

The leadership of young kings in the Kingdom of Judah

Aias A. B. Cabaça
Angolan Northern Union
acabaca@aias.edu

Abstract

Israel's pre-exilic and exilic period were one of the nation's most difficult periods. It was marked with spiritual inconsistency which led to moral degeneracy and political instability. During this dark period the king's role went beyond the political realm. They also played a major role on the spiritual and moral climate of the nation.

Saul, David, Solomon and Rehoboam were the only kings with the privilege of reigning over the 12 tribes of Israel. However, Rehoboam not only reigned over the twelve tribes, but since the twelve tribes were divided during his reign; he was also the first to rule over the southern kingdom of Judah.

There were twenty kings that reigned in the kingdom of Judah and approximately 70% were young. This paper surveys the twenty kings and analyses selected texts which highlight their age, spiritual status, and the influence they had on the nation. It also answers several questions like why there were young kings, why were some successful, why others failed, and what implications can the church derive from this phenomenon.

Keywords: Leadership, Young, Kingdom of Judah, Mentorship, Influence

The author of first and second Kings presents the history of Israel through the rise and fall of kings. One of the elements that stands out in the narratives is the leadership and influence of young kings in the kingdom of Judah. Some of these southern kings were children, adolescents, young adults and in their middle adulthood. They also made significant impact on the spiritual life of the nation while being young. So, this is not merely about them stepping into the office as young

individuals, but also, about their significant accomplishments while they were young.

This study has a threefold purpose. First, to understand why so many young kings reigned in Judah. Second, what type of influence they exercised over Israel. Third, what implications can be drawn out of this phenomenon for the Church. The table below contains the twenty individuals that reigned in Judah, their age group, their status, biblical reference, and the duration of their reign.

Table 1
Rulers of the kingdom of Judah

King	Age	Age Group	Status	Biblical Reference	Duration of Reign ¹
Rehoboam	41	MA	Evil	1 Kgs 14:21,22	931-913 B.C.
Abijam	-	-	Evil	1 Kgs 15:1-3	913-911 B.C.
Asa	-	-	Good	1 Kgs 15:9-11	911-870 B.C.
Jehoshaphat	35	MA	Good	1 Kgs 22:42,43	872-848 B.C.
Jehoram	32	YA	Evil	2 Kgs 8:17,18	853-841 B.C.
Ahaziah	22	YA	Evil	2 Kgs 8:26,27	841 B.C.
Athaliah	-	-	Evil	2 Kgs 11:3,4	841-835 B.C.

¹ The duration of their reign is provided by Edwin R. Thiele in the following book: John H. Walton and Andrew E. Hill, *Old Testament Today: A Journey from Original Meaning to Contemporary Significance* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2004), 149.

Joash	7	C	Good then Evil	2 Kgs 11:21; 12:2	835-796 B.C.
Amaziah	25	YA	Good	2 Kgs 14:2,3	796-767 B.C.
Azariah	16	A	Good	2 Kgs 15:2,3	792-740 B.C.
Jotham	25	YA	Good	2 Kgs 15:33,34	750-732 B.C.
Ahaz	20	A	Evil	2 Kgs 16:2-4	735-716 B.C.
Hezekiah	25	YA	Good	2 Kgs 18:2,3	716-687 B.C.
Manasseh	12	C	Evil then Good	2 Kgs 21:1,2; 2 Chr 33:13	697-643 B.C.
Amon	22	A	Evil	2 Kgs 21:19,20	643-641 B.C.
Josiah	8	C	Good	2 Kgs 22:1,2	641-609 B.C.
Jehoahaz	23	A	Evil	2 Kgs 23:31,32	609 B.C.
Jehoiakim	25	YA	Evil	2 Kgs 23:36,37	609-598 B.C.
Jehoiachin	18	A	Evil	2 Kgs 24:8,9	598-597 B.C.
Zedekiah	21	A	Evil	2 Kgs 24:18,19	597-587 B.C.

C: Child; A: Adolescent; YA: Young Adult; MA: Middle Age.

The age group column contains codes, the codes and their meanings are as follows: C: Child; A: Adolescent; YA: Young Adult; MA: Middle Age. The four steps employed in this study are in the following sequence: 1) set demarcations for age groups, define the concept of youth and leadership referred to in this study; 2) analyze the selected verses in the table; 3) discover the leadership influence of each king and any other finding that contributes to the study, finally, 4) draw out implications for the Church.

Demarcation of Age Groups and Definition of Terms

There is biblical and cultural evidence suggesting that in ancient times the Israelites believed that childhood ended at age 12. In Luke 2:41-45 Jesus is taken to the temple by his parents after he turned 12, this was done “according to the custom” of their time. It seems that whenever a Jewish boy turned twelve or became an adolescent they could participate in religious ceremonies.

There are actually two Jewish ceremonies that mark the end of childhood, one is for boys and the other for girls. The Jewish ceremony for boys is called *bar mitvah* and *bat mitvah* for girls. One source mentions that when a Jewish girl turns 12 and a Jewish boy turns 13 they are no longer considered as children.² Some have argued that this tradition began in the thirteenth century after Christ, while others suggest it goes back to ancient times. I believe that Luke 2:41 is evidence of its ancient roots.

Biblical writers employed several terminologies to refer to those age groups. In 2 Chronicles 34:3 the noun *nā'ar* which may be rendered as “boy,” “lad,” or “youth”³ is employed to refer to the 16-year-old

² Hatch Trevan and Marks Loren, “Bar Mitzvahs and Bat Mitzvahs,” *All Faculty Publications*, no. 3037 (2014): 3.

³ I’m going to share a direct quote from *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, but I have altered the abbreviation of the books of the Bible because most readers are not familiar with the way Clines abbreviated them. However, all of the information comes from Clines. “Boy, lad, youth Gen 21:12; 22:12; 43:8; 48:16; Judg 13:24; 1 Sam 17:33; 1 Kgs 14:3; 2 Kgs 2:23; Isa 7:16), newborn (1 Sam 4:21), from birth (Judg 13:5,7), infant of three months (Exod 2:6), unable to speak (Isa 8:4), not yet weaned (1 Sam 1:22), just weaned (1 Sam 1:24).” David J. A.

