

THE NEO-ASSYRIAN EMPIRE

I. ASSYRIA IN THE EARLY IRON AGE

- A. Tukulti-Ninurta I (1244-1208 BC)
- B. Tiglath-Pileser I (1115-1077 BC)

II. THE RISE OF ASSYRIA IN THE 9th CENTURY BC

- A. **Adad-nirâri II** (911-891)
- B. Tukulti-Ninurta II (890-884)
- C. **Ashurnasirpal II** (883-859)
 - 1. made frightfulness an instrument of war
 - 2. conquered Aramean states to west; pushed to Mediterranean Sea
 - 3. built new Assyrian war capital, Kalhu (**Calah** in Gen 10), modern **Nimrud**
- D. **Shalmaneser III** (858-824)
 - 1. continued his father's annual campaigns in all directions
 - 2. The **Battle of Qarqar**, 853 BC (*CBA*, map 127)
 - a. met a coalition of kings of Syria and Palestine
 - b. Assyrian records mention coalition of Ahab & Hadad-idri (Hadad-ezer, prob. Ben Hadad)
 - c. Temporarily halted Assyrian advance in North Syria
 - d. Not mentioned in the Bible, except a hint in 1 Ki 22:1
 - 3. Campaign to Palestine in 841 BC (*CBA*, map 132): tribute from Jehu of Israel (shown on Black Obelisk)
- E. Relative weakness for 80 years
 - 1. Internal revolt by one of Shalmaneser's sons; problems with kingdom of Urartu to the north
 - 2. Shamshi-Adad V (823-811): son of Shalmaneser III, put down revolt by his brother
 - 3. queen Sammuamat (known as "Semiramis" by 1st cent. BC writer Diodorus Siculus): ruled 4 years
 - 4. **Adad-nirâri III** (810-783): campaigned to Damascus; = "savior" of Israel (2 Ki 13:5; *CBA*, map 136)
 - 5. weak kings for first half of 8th century

III. THE ASSYRIAN EMPIRE (8th-7th CENTURIES BC)

- A. **Tiglath-Pileser III** (745-727 BC)
 - 1. seized throne after a rebellion; made extensive administrative reform; reorganized army
 - 2. true founder of the Assyrian Empire
 - 3. 3 stage policy towards conquered territory
 - a. voluntary submission and vassalage under local rulers
 - b. conquest by force, followed by imposition of tribute
 - c. for recalcitrant areas: incorporation as Assyrian province under direct rule; deportation of population
 - 4. expanded in all directions, especially to west; Israel and Aram-Damascus became vassals in 738
 - 5. 735: biblical "Syro-Ephraimite" War; 734: vs. Philistia; 733: Israel reduced; 732: Damascus destroyed
- B. **Shalmaneser V** (726-722)
 - 1. Hoshea of Israel rebelled, Samaria besieged
 - 2. took Samaria, according to Bible, population deported (2 Ki 16:3-6)

C. **Sargon II** (721-705): established “Sargonid” dynasty that lasted until 609 BC

1. background uncertain: a son or Tiglath-Pileser or usurper?
2. claims to have taken Samaria and deported 27,290 persons (TANE, 195)
 - a. perhaps Shalmaneser V took city, Sargon II claims victory as his own, deported population?
 - b. perhaps Sargon’s victory at Samaria was a later campaign (720, while dealing with Gaza)?
3. forced to put down various rebellions throughout his reign (*CBA*, map 149)
 - a. Babylon was briefly independent under Merodach-baladan
 - b. rebellion in Gaza put down in 720 (TANE, 195-96; perhaps Samaria was involved in this and attacked)
 - c. Ashdod rebelled, was destroyed in 712 (TANE, 196); Hezekiah of Judah warned not to join (Isa 20)
4. built new capital, **Dûr-Sharrukîn** (“fortress of Sargon”), modern **Khorsabad**
5. killed in battle, 705

D. **Sennacherib** (704-681)

1. a younger son of Sargon; faced major revolts (after Sargon’s death) in Babylon, Levant
2. Babylon rebelled under Merodach-baladan (Isa 39), who continued to cause trouble for some years
3. Hezekiah of Judah was leading rebels in the west, including Sidon, Ashkelon, and Ekron
 - a. other rebels included Sidqia of Askelon, Ekron (they had deposed their king), Sidon
 - b. rebellion relied on aid from Egypt
 - c. Sennacherib attacked in **701 BC** (TANE, 199-201; 2 Ki 18-19; Isa 36-37)
4. built new capital at **Nineveh**, modern Nebi Yunis & Kuyunjik, on Tigris; and a “palace without a rival”
5. Babylon rebelled again in 689; Sennacherib destroyed the cultural capital in retaliation
6. Sennacherib killed by his own son while praying at a temple in 691

E. **Esarhaddon** (680-669)

1. son of Sennacherib, defeated rebels to take throne
2. atoned for father’s sin by rebuilding Babylon
3. 671 BC: Esarhaddon conquered Egypt by taking Memphis; Ethiopian pharaoh Taharqa fled south
4. Taharqa returned, Egypt rebelled, Esarhaddon fell ill and died enroute to retake Egypt (669)

F. **Ashurbanipal** (668-627)

1. last great king of Assyria; ruled over height of empire
2. his brother, Shamash-shum-ukîn, ruled Babylon
3. rebellion in Egypt resulted in the sack of Thebes in 664
4. destroyed traditional enemy of Mesopotamia, Elam in Persia
5. new palace built in Nineveh
 - a. much Assyrian art in bas relief; includes many lion hunt scenes
 - b. library included many great works of Mesopotamian literature; i.e., Gilgamesh Epic
6. 639: annals end; empire erodes
7. at his death in 627, widespread revolts occur; Babylon becomes independent for good

IV. THE RISE OF BABYLON

A. Nabopolassar takes throne of Babylon in 626; war between Babylon and Assyria

1. 614: Medes take religious capital Assur
2. 612: military capital **Nineveh** sacked (**Nahum**)

B. **Babylon vs. Egypt**

1. Babylon moves to claim territory formerly held by Assyria
2. Egypt tries to reestablish supremacy in the Near East
3. 609 BC: Necho II of Egypt went to N. Syria to oppose Babylonian advance
 - a. Egypt sides with old enemy Assyria to oppose new threat from Babylon
 - b. Josiah of Judah killed at Megiddo trying to stop **Necho** (2 Ki 23:29-30; 2 Ch 35:20-27)
 - b. Babylon defeated Assyrian-Egyptian alliance; Assyria is no more after 609