

Nations [Heb *‘ammim*, *gôyim*, *le’ummîm*]

[1037] The study of the nations within the canonical tradition of ancient Israel leads inevitably to the primary tension between the concepts of nationalism and universalism. On the one hand, particularly within the prophetic literature, there are passages that express the narrowest self-interest and even hatred for Israel’s enemies among the nations. But alongside these stand passages expressing an exalted vision of worldwide salvation for “the nations.” Scholars are divided as to how deeply embedded within the developing canonical tradition of ancient Israel they choose to see the latter development. Nonetheless, it is clear that “Israel as a light to the nations” is no peripheral theme within the canonical process. The nations are the matrix of Israel’s life, the *raison d’être* of her very existence.

The initial period of world prehistory in the book of Genesis ends with the Flood, after which humanity makes a new start from Noah and his sons and separates into families, languages, lands, and nations. The Table of Nations in Genesis 10 lists some seventy entities, which include the whole of the ancient world, as known to the author, divided roughly into racial groups. It is without parallel in ancient literature, for this interest in the nations reflects accurately the biblical emphasis on history as the vehicle of revelation and the nations as the object of God’s redemptive purpose.

A. Terminology

1. In the Old Testament. Three words appear in the Hebrew text of the OT, which are used more or less synonymously in reference to the nations, each of which may be used in the singular to refer to a particular nation, including Israel.

‘ammim (cf. Ugaritic *‘m*, “clan”; Vg. *populi* or *nationes*; LXX *ethnē* or *laoi*), “peoples.” The stress is on kinship as the basis of the group, at least in the original meaning of the word. In the singular, the term *‘am* is used most frequently in reference to Israel as the “people of Yahweh.” In such cases the LXX uses *laos*. The LXX uses *ethnē* for the plural in the Pentateuch, Joshua, and Judges; elsewhere both *ethnē* and *laoi* are used.

gôyim (Akkadian loanword from West Semitic, *ga’u*, “gang” or “group” [e.g., of workmen]; Vg. *gentes*; LXX *ethnē*, “nations”; KJV alternately “heathen.” This term stresses political and social rather than kinship bonds.

le’ummîm (cf. Akkadian *li’immu*, “thousand”; Ugaritic *l’m*, “people”; Vg. *populi*; LXX *ethnē*, “peoples”; KJV (incorrectly) “the people.” Originally the term probably referred to a city which could produce a contingent of soldiers (a “thousand”) in time of war. The word is often used in parallel with *gôyim* within the prophetic literature and Psalms.

A fourth term appears in both Hebrew *‘ummot* (Gen 25:16; Num 25:15) and *‘ummîm* (Ps 117:1) and Aramaic *‘ummâ* (Dan 3:29) and *‘ummayyâ’* (seven times) with the meaning “nation(s),” “tribe(s),” “people.”

2. In the New Testament. The primary term used in the NT is *ethnē* (Vg. *gentes*), taken from LXX usage. “Gentiles is used in reference to non-Jewish nations in contrast to the Jews (Luke 21:24; Acts 9:15; 1 Cor 1:23), or in contrast to followers of Christ (Matt 6:7, 32; 10:5; 20:19; Eph 2:11-12). “Nations” is used in reference to all nations including the Jews (Matt 24:9, 14; Mark 11:17; Rev 7:9). Exceptions to be noted include Acts 13:19; 14:16; and Gal 3:8.

In the NT the term *laoi*, “peoples” in the plural, occurs only eight times, four of which are in parallel to *ethnē*, indicating either Semitic style or LXX quotation (Luke 2:31; Acts 4:25, 27;

Rom 15:11), and four times in Revelation within the formula “nations, tongues, and tribes,” reminiscent of Genesis 10 and Dan 3:4-7.

B. Israel Against the Nations

1. Holy War as a Celebrated Event in Ancient Israel. The institution of Holy War during the period of the Judges should be distinguished from Yahweh’s Holy War as celebrated in the cultus of Ritual Conquest. Yahweh’s Holy War is the ritual fusing of the events of the Exodus-Conquest into one great cultic celebration in which the 1038 Divine Warrior marched with his hosts from Sinai to Shittim and then across the Jordan River to Gilgal, the battle camp for the conquest of Canaan. The nature of the institution of holy war as reflected in the Song of Deborah (Judges 5) can be reconstructed, at least in part, from an analysis of Yahweh’s Holy War as celebrated in the Ritual Conquest tradition. The ark of the covenant was a battle palladium. The tribal groups had designated positions within the battle camp under priestly organization. Moses and Joshua, as “judges” over Israel, filled the role later assumed by the prophets in delivering war oracles to inspire the troops in battle.

The quotation from the Book of the Wars of the Lord in Num 21:14 presents the Divine Warrior as poised on the edge of the promised land, before the most celebrated battles of the Exodus-Conquest. He has come in the whirlwind with His hosts to the sources of the river Arnon in Transjordan. He marches through the wadis, turning aside to settle affairs with Moab before marching against the two Amorite kings to the north, and then across the Jordan to Gilgal and the conquest of Canaan.

The actual conquest of Canaan was apparently reenacted as part of the annual festival tradition within ancient Israel, from the period of the judges down into the monarchic era, and perhaps beyond, as suggested by the so-called “War Scroll” from the Dead Sea community at Qumran. The tribal units of Israel took up their designated positions around the ark of the covenant at Gilgal. From there they set out to conquer Jericho in ritual tradition as part of the spring festival of Passover each year.