Josiah. The same noun is employed in Genesis 37:2 to refer to a 17-year-old Joseph and commonly translated as “young man.” It has even been utilized to refer to the three-months-old infant Moses (Exod 2:6). This means that the noun *nā‘ar* can be employed for an infant, a child, and an adolescent.

Daniel and his friends in Daniel 1:4 are also described as “youths” (*yēlādīm*), however; the author employs the noun *yālad* instead of *nā‘ar* which also means “youth”.⁴ The second difference is that the author of the book of Daniel doesn’t mention the age of Daniel and his friends. Some biblical scholars don’t bother to guess their age while others suspect they were around 10-18, but Ellen Gould White believed that in Daniel 1 the prophet Daniel was 18 years old. It seems that most don’t suggest an age higher than 18.

In Daniel chapter two the young men become two years older (Dan 2:1) and they are no longer referred to as “youths.” A similar thing happens to Josiah, he was described as a youth when he was 16; but once he turned 24 (2Chr 34:8) he was no longer referred to as a youth. Nevertheless, when Joseph was 28 he was called “young” (Gen 41:12).⁵ The phrase employed to refer to Joseph as “young” (נַיִן) was the same utilized in Genesis 37:2 when he was 17 years old and also the one employed for 16 year old Josiah in 2 Chronicles 34:3. So, biblically speaking it is not just infants, children, or adolescents that are called young; even a 28 year old is also referred to as “young” person.

Clines, ed., *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2011), 5:708.

⁴ Clines declares that the noun has been employed in Scripture to refer to male children (Exod 1:17, Ezra 4:3, Zech 8:5), females (Exod 21:4, Exod 10:1), and youth (1 Kgs 12:8,10,14) in general. Clines, *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, 4: 220.

⁵ One is able to know he was 28 in Genesis 41:12 because Joseph was inaugurated as ruler of Egypt at age 30 (Gen 41:46). During the year of inauguration, the butler told Pharaoh that he had done time with a “young Hebrew” that had interpreted his dream. According to Genesis 41:10 “two full years” had already passed since Joseph had interpreted the butlers dream. Since Joseph became ruler over the land of Egypt at the age of 30 (Gen 41:46) one can simply subtract 2 from 30 to get 28. So, the butler referred to the 27-year-old Joseph and not the 30 as a “young” man.

But what about adulthood? In the Torah the age 20 seems to be the age that marks the beginning of adulthood (Exod 30:11-16, Num 1:1-3, 26:1-4, Lev 27:1-8). Once an individual reached 20 years old they were included in the census (Exod 30:11, Num 1:1-3) and could be enlisted to go to war (Num 26:1-4). This would mean that although Joseph was called “young” at the age of 28 (Gen 41:12), he was an adult. Perhaps what one would call today a young adult.

Besides the age of 20 being an age of maturity, 25 seems to also be another significant age. In Numbers 4:2,3 the Lord instructs Moses to select priests from the sons of Kohath (a Levite), but on the condition that they had to be at least 30 and as far as or until fifty years old. Later on, King David ensured that the Levites who would be serving at the “house of God” by assisting with the “showbread, the flour for the grain offering, the wafers of unleavened bread, the baked offering, the offering mixed with oil, and all measures of quantity or size...” were 20 and above (1Chr 23:27-32). In Numbers 8:24-26 the Lord instructs Moses that Levites were to begin “to wait upon the service of the tabernacle of the congregation” from 25 “and upwards” (Num 8:24). But once these Levites turned 50, they were to return “and serve no more” (Num 8:25).

Finally, at what age was a person considered old? In Genesis 21:2 Abraham is referred to as an “old”⁶ man (יָדָר) at the age of 100 (Gen 21:5). In the context of Genesis 5 100 years old wouldn’t really seem old, but after the flood it is considered an old age.

Neither God, Moses, nor David mention the reasons why certain works required a person to be at a certain age, but one begins to notice the reality of biblical age groups.

⁶ “The noun *zāqēn* is derived from the noun *zāqān*, “beard”, which is attested with the equivalent radicals in most Semitic languages. In its basic meaning, therefore, it refers to a man with a beard, originally perhaps an adult in general (cf. Neo-Assyr. *ša ziqni* in contrast to “eunuch”). In the OT, however, it always refers to old men (once to an old woman) or elders as officials... the verb *zāqēn*, as well as the nouns *zōqen*, *ziqnāh*, and *z’ qunim*, has as its semantic content “be old, grow old”. The verb *zqn* is likewise attested with this meaning in Old Aramaic.” G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, Rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 4:122, 123.

In light of all this information I have created several categories. Childhood would be from 0 up to 12 or 13, the initial stage of adulthood ranged from 20-25, priests retired at 50 which may perhaps mark another developmental stage, and the final age group was old age. There is therefore not much difference with the modern understanding of age groups.

The noun “child” or “children” these days is generally employed for individuals 12 years and below, as stated by Danne, T., K. Lupke, K. Walte, W. Von Schuetz, and Marry-Anne Gall.⁷ That would mean adolescence begins at 12 or 13, however; there is a division as to the ending of adolescence. Jeffrey Jensen Arnett suggests adolescence ends at 18.⁸ But Erick Erikson’s view which Gerald C. Kane applies in his study suggests that adolescence ends at 24.⁹

These modern demarcations are very close to the biblical evidence. According to Erikson’s categories, adolescence ends at 24. Although at 20 years old an Israelite was eligible to go to war, the Lord had instructed priests to begin serving at 25 and in Erickson’s categories 25 is the beginning stage of adulthood.

This study will follow the stages of Erikson as presented by Gerald C. Kane. This selection is due to the fact that it’s aligned with the biblical concept. Second, Erikson names categories that Scripture recognizes but doesn’t mention; like the gap between childhood and adulthood (which is adolescence). The other gap is between adult and old age (which is middle-age). The stages which can be found in first and

⁷ “This single-center, open-label, randomized, crossover trial included children (aged 6–12 years...” T. Danne et al., “Insulin Detemir Is Characterized by a Consistent Pharmacokinetic Profile Across Age-Groups in Children, Adolescents, and Adults with Type 1 Diabetes,” *Diabetes Care* 26, no. 11 (November 1, 2003): 3087.

