Jeroboam I until Solomon's death
    - b. conquered Palestine about 925 (cf. I Kgs. 14-25; II Chr. 12)
  - 2. 914-874 - Osorkon I
  - 3. ? Osorkon II
  - 4. ? Shoshnek II
  
- G. 23<sup>rd</sup> Dynasty (759-715 - Libyan)
  
- H. 24<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (725-709)
  
- I. 25<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (716/15-663 - Ethiopian/Nubian):
  - 1. 710/09-696/95 - Shabako (Shabaku)
  - 2. 696/95-685/84 - Shebteko (Shebitku)
  - 3. 690/689, 685/84-664 - Tirhakah (Taharqa)
  - 4. ? Tantamun
  
- J. 26<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (663-525 - Saitic):
  - 1. 663-609 - Psammetichus I (Psamtik)
  - 2. 609-593 - Neco II (Necho)
  - 3. 593-588 - Psammetichus II (Psamtik)
  - 4. 588-569 - Apries (Hophra)
  - 5. 569-525 - Amasis
  - 6. ? - Psammetichus III (Psamtik)
  
- K. 27<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (525-401 - Persian):
  - 1. 530-522 - Cambyses II (Cyrus II's son)
  - 2. 522-486 - Darius I
  - 3. 486-465 - Xerxes I
  - 4. 465-424 - Artaxerxes I
  - 5. 423-404 - Darius II
  
- L. Several brief dynasties (404-332)
  - 1. 404-359 - Artaxerxes II
  - 2. 359/8 - 338/7 - Artaxerxes III
  - 3. 338/7 - 336/7 - Arses
  - 4. 336/5 - 331 - Darius III

\*for a differing chronology see Zondervan's Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia, vol. 2 p. 231.

## V. Survey of Greece:

### A. 359-336 - Philip II of Macedon:

1. built up Greece
2. assassinated in 336 B.C.

### B. 336-323 - Alexander II "the Great" (Philip's son):

1. routed Darius III, the Persian king, at the battle of Issus
2. died in 323 B.C. in Babylon of a fever at 32/33 yrs. of age
3. Alexander's generals divided his empire at his death:
  - a. Cassander - Macedonia and Greece
  - b. Lysimachus - Thrace
  - c. Seleucus I - Syria and Babylon
  - d. Ptolemy - Egypt and Palestine
  - e. Antigonus - Asia Minor (He did not last long)

### C. Seleucids vs. Ptolemies struggle for control of Palestine:

1. Syria (Seleucid Rulers):
  - a. 312-280 - Seleucus I
  - b. 280-261 - Antiochus I Soter
  - c. 261-146 - Antiochus II Theus
  - d. 246-226 - Seleucus II Callinicus
  - e. 226-223 - Seleucus III Ceraunus
  - f. 223-187 - Antiochus III the Great
  - g. 187-175 - Seleucus IV Philopator
  - h. 175-163 - Antiochus IV Epiphanes
  - i. 163-162 - Antiochus V
  - j. 162-150 - Demetrius I
2. Egyptian (Ptolemaic Rulers):
  - a. 327-285 - Ptolemy I Soter
  - b. 285-246 - Ptolemy II Philadelphus
  - c. 246-221 - Ptolemy III Euergetes
  - d. 221-203 - Ptolemy IV Philopator
  - e. 203-181 - Ptolemy V Epiphanes
  - f. 181-146 - Ptolemy VI Philometor
3. Brief Survey:
  - a. 301 - Palestine under Ptolemy rule for 181 years.
  - b. 175-163 - Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the eighth Seleucid ruler, wanted to Hellenize Jews by force, if necessary:
    - (1) constructed gymnasiums
    - (2) constructed pagan altars of Zeus Olympius in the Temple
  - c. 168 - December 13 - hog slain on the altar in Jerusalem by Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Some consider this to be "the abomination of desolation" in Daniel 8.
  - d. 167 - Mattathias, priest in Modin, and sons rebel. The best known of his sons was Judas Maccabeas, "Judas the Hammer."



- e. 165 - December 25 - Temple rededicated. This is called Hanukkah or “Festival of Lights.”

For a good discussion of the dating problems, procedures and presuppositions see *The Expositors Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, pp. 10-17.