2. Egypt and Amalek as Paradigmatic Enemies. The crossing of the Jordan river in the tradition of Ritual Conquest was set over against the crossing of the Red Sea (*yam sup*), or “Sea of Reeds [or rushes],” in which the people of Israel were delivered from their traditional foe, the Egyptians (cf. Exod 15, the “Song of the Sea,” and Ps 114:5). After crossing the sea, Israel’s first military encounter was against the Amalekites (Exod 17:8-15). Amalek was defeated and cursed in the name of Yahweh, who pledged “war with Amalek from generation to generation” (Exod 17:16). In later tradition Israel was commanded to “blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; you shall not forget” (Deut 25:19). Though not much is known about Amalek so far as history is concerned, her traditional enmity with Israel surfaces in the story of Saul’s demise because of his refusal to slay Agag, king of Amalek, and again in the story of Esther whose archenemy Haman is identified as the Agagite (Esth 3:1, 10; 8:33, 5; 9:25).

The war with Amalek is the first in a series of wars which, together with the defeat of the Egyptians at the Red Sea, constitute Yahweh’s Holy War par excellence. Further battles in this series include the war with the Canaanite king of Arad (Num 21:1-3), the wars with the Amorite kings Sihon and Og (Num 21:21-35), and the war against Midian (Num 31:1-54)—all under the leadership of Moses. After Moses’ death, Joshua led the people across the Jordan to the second phase of Yahweh’s Holy War against Jericho, Ai, and the Canaanite inhabitants of the promised land.

3. The Seven Traditional Enemies of Deuteronomistic Tradition. The full list of “seven nations greater and mightier than (Israel)”—the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites—appears in three passages (Deut 7:1; Josh 3:10; 24:11). Though some of these “nations” are identifiable, the Perizzites and the Girgashites remain obscure. Detailed study of the occurrences of these seven names within the biblical tradition suggests that the complete listing of seven nations is probably traditional in nature. Within the holy war materials of the Deuteronomistic tradition these seven nations apparently constitute a roll call of enemies within some sort of cultic context.

4. Assyria and Babylon Join Egypt as Paradigmatic Enemies. In the flow of historical events, the northern kingdom of Israel was eventually destroyed by Assyria under Sargon II (722 B.C.E.), and somewhat later Judah fell to the Neo-Babylonian Empire under Nebuchadnezzar (587-586 B.C.E.). The prophetic books of Nahum and Jonah focus on Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, which became a symbol for the archenemy of God’s people. In the book of Judith the city of Nineveh, as the capital of Assyria, was said to be ruled by Nebuchadnezzar, in complete disregard of history as such. Nebuchadnezzar was the ruler of the New Babylonian Empire, which destroyed Jerusalem; Babylon subsequently became another symbol of the archenemy (cf. Rev 18:2).

5. The Oracles Against the Nations. Within the prophetic literature of ancient Israel, the oracles against the nations constitute a large and distinctive block of material. The classical prophets of ancient Israel were apparently political figures, sharing in the rule of the people in some way, alongside the king. Jeremiah’s self-description of his call to be “a prophet to the nations” (Jer 1:5) speaks to one aspect of this responsibility.

The establishment of the Davidic monarchy and the centralization of Israel’s worship in Jerusalem introduced a powerful impulse to the religion of ancient Israel which tended to reshape earlier tradition. The cultus of the premonarchic Covenant League was retained but was subordinated to a royal cultus administered by dominant priestly families under the control of the king. Yahweh’s Holy War, as cultic reenactment of the Exodus-Conquest, was no longer climaxed by mere possession of the land of promise. The ark of the covenant as carried in ritual procession to its “eternal resting place” on Mount Zion in Jerusalem. The climax of the Royal Festival became the enthronement of the Davidic monarch in dynastic covenant. The ark of the covenant was subsequently housed permanently in an elaborate temple, constructed under Solomon, which became the center of Israelite worship until its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar in 587 B.C.E.

Beginning with the oracles against the nations in Amos 1-2, the member nations of the former Davidic empire were judged in a highly stylized manner for violation of the treaty stipulations of their “covenant of brotherhood.” Motifs from earlier war songs of Israel’s Covenant League were incorporated into this poetic composition, which was essentially a reversal of Yahweh’s Holy War as celebrated in the Ritual Conquest traditions. The Divine Warrior was now leading his hosts in battle against his own people because they had spurned their covenant obligations. The framework of the idealized Davidic empire as the legal basis for judgment speeches against the nations was expanded in the developing tradition from Amos to Jere-¹⁰³⁹miah. Isaiah’s oracles against Assyria, Egypt, Ethiopia, and the insurgent Arab tribes of the East were based on the concept of the universal sovereignty of Yahweh as suzerain of the nations. The intent of the tradition at the hands of Isaiah, Nahum, Zephaniah, and Jeremiah appears to be primarily political. The major thrust of the oracles against the nations in this period was aimed at shaping foreign policy in Judah with respect to the nations concerned.

C. Israel and the Nations in History

1. The Davidic Empire as Political Ideal. Under David, Israel as a political entity was no longer a loosely federated tribal league, but rapidly became the center of an international empire. After defeating the Philistines (2 Sam 5:17-25; 1 Chr 18:1), David first turned his attention to Moab: he defeated Moab, ruthlessly punished their army, exacted tribute, and became their overlord. Next came the Arameans and the Ammonites. After humiliating David's delegation and thus provoking war with Israel, Hanun king of Ammon summoned his Aramean allies to aid him in battle. David defeated the Arameans and drew up a treaty of peace which made of the Aramean states a kind of province administered from Damascus. He also negotiated a "treaty of friendship" with king Toi of Hamath, making him a vassal within the emerging Davidic empire (cf. 2 Sam 8:9-10). The Ammonite campaign continued under Joab, David's general. When finally forced to capitulate, Ammon became Davidic territory with David ostensibly its king (cf. 2 Sam 12:26-31 and 1 Chr 20:1).