⁸ “If adolescence is the period from age 10 to 18 and emerging adulthood is the period from (roughly) age 18 to the mid-20s, most identity exploration now takes place in emerging adulthood rather than adolescence.” Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, ed., “Emerging Adulthood: Understanding the New Way of Coming of Age.,” in *Emerging Adults in America: Coming of Age in the 21st Century*. (Washington: American Psychological Association, 2006), 8.

⁹ Gerald C. Kane, “Psychosocial Stages of Symbolic Action in Social Media,” *SSRN Electronic Journal* (2012).

second Kings are later childhood (6-12), early adolescence (12-18), later adolescence (18-24), early adulthood (24-34) and middle adulthood (34-60).¹⁰

Therefore, the phrase “young kings” in this study refers to individuals from infancy to early adulthood. Since the youngest king was 7 years old it will apply to individuals from 7 to 34 years old. This would be in keeping with the biblical evidence and the stages suggested by Erickson.

The Leadership Role of the Kings

The leadership role of these Kings was gained by virtue of their position, they were leaders as soon as they replaced the previous King. A son usually replaced a father, except for Athaliah who forced herself into the Kingly position and few others that were placed as vassal kings by foreign rulers. Gregory Goswel says that this type of leadership is the dynastic kingship and that the “orderly replacement of leaders” was already alluded to in the Pentateuch.¹¹

Every type of leadership involves influence¹² and the influence of religious leadership and spiritual leadership¹³ are well demonstrated in first and second Kings. It is also crucial to understand that the Kings in Israel were not merely devoted to the political leadership of the nation, they played an important role in its spiritual condition. Since

¹⁰ Kane, “Psychosocial Stages of Symbolic Action in Social Media,” 5.

¹¹ Goswell says that “many scholars view the Moses-Joshua transition in Deuteronomy as an example of semi royal succession, namely, the kind of orderly replacement of leaders that is a leading feature in later dynastic kingship, though it must be said that the dynastic nature of kingship is implied rather than asserted in Deut 17:20, ‘that he may continue long in his kingdom, *he -and his children*, in Israel’.” Gregory Goswell, “Joshua and Kingship,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 23, no. 1 (2013): 31.

¹² Duane M. Covrig, Janet Ledesma, and Gary Gifford, “Spiritual or Religious Leadership: What Do You Practice? What Should You Practice?,” no. 1 (2013): 107.

¹³ “However, religious leadership may manifest that authenticity in leadership through faithfulness to a more official or organizational accepted process. Spiritual leadership, on the other hand, may receive authentication through more charismatic and visionary forms of leadership and followership. Spiritual leadership is authenticated more from followers.” *Ibid.*

influence is involved, the kings were not left to do as they wish. In fact, Covrig, Ledesma and Gifford have seen John 4:1¹⁴ as a reference to test leaders. This testing of leaders aids in ensuring that their influence on the nation is checked.

Guidelines for Israelite Kings

In Deuteronomy 17:14-20 a set of “strict”¹⁵ guidelines are given for the kings of Israel. These guidelines were so useful that it was influential in the establishment of modern western constitutional monarchy.¹⁶ It is even considered as “the most eloquent presentation of servant leadership in the Old Testament.”¹⁷ Interestingly enough, these guidelines or portrayal of the “ideal king”¹⁸ are at the center of a chiasmic structure¹⁹ which highlights leadership.

The guideline for kings begins with a prophecy. God prophecies in Deuteronomy 17:14 that once the people arrive in the promised land they will request a King so that they can be “like all the nations that”

¹⁴ “The need to ‘test the leaders’ is emphasized in this passage. It is a call to see if they are in keeping with God’s character and purposes. Whether they are chosen by tradition or organizational process, or self-selected, or promoted by others, their actions and their beliefs should be tested by an authoritative reference. For Christians, that reference point has been the Bible.” Ibid.

¹⁵ “Moses narrowed the qualifications for candidates for kingship (17:15), and then he set strict limits on the conduct of those who would be installed as king (vv. 16-20).” Daniel I. Block, “The Burden of Leadership: The Mosaic Paradigm of Kingship (Deut. 17:14–20),” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 162, no. 647 (2005): 260.

¹⁶ “The law about the king continues Deuteronomy’s policy of limiting the power and prestige of human authorities... These aspects of the law were very influential in the development of western constitutional monarchy.” Jeffrey H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy Devarim: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation*, 1st ed., The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 166.

¹⁷ “The most eloquent presentation of servant leadership in the Old Testament is in Moses’ instructions in Deuteronomy 17:14-20 on the conduct of Israel’s future kings.” Block, “The Burden of Leadership,” 260.

¹⁸ “Like the ideal king of Deut 17:20 and Josiah (2 Kgs 22:2), Joshua is not to deviate from the path of obedience to the right or left (Josh 1:7), but again this is an ethic for all God’s people, not just for an outstanding leader (see Josh 23:6).” Goswell, “Joshua and Kingship,” 34.

¹⁹ Block, “The Burden of Leadership,” 260.

which will be “around” them. Knowing that they would make such a request, the Lord sets forth guidelines in place before the request was made (Deut 17:14-20). Their request is narrated in 1 Samuel 8:4-9 where they insist and the Lord lets them have their way. Although God gives guidelines for the Kings in the Pentateuch, it clearly wasn’t what he wanted for them.

The first policy among the guidelines is that the king had to be an Israelite; second, he could only be appointed by God (17:15). Other guidelines were in regards to the danger of excesses, including polygamy (17:16,17). Finally, the King was to “write a copy” of the law which was “before the Priests and Levites;” and he was to meditate on it for all his life (17:18,19).

King David was aware of these guidelines. When he was about to step down from the throne he charged his son Solomon to observe what was “in the law of Moses” (1 Kgs 2:3). Solomon was warned that if he neglected the instructions of Moses which included the guidelines for kings, he would not “prosper” as king (1 Kgs 2:3).

