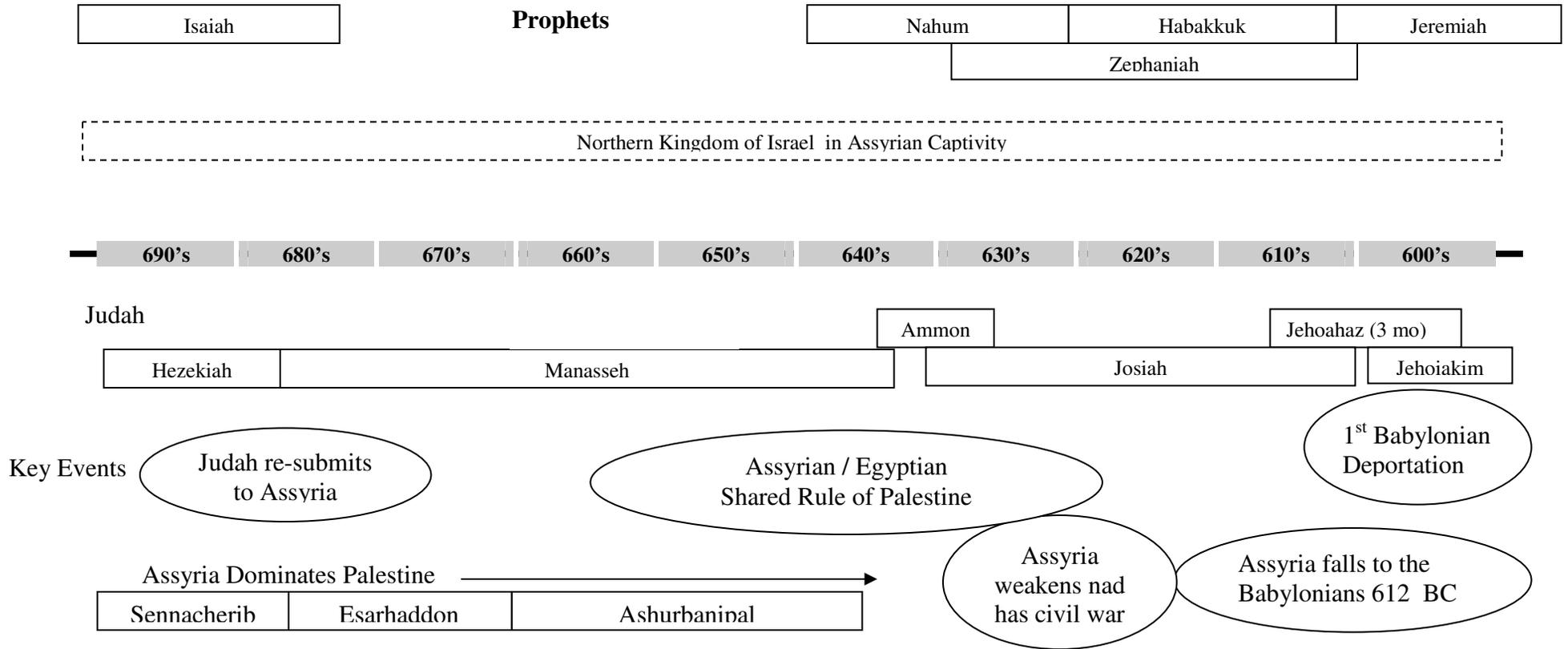


Seventh Century B.C. – Israel’s Timeline



Summary of the Century:

The Northern kingdom remained in captivity throughout the century, while Judah struggled under Assyrian and then Babylonian oppression. The major event of the century was the fall of Assyria in 612BC. God used Babylonia to judge as well as to bring judgment on Judah which remained idolatrous throughout much of the century.

Details:

Toward the end of Hezekiah reign, Judah was more deeply submitted to Assyrian rule. In the eighth century, Assyria did not dominate Judah internally until late in the rule of Hezekiah. Manasseh son of Hezekiah did not follow in his fathers Godly ways. Very little is known about the early portion of the century during the reign of Manasseh save what is written in the book of Chronicles. Manasseh who became king at age 12 was remembered as a very poor king because of his official sponsorship of religious practices from surrounding nations. II Chronicles records that he did repent of this practice however after being deported temporarily to Assyria where he turned to Yahweh and was allowed to return. During his reign Assyria controlled the economic, religious and political life of Judah. The official worship of Assyrian Gods such as Ashur and Ishtar, Baal and even child sacrifice no doubt had a lot to do with bringing Judah into judgment. In this context of government the people of Judah forgot Yahweh's law completely. Considering this I find it odd that his reign lasted so long (55 years) as compared to other kings unless God extended his reign due to his repentance. During this time Assyria also was active in conquest advancing into Egypt and conquering a lot of it but not occupying it. Instead Assyria joined with Egypt (Necho) and setup a form of shared rule over Palestine. By the time Josiah came to power, Egypt was more dominant of the Palestinian area than Assyria.

In the latter half of end of century Josiah instituted a revival of sorts in Judah which was apparently brief. Here we find the prophet Habakkuk wondering why God was allowing continued evil of the surrounding nations as well as Judah. He didn't have to wait long for Gods answer as Assyria weakened greatly after the death of Ashurbanipal and under the contested leadership of Sin Shariskun as internal strife with Sin-shumlishir a military command ensued. Josiah may have noticed weakness growing in Assyria and attempted to gain independence from Assyria and Egypt after the death of Ashurbanipal. While Josiah's reforms were good, they did not continue under his successors showing that the people of Judah were pretty far steeped in idolatry by this time. Josiah died in battle fighting the Egyptians around 610 BC. On the international front during this time God raised up Babylonia (Nabopolassar) which conquered Assyria in 612BC. The book of Nahum is dedicated to predicting the fall of Assyria capital city Nineveh. The final years of the century saw Judah under the leadership of Jehoiakim pulled into this international struggle because the hearts of the people did not continue in the reforms of Josiah and the first of what would be 3 Babylonian deportations. The first occurred in Jerusalem in 605 BC as Babylonia made sure all of the Assyrian empire including Judah was subjugated. Zephaniah and Jeremiah also wrote their books during this period. Zephaniah wrote to warn Judah of impending judgment during the reign of Josiah due the practices of the people under Manasseh and Amon. They ignored the warnings and then Jeremiah wrote to warn the people of Judah their impending captivity by the Babylonians as a result.