After the Aramean campaign, Edom was attacked and ravaged with dreadful cruelty by Joab and his troops (cf. 2 Sam 8:13-14; 1 Kgs 11:15-17), making David the undisputed master from Egypt to the Euphrates. The Philistines were reduced to their pentapolis and immediate coastal area. David was king of Judah, Israel, Jerusalem, Ammon, and the Canaanite city-states incorporated into Judah and Israel. He ruled through provincial governors or vassal chiefs in Aram, Edom, and Moab and had established treaty relationships with Tyre and Hamath. David had thus become the most powerful ruler in the world of his day, and Israel was transformed from a tribal confederation to suzerain of a league of nations.

Though the Davidic empire as a political reality did not survive the breakup of the United Monarchy in 922 B.C.E., the ideal extent of Israel's suzerainty under David lived on in prophetic circles. Mauchline has demonstrated this persistent belief in the Davidic empire in the 8th and 7th centuries, particularly in the writings of Amos, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. The emergence of both the Assyrian and the Neo-Babylonian empires did not obliterate the prophetic vision of Israel as the kingdom of David at its height in the first half of the 10th century B.C.E. In fact, this political ideal played a formative role in the shaping of the messianic hope of ancient Israel.

At the midpoint of the 8th century, Egypt was divided with numerous petty dynasts competing for the political authority of the decadent 22nd Dynasty. Egypt seemed to be moving relentlessly down the road toward disaster and eclipse while Assyria was once again on the rise. From 801 to 746 the Assyrian kings were occupied with difficulties closer to home—north, east, and south of Assyria—and consequently left the West relatively undisturbed. Jeroboam II of Israel was thus able to conquer Damascus and to restore the old Davidic border on the north in eastern Syria (cf. 2 Kgs 14:23-25); while his younger contemporary Uzziah, king of Judah, regained control of the southern desert, the land of Edom, and its sea-trade routes to the south (2 Chr 26:1-15).

To summarize the first half of the 8th century, it may be said that Assyrians, Arameans, and Urartians fought each other to a standstill in Mesopotamia and Syria. Given the internal stability that chanced to prevail in Judah and Israel at the time, it is no wonder that the divided kingdom briefly regained the economic strength and territorial extent of the Solomonic empire. Assyria's long respite made the people of Israel forget how much the conquests and splendor of Jeroboam's reign were the result of Assyria's maiming Israel's more immediate oppressors. With the rise of Tiglath-pileser III in 745, after the death of Jeroboam II in Israel, things changed. Assyria was now bent on conquest, and Syria-Palestine was a prime target in her march toward Egypt and control of the Near East.

2. An Era of Transition (ca. 750-700 B.C.E.). The accession of the usurper Tiglath-pileser III (745–727) to the throne in Assyria marks the beginning of a new era, for he and his two successors changed the balance of power in the ANE. In 745, Tiglath-pileser found Assyria in a difficult, even desperate military and economic situation; but over the next forty years Assyria recovered and consolidated control of all its old territories, reestablishing itself as the preeminent military and economic power of the Middle East. Tiglath-pileser reorganized the nearer Syrian provinces under direct Assyrian rule and divided the former provinces into smaller prefectures so as to secure centralized control of the empire. At the same time he regulated succession to political power in the middle tier of states, including Israel, and waged war against the more distant ones.

Israel was soon beset with internal crises brought on by the new Assyrian policy, and political prominence in Syria-Palestine apparently passed to Judah. The inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser for the year 738 mention the fact that he fought in Judah. Uzziah's daring attempt to halt the expansion of Assyria failed and the league dissolved. By 738, Tiglath-pileser reached the mountains of Lebanon, founding Assyrian provinces in the former territory of the kingdom of Hamath. The list of kings paying tribute to Assyria at this time includes the kings of Byblos, Tyre, Aram, and Samaria, and even a certain queen in Arabia.

Uzziah died in 735 or 734 and was succeeded by his son, Jotham, who had apparently shared a lengthy coregency with his father. Jotham died in 734 and was succeeded by Ahaz, who was immediately confronted with a political crisis of major proportions: Pekah had usurped the throne in Samaria and, together with Rezin king of Aram, apparently began preparing a new league against Assyria. When Ahaz refused to join this league, the two kings marched against Jerusalem in an attempt to replace him with a certain "son of Tabeel" (Isa 7:6). During the campaign of Rezin and Pekah against Ahaz, the Edomites asserted their independence and invaded Judah from the south (2 Kgs 16:6; 2 Chr 28:17). The people of Philistia also took the opportunity to overcome the cities of the Negeb and the Shephelah of Judah (2 Chr 28:18). If the reconstruction 1040 of Aharoni and Avi-Yonah is correct, Rezin, king of Aram, either neutralized Ammon and Moab or engaged their assistance against Judah at this time. Then, in spite of the warnings of Isaiah (Isa 7:4), Ahaz turned to Assyria for aid.

Tiglath-pileser's actions were swift and decisive. From Assyrian inscriptions it is known that he had already set out on a campaign to Philistia in 734. Hanun, king of Gaza, took refuge in Egypt and Tiglath-pileser left troops on the Egyptian border, thus cutting the kings of Palestine off from Egyptian aid. In response to the appeal of Ahaz of Judah, Tiglath-pileser marched against Israel and Aram-Damascus. In the years 734–733, the plains of Esdraelon and Sharon, the region around Mount Carmel, and Gilead in Transjordan were incorporated into the Assyrian provincial system, leaving the city-state of Samaria with only a measure of independence. By 732 the Assyrian victory was complete with the conquest of Damascus and the incorporation of its territory into the Assyrian empire (2 Kgs 16:9). Tiglath-pileser's second western campaign (734–732) was decisive, for from the Taurus mountains in the north to the River of Egypt in the south, the entire Mediterranean littoral now paid him homage, either as province or as vassal kingdom. In 731, Tiglath-pileser's attention was again diverted to other regions with a rebellion in Babylonia, settled in 729 when he set himself up as Pul, king of Babylon (2 Kgs 15:19; 1 Chr 5:26).