Analysis of Significant Texts in 1 Kings

This section is devoted to providing the findings in the selected texts from first kings which are in the table. The table reveals that there are few young kings mentioned in the book of first kings. It demonstrates that older kings began to reign first and in the course of time the younger kings began to appear. It begins with Rehoboam the son of Solomon who reigned as the last king that had dominion over the twelve tribes, he was also the first to rule in the kingdom of Judah after Israel was divided into two kingdoms. At forty-one (1 Kgs 15:21) he doesn’t fit in the youth category which ends at 34, he falls under middle adulthood (34-60).²⁰

In 1 Kings 12:8 Rehoboam is said to have forsaken the council of older men (זְקֵנִים). The noun rendered as “older” which may also mean

²⁰ Kane, “Psychosocial Stages of Symbolic Action in Social Media,” 5.

“elder”²¹ is often employed in a sentence as an antithesis to the noun “young”.²² The same case happens in this text because instead of obeying the “older men”, Rehoboam obeys the “young men” who grew up with him (8, 10). These young men were הַיְלָדִים (*haylādīm*), this is the plural rendition of *yālad* (יָלַד) which means “youth”.²³ This is the same term employed in Daniel 1:4 to refer to Daniel and his friends. The second king on the table is Abijam (1 Kgs 15:1) and the third was Asa (1 Kgs 15:9); their ages are not mentioned.

Jehoshaphat, the fourth king, was thirty-five years old (1 Kgs 22:42) when he began to reign. Like Rehoboam, he falls in the age group of middle adulthood (34-60). But unlike Rehoboam, Jehoshaphat is considered a good king who followed in his father’s footsteps (22:43) and brought some reforms to Israel (47-49). Both sons, Rehoboam and Jehoshaphat followed in their father’s footsteps. One turned out evil and the other good.

Findings from Significant Texts in 2 Kings

This section is devoted to providing the findings from selected texts in second kings. It proceeds in the following manner: first children (6-12), second adolescents which includes early adolescent (12-18) and later adolescent (18-24), finally, young adults (24-34).

Child Kings (6-12)

Why There Were Child Kings in The Kingdom of Judah. The historical narrative in the books of Kings accounts for only three child

²¹ Botterweck and Ringgren, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 4:122, 123.

²² “Occurrences. The noun *zāqēn* is attested 178 times in the OT. A bare third of the occurrences has the meaning ‘old’. These appear frequently in antithesis to terms for the young (...*na’ar*... Dt. 28:50; *bāchūr*... Prov. 20:29; *yeledh*... Zec. 8:4f... sometimes in purely formulaic usage ‘young and old’, Gen. 19:4). Thus *zāqēn* is the most common and most general term for someone old.” Ibid., 4:123.

²³ Clines, *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, 4:570.

kings, they are Joash, Josiah, and Manasseh. Joash²⁴ and Josiah²⁵ became kings early because those who were supposed to reign before them and some who actually reigned before them were killed while they were young. Manasseh does not enter this category because his father (Hezekiah) had a long reign and died of natural causes. Despite the very long rule of his father, Manasseh rose to the throne when he was still young.²⁶ Regardless of the reasons why they began reigning at a young age, what remains certain is that they were permitted by God to reign while they were children.

The Influence of Mentorship. Out of the three youngest kings there were two that were mentored, namely Joash and Josiah. Scripture states that Joash was a good king “because Jehoiada the priest instructed him” (12:2). The verb rendered as ‘instructed’ is *yārā* (יָרָא) which may also

²⁴ The reason for such a young king perhaps lies in the fact that those who were supposed to be king before him died early. This is because Athaliah killed members of the royal family to which Josiah belonged to (11:1). As soon as he had done that evil act she began to rule. Athaliah was the mother of king Ahaziah who was murdered in a *coup d'état* and in retaliation that is when Athaliah killed members of the royal family, those that were killed by her were probably older than Joash. But thankfully as the heirs to the throne were being killed Joash was hid and enthroned when it was safe (11:2-12).

²⁵ Josiah began to reign at the age of eight (2 Kgs 22:1) because his father Amon was killed at 24 and only reigned for two years (2 Kgs 21:19).

²⁶ Manasseh’s father was Hezekiah, Hezekiah died at 54 and reigned for twenty-nine years (2 Kgs 18:2). It is important to note that Hezekiah was about to die at 39 (2 Kgs 20:1-6), but after he entreated the Lord to live longer he was added 15 years (2 Kgs 20:6). If God wanted to prevent Manasseh from reigning at a young age He could have done it by extending the life of Hezekiah more than the fifteen additional years He granted him (2 Kgs 20:6). If Manasseh’s father (Hezekiah) had died 15 years earlier, Manasseh wouldn’t have been alive at that time and another individual would have been King. Since Manasseh turned out to be evil, some may suggest that Hezekiah’s life shouldn’t have been extended. Perhaps a better King would have continued the work of Hezekiah, but perhaps that King would have also forsaken God or not even repent as Manasseh does in the end. These are possible scenarios, but the fact is that God extended Hezekiah’s life and allowed Manasseh to reign at twelve years old.

mean to ‘teach’²⁷ or ‘guide’. It is an active causative verb,²⁸ the literal translation would be “he caused to instruct Joash.” In English it may sound redundant, but the Hebrew causative stem conveys the emphasis on Jehoiada’s active role in Joash’s success.

The verb *yārâ* is said to also indicate that the instructor and student have a relationship of which “the instructor possesses or claims authority over the other.”²⁹ This is true of Jehoiada and Joash because the day Joash was crowned king the priest Jehoiada led the king and nation into making covenants with the Lord. The first covenant was that the nation “should be the Lord’s people” (11:17). The second and final was one “between the king and the people” (11:17). So, both people and king were led to acknowledge God through Jehoiada. This had a positive effect on the reign of Joash.

While 2 Kings only presents the noble work that Jehoiada and Joash had done, 2 Chronicles 24 reveals the negative. First, Joash only did what was right when Jehoiada was alive (2 Chr 24:2). Second, while Jehoiada was still alive he led Joash to violate the guideline given in Deuteronomy 17:17 by getting Joash two wives (2 Chr 24:3). Third, soon after Joash lost his mentor he gained new advisors that helped him introduce idolatry in Judah (24:17).

²⁷ “Vb. Teach-Qal... as noun, teacher, one who teaches... 1. Teach, instruct.” Clines, *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, 4:291.

²⁸ It is a *hiphil* active stem. “The verb appears 45 times in the OT, always in the *hiphil*. There are also 9 occurrences of the derived substantive *môreh*. The other derivative, *tôrâ*, occurs much more frequently; it is treated in a separate article.” G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 6:339.

²⁹ “In nearly every occurrence the verb can be translated ‘teach’ or ‘instruct’, almost always with a double object: ‘teach someone something.’ The root represents a concept with a Sitz im Leben in teaching and catechesis. It presupposes a relationship between two personal (or personally conceived) entities: the instructor possesses or claims authority over the other; the recipient of instruction has or should have certain expectations of the teacher. It is clear that only the functional context denoted by *yārâ*... is given its (full) due. The root implies nothing about any particular method of instruction. The element of mutual personal relationship should always be kept in mind...” Ibid.

The fact that he did evil after Jehoiada passed away implies several things. Perhaps he was not mentored but instead manipulated by Jehoiada, or maybe he drifted away even though he was mentored well. Even the disciples of Jesus also committed mistakes after being mentored well and so have several others in history. Perhaps the lesson is that the success of mentorship not only relies on having a good mentor, but also on the interest, consistency and personnel devotion of both parties.

Josiah's case is different from that of Joash, although Josiah was mentored he had a personal commitment to seek God (2 Chr 34:4). Scripture does not say this about Joash. Josiah's success is due to the fact that he worked alongside Hilkiah the priest. The narrative suggests the two were close associates. When Josiah was twenty-six years old, the book of the covenant was discovered and the priest Hilkiah presented it to Him (22:8-10). This book contained exhortation to remain faithful to God and warnings against disobedience of Gods commandments, ordinances, and precepts. In response to the message of the book, Josiah proceeded to mobilize the elders, priests, prophets and together they gathered the nation in the house of the Lord to read the book of the covenant to them (2 Kgs 22:11-20; 23:1,2). One can clearly see that Josiah worked alongside individuals that were older than him to bring forth reformation.

This leadership style that is showcased by the priests Jehoiada and Hilkiah is a "servant leadership."³⁰ In this type of leadership the mentee is not the only one serving, the mentor is also a servant. Jesus did the same with His disciples (Luke 22:26,27). This training is accomplished through a relationship like that of a father/mother and son/daughter. The mentors also prepare, encourage and help their mentee to take on important responsibilities.³¹

³⁰ "Servant leadership is a timeless leadership philosophy with its main focus on a leader as a servant whose purpose is to serve." Kelebogile T. Resane, "Servant Leadership and Shepherd Leadership: The Missing Dynamic in Pastoral Integrity in South Africa Today," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 76, no. 1 (March 12, 2020): 2.

³¹ "Shepherd leadership is sending others to the front to take the lead in areas where they are the strongest. It is both a quality and the action of deliberate efforts to develop

The Nature of Their Influence. Joash's reforms were connected with the temple and worship. He leads the nations to tear down the house of Baal and kill its priests (11:18). There were reforms made in regards to symbols of worship that were against God's will (19,20). Finally, Joash also focused on restoring the house of the Lord and its utensils (12:4-16). Perhaps his devotion to the house of God may be due to the fact that it was his refuge during the persecution of Athaliah. But after Joash's apostasy (2 Chr 24:15-27) he gave away the treasures of the previous kings and the ones in the house of the Lord to Hazael (12:17,18). Nevertheless, at his death he is referred to as one who did good "with respect to God and His temple" (12:2). Perhaps Joash is treated by God as one who never did evil because he repented and was forgiven.

On the other hand, Josiah remained committed to God throughout his life. In 2 Chr 34:4 it says that in the eighth year of his reign he began to seek God while he was still a "boy", the common noun rendered as 'boy' is נָעַר. As stated before, this noun can be employed for a newborn, infant³² or even a seventeen-year-old like Joseph.³³ At this time Josiah was 16 years old. Some Qumran scrolls use the same noun to

others. It is a leadership sense of responsibility entrusted by God to map out the way for a brighter and better future for the emerging leaders. The welfare of the sheep (those led) becomes a priority." Ibid.

³² I'm going to share a direct quote from *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, but I have altered the abbreviation of the books of the Bible because most readers are not familiar with the way Clines abbreviated them. However, all of the information comes from *Clines Dictionary*. "Boy, lad, youth Gen 21:12; 22:12; 43:8; 48:16; Judg 13:24; 1 Sam 17:33; 1 Kgs 14:3; 2 Kgs 2:23; Isa 7:16), newborn (1 Sam 4:21), from birth (Judg 13:5,7), infant of three months (Exod 2:6), unable to speak (Isa 8:4), not yet weaned (1 Sam 1:22), just weaned (1 Sam 1:24)." Clines, *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, 5:708.

³³ I'm going to share a direct quote from 'The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew,' but I have altered the abbreviation of the books of the Bible because most readers are not familiar with the way Clines abbreviated them. However, all of the information comes from Clines Dictionary. Clines indicates that the noun נָעַר may be used to refer to a "young man (e.g. Gen 34:19; Exod 24:5; 33:11; Josh 6:23; Judg 17:7; 1 Sam 2:17," "1 Sam 2:21," "1 Sam 25:5," "2 Sam 1:5; 4:12; 14:21; 18:5; 20:11; 1 Kgs 11:28; Isa 3:4," to someone "of marriageable age (Gen 34:19), aged seventeen (Gen 37:2)." Ibid.

refer to young men and the LXX renders this noun into a Greek equivalent that conveys the same idea.³⁴

Not only was Josiah seeking God at sixteen, but the same verse (2 Chr. 34:4) also reveals that in the twelfth year of his reign he began to destroy idols. By adding eight to twelve one gets twenty, the author does not mention what happened in between those years. But he does however desire readers to be aware of the fact that at twenty years old Josiah was actively involved in reformation. Ellen G. White mentions that he was warned of the errors committed by past generations³⁵ and in obedience to the advice of the faithful he stood firm for the Lord. Unlike Joash, Josiah not only had a mentor; he seems to have made a commitment to stand firm for God.