Tiglath-pileser died in 727 and his successor, Shalmaneser V (727–722), was occupied for some time securing his throne. Though Israel was not hard-pressed by Assyria, Hoshea continued to pay tribute. Then, in 726, an event to the south altered the situation. 2 Kgs 17:4

records the fact that Hoshea, king of Israel, appealed for aid against Assyria to a certain King “So” in Egypt, who is probably to be identified with Tefnakhte I of Sais. Hoshea, who evidently was no longer as pro-Assyrian as he had been in 732, welcomed the news from Egypt that a new dynasty was emerging in the Delta, which promised to unite a badly divided Egypt and return her to her legendary greatness. Reports evidently confirmed the news as Tefnakhte rapidly gained the supremacy of the Delta area and began to move south with his troops. At last the time was right and Hoshea withheld tribute from Assyria, apparently convinced that Tefnakhte would come to his aid.

Tefnakhte’s rise to power in the Delta was preceded by the emergence of Piye (*Piʿankhi*), a Cushite ruler in Upper Egypt, whose brother later became the first pharaoh of the Ethiopian 25th Dynasty in Egypt. Piye ordered his troops, which were already in Upper Egypt, northward to besiege Hermopolis, which had just submitted to Tefnakhte. Meanwhile, he dispatched a second army, which defeated Tefnakhte’s fleet on the Nile and continued on its way to Heracleopolis, the last major city in the Delta still holding out against Tefnakhte. Piye’s troops were victorious both by land and by sea, and Tefnakhte saw his empire crumbling even more quickly than it had taken form. When Piye left the Delta to return south, he apparently left the various dynasts in their individual cities as vassals. In Upper Egypt his rule continued for an uncertain but brief period.

Meanwhile, Sargon II (722–705) had taken power in Assyria during the siege of Samaria. In his first campaigns following the fall of Israel, he was defeated near Der by Merodach-Baladan, then king of the small kingdom of Bit-Yakin, who had the assistance of the Elamite king Humbanigash. Sargon turned against Syria where, following the death of his brother, Shalmaneser V, the Assyrian rule had collapsed, at least as far north as Hamath. Apparently Piye deemed the time a propitious one to deal a vital blow to Assyria, for on the historic battlefields of Qarqar on the Orontes, Sargon met the kings of Hamath and Damascus, and others whom the Egyptian general Reʿu (formerly read Sibʿu) had been able to muster. Though the fact that this Egyptian was indeed Piye’s general cannot be demonstrated, it seems likely that such was the case. The defeat of the allies was complete, and in 720 Sargon pursued the Egyptian contingent as far as Raphia, whence the Egyptian general fled home, presumably to Ethiopia, for Sargon did not cross the Egyptian border in pursuit.

In 720 Tefnakhte reemerged as king in Sais (Memphis), apparently by allying himself with Assyria so as to make a new bid for the control of Egypt and to keep Assyrian forces out of the Delta. In 718 he erected a stela, which is dated to his eighth year as pharaoh, considering his reign from his earlier rise to power in 726. Tefnakhte’s son Bocchoris, who was recognized by all as a pharaoh of the 24th Dynasty, in 716/15 left a monument dated to his sixth year. He reigned until 710/09 when Shabaka, brother of Piye, founded the Ethiopian 25th Dynasty, which was involved in much of the diplomatic intrigue in Palestine in the following decades.

The respite following Sargon’s first campaign in the West lasted two years (719–718) during which time Sargon was engaged in the far north. In 717, Carchemish conspired against Assyria. Unleashing a two-year show of strength in the West, Sargon defeated Carchemish and marched south to the Egyptian border. There, according to a fragment of a clay prism published in 1941, he received tribute from king Shilkanni (Osorkon IV) of Bubastis, the last king of the so-called 23rd Dynasty in Egypt. It is significant that Osorkon is called king (*Lugal*) and not pharaoh (*ʾPi-ir-ʾu*) in this inscription. The *Pir-ʾu* (pharaoh) who was king of Egypt in 715, according to the annals of Sargon II, was probably Bocchoris. Osorkon was a king of Egypt in the western Delta

in 716, but Tefnakhte of Sais (in 720) and his son Bocchoris (in 715) were recognized as pharaohs by the Assyrians.

In the midst of these events on the Egyptian border, Ahaz of Judah died and was succeeded by Hezekiah (715-687). Sargon was again occupied on his northern frontier until 712, when Palestine once more felt the full impact of the Assyrian arms. The provocation for Sargon's third and last western campaign came from Ashdod, where a certain Yamani had usurped the throne. Yamani had contacted other Philistine cities, Judah, Edom, Moab, and Egypt in an attempt to stir up a rebellion. Anticipating an Assyrian attack, he fortified Ashdod against siege. When news of Ashdod's revolt reached Sargon, he dispatched his army under a commander-in-chief who "came to Ashdod and fought it and took it" (Isa 20:1). Ashdod and her surrounding territory were organized as a new Assyrian province ruled by a governor.