2 Chronicles 34:8 reveals that in the eighteenth year of his reign (twenty-six years old) he began to repair the temple, found the book of the law and purged Jerusalem from practices that were contrary to God's will. In that same year he also led Israel in its greatest Passover celebration. Josiah was also the only child king of whom his reforms were prophesied about (2 Kgs 23:17,18). He even encouraged reverence for God's word during the time he led the nation into making a national covenant with the Lord (2 Kgs 23:2-4)³⁶ and there were more than seven

³⁴ G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 2007), 9:485.

³⁵ "Born of a wicked king, beset with temptations to follow in his father's steps, and with few counselors to encourage him in the right way, Josiah nevertheless was true to the God of Israel. Warned by the errors of past generations, he chose to do right, instead of descending to the low level of sin and degradation to which his father and his grandfather had fallen. He 'turned not aside to the right hand or to the left.' As one who was to occupy a position of trust, he resolved to obey the instruction that had been given for the guidance of Israel's rulers, and his obedience made it possible for God to use him as a vessel unto honor." Ellen Gould White, *Prophets and Kings* (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1917), 384.

³⁶ After this he led the nation into making a covenant to follow the Lord, by keeping "his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all *their* heart and all their soul, to perform" everything that was written in it (23:4).

reforms in regards to the temple and worship (23:4-11)³⁷ which were fruits of the several covenants that they had made with the Lord.

There are also reforms by Josiah that were connected to previous kings because he had gone against the evil works of previous kings. These reforms include destroying the altars which king Ahaz and his Grandfather Manasseh had placed in the house of the Lord (2 Kgs 23:12) including other evil deeds that his grandfather (Manasseh) had introduced in Israel.³⁸ He also went outside Judah and Jerusalem to destroy the evil works of Solomon³⁹ and Jeroboam.⁴⁰ Finally, Josiah went to Samaria and destroyed the high places and did away with the priests of Samaria. His reformation was more aggressive than those of the previous kings of Israel, they took place inside and outside the city of Jerusalem.

As for the third child king called Manasseh, he had a good father and still did evil.⁴¹ This is evidence that even if a child good examples, they may still do evil. Although his father had made the mistake of not giving God the glory when he was visited by foreign dignitaries,

³⁷ Within 2 Kings 23:4-11 there was a removal and destruction of Baal vessels from Gods temple (23:4), killing of idolatrous priests and eradication of the worship of the sun, moon, planets, and all the hosts of heaven (23:5). Josiah also removed and crushed the grove that was placed in the house of the Lord (23:6), destroyed sodomite houses (23:7), from Geba to Bearsheeba he defiled high places where incense was burned (23:8), defiled Topheth where children were being sacrificed to Molech (23:10), and killed the horses and burned the chariots dedicated to the sun which were placed at the entrance of the house of the Lord (23:11).

³⁸ His last deeds of reformation in the book of Kings was to put away workers of familiar spirits, wizards, images and idols from Jerusalem (2 Kgs 23:21-24)

³⁹ He destroyed and defiled the high places that Solomon had built outside of Israel for Ashtoreth, Chemosh, Milcom (2 Kgs 23:13).

⁴⁰ He did away with alters, groves and high places of Jeroboam in Bethel (2 Kgs 23:15).

⁴¹ Unfortunately, Scripture recounts that Manasseh did evil by seeking the “abominations of the heathens” (2 Kgs 21:1). He rebuilt what his father destroyed and caused an apostasy in regards to the temple and worship (3-7). He rebuilt the high places his father (Hezekiah) destroyed, reared groves and altars of Baal; even worshiped all the hosts of heaven (2 Kgs 21:3). He also defiled the house of the Lord by building alters in it (21:4), built images and alters to the hosts of heaven in the two courts of the house of God (21:5,7). Finally, he practiced and encouraged child sacrifice and spiritism (21:6) in Israel.

Hezekiah was a good father from which to draw godly inspiration. The bright side is that Manasseh humbled himself and God brought him back to Jerusalem (2 Chr 33:13) and in the later part of his life he attempted to reverse his negative influence towards the temple and worship (2 Chr 33:14-16).

It is worth mentioning that all the kings that began to reign as children had much in common. First, they all made their mistakes. Joash began as good and later turned out bad, Josiah died due to disobedience (2 Chr 35:20-24), and Manasseh started out as evil and repented after God punished him. Second, when they were good or bad, they were all interested in the temple and worship. One is still tempted to posit that perhaps for Joash and Josiah it was because they were mentored by priests. But Manasseh was not mentored by a priest, yet his interest still lied in the temple. What remains clear is that the temple and worship were crucial to the success of the nation. Whenever there was success or apostasy it was reflected in the temple and the manner of worship. Mentorship proved to be crucial for the child kings, but the success of it depended on the discipline and faithfulness of both parties.

Adolescents Kings (12-24)

Why There Were Adolescent Kings in The Kingdom of Judah.

There is not much information concerning the adolescent kings in comparison with the child kings. Therefore, this section will be shorter. There were seven adolescent kings. These seven were Azariah, Jehoachin, Jehoahaz, Ahaz, Amon, Zedekiah and Ahaziah. They reigned as young individuals for the same reasons that made it possible for the child kings to begin reigning while they were children.

The first group did not replace a predecessor that died early because their fathers reigned for long, but the second group had predecessors that died early. The ones who had fathers that reigned for long and still took the throne as young adults are Azariah, Jehoahaz, Ahaz, Amon, and Zedekiah.⁴² Two out of the seven began reigning as

⁴² Azariah's father was Amaziah (2 Kgs 14:2-3), Amaziah was a good King who began to reign at twenty-five and reigned for 29 years. Jehoahaz's father was Josiah, his reign began at

adolescents because their fathers left the throne early, they were Azariah and Ahaziah.⁴³

Influence of Adolescent Kings in Israel. Out of the seven adolescent kings only Azariah was good. The reason for Azariah's good influence over Israel is connected to his father's influence. This motif is clearly emphasized in the narrative because it declares that he walked in his father's footsteps (2 Kgs 15:3).⁴⁴

The six evil kings were Jehoachin, Jehoahaz, Ahaz, Amon, Zedekiah and Ahaziah. Ahaz and Zedekiah reigned longer. Although Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin only reigned for three months (2 Kgs 23:31,32; 24:8), Ahaziah one year (2 Kgs 8:26,27), and Amon two years (2 Kgs 21:19,20); they still had a negative influence over Israel. Like the child kings, their negative influence was also reflected in their impact to worship and the temple.

These adolescent kings had both good and bad examples of their fathers from which to follow, but chose to do evil. This in no way suggests that the point of reference should be a father, but it certainly attests to the fact that their father's influence was a key element in their success. Personal choice was also a crucial element in the success or failure of these kings.

8 and he reigned for 31 years (2 Kgs 22:1). Ahaz's father was Jotham, a good king who began to reign at 25 and reigned for 16 years (2 Kgs 15:32-34). Amon's father was Manasseh, he did not die young because he reigned 55 years (2 Kgs 21:5). Zedekiah's father was Jehoiachin, he was 18 years old when he began to reign. Jehoiachin only reigned for three months until the king of Babylon replaced him and placed Zedekiah as king (2 Kgs 24:17).

⁴³ Ahaziah's father was Jehoiachin, Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he began to reign, but only reigned for three months (2 Kgs 24:8) because Nebuchadnezzar made him a vassal king three years into his reign (2 Kgs 24:1). The father of Ahaziah was Jehoram, Jehoram was 32 when he began to reign and reigned for only 8 years (2 Kgs 8:17,18).

⁴⁴ This suggests he did not lead Israel astray. He however, did not remove the high places and people still sacrificed and made offerings there (2 Kgs 15:4). Azariah spent his final days living alone in a separate house due to leprosy, a disease that was brought upon him by the Lord (2 Kgs 15:5).

Young Adults (24-34)

Why There Were Young Adults as Kings in the Kingdom of Judah. One of the reasons why some began to reign as young adults lies in the fact that their predecessors died or were taken captive early in their reign. Some of these individuals are Ahaziah, Hezekiah, Zedekiah, and Jehoiakim. Hezekiah began early because his father started reigning at a young age and only reigned for sixteen years.⁴⁵ While Zedekiah and Jehoiakim began to reign at a young age because God allowed their fathers to be taken captive early in their reign.⁴⁶ The ones who didn't lose their fathers early and still arose to the throne as young adults are Jehoram, Jotham, and Amaziah.⁴⁷

The Influence of the House of Ahab and Jezebel. Among the kings that began to reign as young adults two of them were evil because of the influence of Ahab's daughters. Jehoram was evil because he walked "as the house of Ahab had done, for the daughter of Ahab was his wife" (2 Kgs 8:18). Ahaziah's evil conduct was because "he also walked in the way of the house of Ahab... for he was son-in-law to the house of Ahab" (2 Kgs 8:27). Ahab himself is considered as one of the most evil kings because "Jezebel his wife incited" him (1 Kgs 21:25). Another evil wife from Ahab's and Jezebel's household was Athaliah,⁴⁸ she was

⁴⁵ Ahaz was his father 2 Kgs 16:2 reigned 16 years Ahaz rested with his father, he was not killed.

⁴⁶ Jehoiakim's father was Jehoahaz, Jehoahaz reigned for three months (2 Kgs 23:31) because he was replaced by Pharaoh Neco who made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in his place (2 Kgs 23:34,35).

⁴⁷ Jehoram's father was Jehoshaphat, he began at 35 and reigned for 25 years (1 Kgs 22:41-43). Jotham's father was Amaziah, he reigned for 52 years (2 Kgs 15:1,2). Amaziah's father was Joash, he began at seven and reigned for 21 years (2 Kgs 12:1). However, he started young and died at 28 years old.

⁴⁸ "Meanwhile, the southern kingdom is plagued by Athaliah –daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, and queen of Judah through intermarriage– who, upon the death of her son (also at the hands of Jehu) assumes control of the south until she is unseated in an uprising led by Jehoiada the priest in 2 Kgs 11. In this episode, the Davidic dynasty hangs on by a thread –the infant Joash is hidden in the temple, only to be unveiled seven years later to a surprised Athaliah– and becomes an ominous foreshadowing of the final verses of Kings." Keith Bodner,

the only woman to lead the nation. But she gained the position and reigned for seven years by force,⁴⁹ she also had encouraged Baal worship in Judah.

Another individual who was close to Ahab was Jehoshaphat, he made peace with the king of the northern kingdom who at that time was Ahab. This is because Jehoshaphat made united himself with an evil king, this unity almost cost him his life (1 Kgs 22:29-33). Therefore, the choice of friends is crucial for a king, it may either be a positive or negative influence towards him and his kingdom.

Even friendship with the son of Ahab had a negative influence over king Ahaziah. Ahaziah was not only Ahab's son-in law, but he was close friends with Joram the son of Ahab. They were so close that they went to war together against Hazael the king of Syria, and during that battle Joram was wounded (2 Kgs 8:28). After the battle had ended Ahaziah went to visit Joram and was killed (1 Kgs 9:27). This was the wrong day to visit the house of Ahab because on this day Jehu was appointed by God to execute judgement on the house of Ahab and Jezebel (2 Kgs 9:7-9; 10:10,11,30; 21:13). Although Ahaziah only reigned for one year, he did evil by associating himself with idolatrous friends and marrying into the idolatrous family of Ahab.

The Rise and Fall of Baal Worship

One of the evil practices that was introduced by both Ahab and Jezebel was Baal worship. They influenced some of the kings in the kingdom of Judah to worship Baal and build an altar for Baal in the house of God. But the Lord did not let this go unchallenged, God raised up

The Theology of the Book of Kings, Old Testament theology (Cambridge, United Kingdom; New York; NY: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 9.

⁴⁹ "Tidings of this general execution reached Athaliah, Jezebel's daughter, who still occupied a commanding position in the kingdom of Judah. When she saw that her son, the king of Judah, was dead, 'she arose and destroyed all the royal seed of the house of Judah.' In this massacre all the descendants of David who were eligible to on the throne were destroyed, save one, a babe named Joash, whom the wife of Jehoiada the high priest hid within the precincts of the temple. For six years the child remained hidden, while 'Athaliah reigned over the land' 2 Chronicles 22:10, 12." Ellen Gould White, *Prophets and Kings*, 215.