For the rest of this reign (710-705), Sargon was occupied in Mesopotamia and in Anatolia, where his death on a 1041 battlefield in 705 triggered widespread rebellion, beginning with Babylonia. Ashkelon and Ekron took an active part in this rebellion, probably because of the ominous proximity of Assyrian authority in the province of Ashdod. Hezekiah intervened in Ekron deposing the loyal Assyrian vassal Padi, taking him captive to Jerusalem. The increasingly aggressive policy of the Ethiopian dynasty in Egypt was no doubt an important factor in the anti-Assyrian stand of Ashkelon and Ekron. For four years Sennacherib (705-681) took no steps to quell the rebellion. Finally in 701, after settling affairs in Babylon, he marched against Philistia and Judah.

Sennacherib's campaign against Judah in 701 is well known, though still the subject of sharp debate among scholars. The records present an unusually complete account from both sides. The problem arises over the very different interpretations given to the biblical and Assyrian evidence. Albright, Bright, and others have argued that there were actually two contests between Sennacherib and Hezekiah and that the Assyrians won the first but lost the second. Hallo, Tadmor, and others reject the two-campaign theory. It is sufficient here to note, with Hallo, that the accession of Sennacherib in 705 symbolized in many ways the start of a new phase in the Assyrian impact on western Asia.

3. *Pax Assyriaca* (ca. 700-640 B.C.E.). The triumph of Assyria and the subsequent *pax Assyriaca* brought an eclipse to the developing tradition of oracles against the nations within the prophetic literature of the OT, for no such material can be dated to this period with any degree of confidence. During the first half of the 7th century Judah, Moab, Ammon, Edom, and Philistia remained subservient to Assyria as vassal kingdoms or nominal Assyrian provinces. The other nations addressed in prophetic materials of the second half of the 7th century reveal a rather story history for the so-called *pax Assyriaca*.

The conquest of Phoenicia by Assyria was a drawn-out affair with continued opposition, particularly from Tyre. When Sennacherib marched against Phoenicia, Luli, king of Sidon, fled to Cyprus where he died. The Assyrians installed Ittoba'al II as king in Sidon, who was in turn succeeded by 'Abdmilkot. Allying himself with Cilicia, 'Abdmilkot revolted against Assyria, and this time destruction and exile of the population followed the Assyrian conquest. In 677, Sidon was razed to the ground and replaced by the new city of Kar-Esarhaddon. Tyre was spared and a treaty was drawn up, which set up an Assyrian governor alongside King Ba'al. Six years later (671) Tyre revolted, in league with Taharqa (Tirhakah), king of Egypt. Though Esarhaddon's reign (681-669) in Assyria marked continued decline in Phoenician independence, Tyre remained autonomous under the rule of Ba'al during the reign of Ashurbanipal (669-630). Sometime after the sack of Thebes (663), Ba'al rebelled again, and though the revolt was

quelled, Tyre was not occupied and merely had to send homage and tribute as a nominal vassal to Assyria.

The emergence of the Ethiopian 25th Dynasty (ca. 710 in Egypt 664) in Egypt set the stage for one of the great power struggles in antiquity. With a direct clash of interest in Lower Egypt and southern Palestine, an eventual confrontation with Assyria was inevitable. However, as Gardiner has noted, it was with a third party to this dispute that ultimate victory was destined to lie, namely with Psammetichus (Psamtik) I (663–609), founder of the Saite 26th Dynasty. The campaigns of Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal from 675 to 663, climaxed by the sack of Thebes, marked the crest of Assyrian expansion. To defeat the Ethiopians, Ashurbanipal apparently used the royal house of Sais to unify Lower Egypt against the Ethiopian king. In so doing the Assyrians set the stage for a second phase in the power struggle. After about a decade on the throne, Psammetichus I shook off the restraint and supervision of the resident Assyrian officials and allied himself with Gyges of Lydia in a successful revolt against Assyria. By the time Ashurbanipal settled affairs with Elam and Kedar around 640, the independent movement of Psammetichus had gone so far that the Assyrian monarch did not care to risk opposing it.

Conspiracy and factional strife mark the history of Elam from ca. 700 to 639, with seven rebellions against Assyria in six decades. It is possible that Egypt (or Ethiopia) was involved in most, if not all, of these revolts, and Judah may have been a party in as many as four of the widespread conspiracies associated with them. In the rebellion of 703–701, Shutruk-nahunte II of Elam (717–699) is singled out as the most prominent ally of Merodach-Baladan of Babylon. Sennacherib put down the revolt, routing the Elamite forces in 703 and again in 700. Between these two conquests of Elam, Sennacherib defeated a coalition of western states including “Hezekiah the Jew,” the princes of Egypt, and the “king of Ethiopia.” The bitter struggle between Elam and Assyria resumed from 694 to 689, no doubt precipitating revolt in the West again, as had occurred earlier in the Elamite revolts of 721–720 and 703–700. The involvement of Egypt in such a revolt is reflected in the biblical reference to Taharqa (Tirhakah) in 2 Kgs 19:9. Unfortunately, the Assyrian records are incomplete for the years immediately following the sack of Babylon in 689. A second campaign in southern Palestine on the part of Sennacherib to quell a revolt in 688 is certainly possible, if not likely. The defeat of Elam in 689 marked the end of political unity and the beginning of an era of factionalism there. Nonetheless, the embers of revolt continued to smolder and burst forth in flames of rebellion twice in connection with the Assyrian conquest of Egypt (ca. 675–663).

When revolt broke out in Babylon in 652 under Ashurbanipal’s brother Shamash-shum-ukin, the widespread conspiracy included numerous petty states in Syria-Palestine and pharaoh Psammetichus, who had already freed Egypt from Assyrian rule. If credence is given the Chronicler’s account of the Babylonian captivity of King Manasseh (2 Chr 33:10–17), Judah was a member of the conspiracy, as was the case earlier in 701 and probably ca. 688. The Babylonian revolt led to civil war in Elam, which Ashurbanipal put down. By 646 Elam was once more under Assyrian control, at least for the moment. Six years later the stage was set for a final coup, which once and for all put an end to an independent Elamite kingdom. In 639 Susa was taken by Assyria and utterly destroyed.

Kedar emerged as the dominant power of the desert league of Arab tribes in Syria-Palestine during the closing years of the reign of Sennacherib (ca. 690–688). The years up to the Babylonian revolt in 652 were relatively tranquil for Assyria in the Kedarite controlled area of Syria-Palestine. Kedar joined in the revolt against Assyria in 652, sending troops under Abiyate to assist Shamash-shum-ukin in Babylon. When the Arab reinforcements were defeated,

Abiyate went to Nineveh, where he submitted to Ashurbanipal and was appointed king of the Arabs. Some time prior to Abiyate's return to his people, a certain Uaite³ "made himself king of Arabia," thus claiming leadership of the Arab confederacy. Around 640 Abiyate apparently deemed it politic to renounce his fealty to Assyria and to join with Natnu of Nabate and with Uaite³ in revolt again. In Ashurbanipal's second campaign against the Arabs (639–637), Uaite³ and Abiyate were captured and taken to Assyria. After humiliating Uaite³, Ashurbanipal apparently had mercy on him as he did earlier with Necho I of Egypt, Tammarithu of Elam and Manasseh of Judah, whom he restored as vassal kings after subjecting them to a humiliating ceremony of submission. That this was the case is suggested by the fact that a later inscription makes reference to Nuhur, the son of Uaite³, who came in submission to Ashurbanipal and was granted his father's throne.

Though the details are not certain, it is likely that the assassination of King Amon in Judah in ca. 640 (2 Kgs 21:23–24) was related to the simultaneous revolt against Assyria on the part of Elam, Kedar, and Tyre. Realizing that the time was not yet right for such drastic action, the "people of the land" put the murderers to death and placed the boy Josiah on the throne in Jerusalem. This action forestalled Assyrian intervention and gave Judah the opportunity to revolt at a more opportune moment.

4. *Regnum Davidicum Redivivum* (ca. 640–609 B.C.E.). Little is known about the history of Babylon and Assyria from 640 to 630. Ashurbanipal died ca. 630 and was succeeded by his son Asshuretiliani, whose rule was challenged early. In 629 Sinsharishkun, another son of Ashurbanipal, was recognized as king in Sippar and Uruk; and a certain Sinshumlisur, commander of the Nippur garrison, claimed the throne of Assyria in 627/26. That year has also been described as "the year in which there was no king in the land." In the year 626 the diadem of Babylon passed from the hands of Assyria to the Chaldean Nabopolassar (626–605), who organized a new dynasty in Babylon. The death throes of the mighty Assyrian empire were at hand.

With the decline of Assyria after the middle of the 7th century, the stage was set for the restoration of Judah among the nations. From 648 to his death in 642, Manasseh remained a loyal vassal to Assyria; and his son Amon (642–640) apparently continued his father's policy. When Elam, the Arab confederacy, and Tyre were again in revolt against Assyria in 640, pressure was exerted on Judah to join them. The assassination of Amon was probably an attempt on the part of rebel extremists to force Judah to throw off the Assyrian yoke. Instead, a more moderate group, the "people of the land," regained control in Judah, executed the king's murderers, and installed the eight-year-old Josiah (640–609) as king of Judah. This action apparently staved off Assyrian intervention in Judah, though it seems that the advisers of the young king were merely seeking a more opportune time to restore the "kingdom of David."

In the eighth year of his reign, according to 2 Chr 34:3, Josiah "began to seek the God of David his father." In other words, as early as 632 Josiah repudiated the gods of his Assyrian overlords. Four years later he annexed the Assyrian provinces to the N—Samaria, Megiddo, and probably Gilead. Of the three Transjordan states only Moab, which was but a shadow of her former self, escaped direct territorial incursion on the part of Judah. The Negeb in particular was wrested from Edomite control.

Unfortunately for Judah, the international situation in the Levant in the 7th century was only superficially similar to that of the 10th century, such that it was quite impossible to restore the empire of David for any length of time. Egypt was again seeking an Asian empire of her own, and the temporary vacuum formed by the demise of Assyria was soon to be filled by the Neo-

Babylonian Empire. Josiah met his death at Megiddo in battle against the Egyptian forces of Neco II (609–594), who was on his way north to Haran to check the progress of the Medo-Babylonian alliance against Assyria. The death of Josiah in 609 marked the beginning of the end for the kingdom of Judah and for the former members of the Davidic League as well. Judah, Moab, Ammon, Edom, and Phoenicia were soon to be swallowed up by the military might of Nebuchadnezzar the Great (605–561). Philistia, Egypt, Kedar, and distant Elam (Persia) were to share the same fate.

5. *Imperium Babylonicum* (ca. 626–582 B.C.E.). The accession of Nabopolassar (626–605) marks the beginning of a new era in the history of the ANE. The Babylonian Chronicle for 626 begins with a revolt in Babylon in which Nabopolassar routed the Assyrian garrison established by Sinsharishkun. Since his first official act in the chronicle was to return to Susa the gods carried off to Uruk by the Assyrians some twenty years earlier, it is clear that he either had or hoped to have Elamite (or Persian) support in his struggle against Assyria. By November 624, Uruk was retaken by Assyria; but Sinsharishkun's belated foray into Babylonia in 623 appears to be the action of a hard-pressed man who snatched time for temporary measures to control a local insurrection. Aware that the Egyptians were now potential enemies to any force pushing into Syria, Nabopolassar allied himself with the Medes in order to destroy the great citadels of Assyria along the Tigris.

When Nabopolassar engaged the Assyrians in Syria on July 23, 616, they fled in disarray. In a second encounter in September the “army of Egypt” appeared along with the Assyrians. The penetration of Egyptian forces so far into Syria can only mean that the Egyptians were aware of the growing weakness of Assyria and of Nabopolassar's intention of establishing Babylonian control there. In May of 614, Nabopolassar besieged Asshur but was forced to retreat before the forces of Sinsharishkun. By midsummer of 614 an army of Medes was advancing toward Nineveh. Again Sinsharishkun repelled the invaders, at least from Nineveh. Turning downstream along the bank of the Tigris, the Medes attacked Asshur, which was poorly defended, since Sinsharishkun had gone to the defense of Nineveh. The city was sacked and its inhabitants massacred. The destruction of Asshur was such a shocking violation of international practice of the time—which usually permitted a city to ransom itself unless it could be termed “rebellious”—that even the Babylonian Chronicle 1043 takes pains to dissociate Nabopolassar from this act of savagery. An alliance of “peace and cordial relations” was concluded between Umakishtar, king of the Medes, and Nabopolassar, and it apparently remained in effect through the major campaigns against Nineveh (612) and Haran (610). After 609 the Medes disappear from the extant chronicles.

After two unsuccessful assaults on Nineveh in 612, the wall of the city was finally breached and the Medes and Babylonians poured into the city. Sinsharishkun died, as Shash-shum-ukin befrore him, in the ruins of the city. Though Nineveh was utterly destroyed, Sinsharishkun's son Ashurballit II (611–609) managed to escape, making his way to Haran, the final bastion of Assyria. When the combined armies of Babylonia and the Medes marched against Haran in 610, the Assyrians and the Egyptians fled and the city was taken. The Egyptian force was a garrison, which was apparently delayed by Josiah's fateful battle at Megiddo in 609. A vain attempt on the part of Ashurballit to retake Haran in 609, with Egyptian help, failed. The final curtain had fallen on Assyrian power in the ANE.

In March 609, the Babylonians and Medes returned to their own lands, and sometime later, according to tradition, a covenant of friendship between Babylonia and the Medes was sealed by the marriage of Nabopolassar's son Nebuchadnezzar to Umakishtar's daughter Amyntas. With

their eastern frontier secured by treaty, the Babylonians gave their attention to affairs in the West.

In the spring of 605 Nabopolassar turned over command of the army to Nebuchadnezzar who, in his first major campaign, took the Egyptians by surprise and defeated them roundly at Carchemish. Though this defeat of the Egyptians marked the beginning of Babylonian dominance in Syria-Palestine, the struggle was by no means over. Entries in the Babylonian Chronicle for the next four years show repeated military expeditions in the West. On August 15, 605, Nabopolassar died and Nebuchadnezzar returned in haste to Babylon to secure his throne. After the ceremonies of accession, he returned to Syria to continue his military exploits. In February 604 he returned to Babylon for the New Year's festival. Later that year he was again in Palestine, where he destroyed Ashkelon. Further campaigns in Palestine in 603 and 602 were designed to eliminate the Egyptian sphere of influence from Gaza north. In December 601, having reduced most of Syria and Palestine, Nebuchadnezzar launched a campaign against the borders of Egypt. In the ensuing battle the Egyptian forces were crippled, but at great cost to Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar was forced to withdraw, and his next year was spent in Babylon rebuilding his army. Egypt, on the other hand, was so seriously weakened that, for the moment, she was reduced to virtual parity with the lesser states of southern Palestine.

From the death of Josiah at the hands of pharaoh Neco in 609 to the second fall of Jerusalem in 587, the kings of Judah and the other Palestinian states held their thrones at the pleasure of Egypt or Babylon. Which of these two powers seemed stronger or more menacing determined foreign policy in Jerusalem and other major cities of the area. After the death of Josiah, Judah became an Egyptian vassal. Jehoahaz, a son and successor of Josiah, was deposed, after reigning only three months, by Neco, who installed Eliakim, another son of Josiah, with the crown name Jehoiakim (609/8–597). After the defeat of Egypt at Carchemish in 605, the area as far south as Riblah was placed under tribute. In 604 Nebuchadnezzar extended his exactions to “all the kings of Hatti land,” though Jehoiakim, Adon of Ashkelon, and perhaps others, held out for a time. Sometime in 603, probably after the fall of Ashkelon, Judah also became tributary to the Babylonians. This relationship stood until 601.

The decisive battle between Nebuchadnezzar and Neco at “the borders of Egypt” in 601/600 was a blow to the pro-Babylonian faction in Jerusalem. Jehoiakim withheld tribute in a vain attempt to reassert Judean independence. In 599/98 Nebuchadnezzar sent raiding parties from his Syrian bases to plunder the Arabs. The Babylonians sent raiding bands of Syrians, Moabites, and Ammonites against Judah as well, as late as 598. Josephus has reconstructed this raid, perhaps with the aid of additional sources now lost.

Late in November 598 a mixed force of Chaldeans, Syrians, Moabites, and Ammonites appeared before Jerusalem. The death of Jehoiakim at this time was probably the result of a palace revolt in which “his body was thrown outside the gates of Jerusalem, and left there, like the body of an ass” (cf. Jer 22:19 and 36:30). Jehoiakim was succeeded by his eighteen-year-old son, Jehoiachin, who, three months and ten days later, was carried into exile by the Babylonians on March 16, 597; and his uncle Mattaniah was installed with the throne name of Zedekiah (2 Kgs 24:17). The treasuries of the palace and temple were looted, and the royal family, together with members of the court, soldiers, and artisans, were departed to Babylon (2 Kgs 24:13–16). In Babylon, Jehoiachin was maintained in nominal captivity along with a group of kings from other lands. Meanwhile, in Jerusalem, Zedekiah was regarded as regent for the exiled king of Judah.

Jerusalem was the focus of an anti-Babylonian coalition in 594 when envoys from Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Sidon came in a conspiracy (Jer 27:3). For some reason the revolt did

not materialize. In 591 Psammetichus II (594–588) made a trip through *Hurru* (Phoenicia), which may have had as its purpose the inciting of further rebellion in Palestine. When Zedekiah foolishly withheld tribute, or perhaps reduced the amount of tribute paid to Babylon in 590 or 589, Babylonian troops appeared before the walls of Jerusalem. An Egyptian army under pharaoh Apries (Hophra) (588–568) came to the aid of Jerusalem, causing the siege to be lifted temporarily, but the Egyptians were routed and the siege was resumed. Finally, in the summer of 587, weakened by siegeworks, famine, and plague, Jerusalem was stormed and methodically destroyed (cf. 2 Kgs 25:8–21; Jer 52:12–27). Booty and prisoners were transported to Mesopotamia.

The catastrophe that struck Judah in 587 did not immediately affect Ammon, Moab, and Edom. By the beginning of the last decade of the 7th century, Ammon had asserted its independence and rapidly became the dominant state of S Transjordan, expanding as far west as the Jordan valley. Nebuchadnezzar's victory at Carchemish in 605 posed a new threat to the petty states of Palestine, and it is probable that the king of Ammon was among the "kings of Hatti" who paid homage to the Babylonian 1044 monarch in 604. After three years, Jehoiakim of Judah revolted, though Ammon and Moab remained loyal and fought with the raiding parties dispatched from Syria against Judah (2 Kgs 24:2). The Ammonites and Moabites remained loyal to Babylon in order to secure protection against the Kedarite dominated Arab confederacy, which was encroaching upon the borders of all the states in Transjordan. It was not until 594, after the first fall of Jerusalem, that Ammon and Moab were induced to join with Edom, Tyre, and Sidon in a conspiracy against Babylon.

Though the widespread revolt against Babylon did not materialize, Ammon remained in open rebellion, even to the point of interference in the internal affairs of the remnant of Judah after 587. King Baalis of Ammon was involved in the plot to assassinate Gedaliah, the governor of Judah (Jer 40:14). Apparently the Ammonite king was trying to gain control of Judah, possibly to the hope of restoring the kingdom of Josiah, this time under Ammonite rule. Though the subsequent political events in Transjordan from 586 to 582 are obscure, it seems probable that Nebuchadnezzar undertook punitive measures. Josephus records a Babylonian campaign in Coele-Syria against Ammon and Moab "in the fifth year after the sacking of Jerusalem, which was the twenty-third year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar" (*Ant.* 10.9.7). The biblical account of Jer 52:30 apparently describes the same event, noting that 745 Jews were included in the deportation of 582, which was carried out by Nebuzaradan, the doughty Babylonian general who had also executed the deportation of 587. The devastating punitive action of 582 created a political vacuum in Transjordan into which poured the Arab invaders of the Kedarite League, destroying all organized political activity in the area (cf. Ezek 25:4–5, 8–9). By the middle of the 6th century the Ammonite state had collapsed, as witnessed by archaeological explorations, which show that sedentary occupation of Ammon ceased almost completely until the early 3rd century.

The situation in Moab was similar to that in Ammon. In 604 the Moabite king submitted to Nebuchadnezzar and remained loyal to Babylon in the revolt of ca. 600–597. Though Moab sent envoys to Jerusalem in the conspiracy of 594, she apparently withdrew and returned to nominal vassalage to Babylon. When Judah was destroyed in 587, Moab was spared. Fugitives who fled from Judah were scorned by the Moabites who, according to the prophet Jeremiah, rejoiced over the fate of Judah and proclaimed their own country to be an impregnable fortress (Jer 48:26–30). The haughtiness of Moab produced a flood of condemnation from the prophets of Judah. In the Babylonian campaign of 582, the voice of Moab, like that of Ammon, was silenced. Some of the

Moabites were exiled to Babylonia, while others fled to Egypt. The destruction of the line of Moabite fortresses in the first quarter of the 6th century meant Moab's end. Subsequent Arab encroachment destroyed any surviving sedentary culture in Transjordan.

The kingdom of Edom managed to survive the devastation of 587 and 582 in Palestine. Along with the other petty states of the area, Edom submitted quietly to the Babylonian yoke in 604. Though envoys from Edom were present in Jerusalem in the conspiracy of 594, Edom apparently withdrew. When Babylonian forces besieged and captured Jerusalem in 588/7, the Edomites joined the forces of Nebuchadnezzar and exulted over the destruction of their ancient enemy (cf. Ps 137:7; Lam 4:21–22; and Obad 10–16). After the deportation of the people of Judah to Babylon in 587 and 582, the Edomites moved northward into southern Judah, making Hebron the capital of a kingdom that eventually came to be known as Idumea. Behind them the Nabateans pressed into former Edomite territory and established a kingdom with Petra as their capital.

The fate of Philistia and Phoenicia at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar is not clear, at least in detail. Only the fall of Ashkelon in 604 can be dated. Gaza, which fell into Egyptian hands in the reign of Neco II (609–594), was later listed as a Babylonian dependency along with Tyre, Sidon, Arvad, and Ashdod. Citing an earlier source of Philostratos, Josephus mentions a thirteen-year siege of Tyre, which apparently began in 587, when Tyre surrendered.

D. The Nations in Prophetic Eschatology and Early Apocalyptic Literature

The fate