Elijah to challenge the prophets of Baal and Elijah had ordered the slaughter of four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal (1 Kgs 18:22,40).

Later on, Jehoiada the priest led the people to renew their covenant with the Lord and they tore down the temple of Baal, broke it's alters, images and killed Mattan the priest of Baal (2 Kgs 11:18). But in the course of time Manasseh erected altars of Baal in the Lord's temple (2 Kgs 21:3,4). Finally, just like Jehoiada, Josiah led the nation into renewing its covenant with the Lord and they proceeded to bring out the articles made for Baal from the house of God and burned them outside Jerusalem (2 Kgs 23:4,5). These findings highlight the constant rise and fall of Baal worship in Judah.

Following in Their Fathers' Footsteps. Another interesting motif about the adolescent kings is the following or forsaking of their fathers' ways. They either followed their biological fathers, David their ancestral father, or some other ancestral father. First, some like Abijam (1 Kgs 15:3), Jehoshaphat (1 Kgs 22:43), Amaziah (2 Kgs 14:3), Azariah (2 Kgs 15:3), and Jotham (2 Kgs 15:34) did good as their biological fathers did Good.

Others like Rehoboam (1 Kgs 14:21,22), Athaliah,⁵⁰ Amon (2 Kgs 21:20), and Jehoiachin (2 Kgs 24:9) did evil just like their biological fathers did evil. But two individuals stand out, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah because they did not follow their biological fathers. Jehoiachin did evil as his ancestral fathers had done (2 Kgs 23:32). The other is Zedekiah, he did evil as his grandfather Jehoiakim had done (2 Kgs 24:29).

However, three kings did good even though their fathers were evil, such as Asa (2 Kgs 15:9-11), Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18:2,3), and Josiah (2 Kgs 22:1,2). Others did evil even though their fathers were good. Such as Jehoram (2 Kgs 8:17,18), Ahaz (2 Kgs 16:2-4), Manasseh (2 Kgs 21:1,2), and Jehoahaz (2 Kgs 23:31,32) who did evil not as his biological father but as his evil ancestral fathers (2 Kgs 23:32,33). There were

⁵⁰ She did evil as her son had done evil. No text indicates that she followed in her son's footsteps, but she was evil just as her son was evil.

even those who neither followed their biological fathers nor their ancestral fathers from the kingdom of Judah. But rather the house of Ahab in the northern kingdom. These two were Jehoram (2 Kgs 8:17,18) and Ahaziah (2 Kgs 8:27).

Protected by Davidic Covenant. There were also several kings that were evil but were spared by God due to the Davidic covenant. Scripture says that during the evil days of Jehoram the Lord “would not destroy Israel” at that time in honor of David (2 Kgs 8:19). Even Solomon did evil, yet God didn’t take the whole kingdom from his descendants because of the promise he had made to his servant David (1 Kgs 11:34). David was promised by God that his sons would rule. So, when God removed ten tribes from Solomon, he left one to be governed by David’s descendants (1 Kgs 11:31,32) as he had promised.

Partial Reformation. Some of the kings like Amaziah (2 Kgs 14:4), Azariah (2 Kgs 15:4) and Jotham (2 Kgs 15:35) embarked on partial reformation. They removed certain evils and left others. Perhaps this was a reflection of their partial commitment to God. Interestingly enough, these kings ruled one after another. Azariah and Jotham were co-regents,⁵¹ Azariah may have raised his son Jotham to think that there was nothing wrong with sacrificing in the high places, this conduct was shared between three consecutive kings. Amaziah began a cycle of complacency that his son and grandson picked up. This finding suggests that no evil influence should be entertained by God’s people, no matter how small it seems to be because in the long run it will have negative effects on the nation.

⁵¹ “In the south, Azariah/Uzziah embarks on a fifty-two-year reign, placed on the Davidic throne at sixteen after his father’s demise. He does what is right, but the short space allocated to his career in 2 Kgs 15:1-7 is clouded with ambivalence. The high places are not removed, and either the king lacks the necessary spiritual discernment to realize they are a stumbling block, or he finds it politically expedient to allow them to remain. Furthermore, this failure is compounded with a divine affliction of leprosy that leads to the king’s confinement and co-regency with his son Jotham.” Bodner, *The Theology of the Book of Kings*, 174.

Invasions and Kingship

Another interesting pattern is the invasion or confrontation the kings from the kingdom of Judah had to deal with from invading nations.⁵² Due to successful invasions against Israel, many of the kings were appointed by foreign rulers. God was the one permitting these nations to invade them (Dan 1:1,2). These invaders also appointed vassal kings. These invaders were not interested in Israel's spiritual and political success as much as the Israelites were, they did not require the vassal kings to meditate on the book of the Law as previous kings were required to do (Deut 17:14-20). This was a recipe for disaster, for even when kings were encouraged to meditate on the book of the Law they failed. How much more when nobody holds them accountable to it? As a result, they all failed, the vassal kings were all evil.

Jehoahaz only reigned for three months (2 Kgs 23:31) because the kingdom was invaded by Pharaoh Neco of Egypt. Neco took him captive and placed Eliakim (also known as Jehoiakim) as king (2 Kgs 23:34-35). Jehoiakim was a young king because his father was removed early in his reign. During the reign of Jehoiakim, Nebuchadnezzar invaded Jerusalem in 605 B.C.,⁵³ the Babylonian chronicles mention that throughout 605 to 601 Nebuchadnezzar conquered many kingdoms throughout Syria-Palestine collecting tribute from them and turning them into vassals⁵⁴ (see Daniel 1).

Nebuchadnezzar and his servants later on returned to Jerusalem Jehoiakim's son called Jehoiachin was ruling (2 Kgs 24:10-17). Like

⁵² Hezekiah and Ahaz were threatened with invasion, but Hezekiah successfully resisted an invasion against the King of Assyria and defeated the Philistines through the help of God (18:7,8). On the other hand, Ahaz did not rely on the God of Israel for protection, instead, he relied on pagan allies. When he was threatened with foreign invasion he offered the silver and gold from the house of the Lord and the kings' treasures to Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria (16:5-9) so that Tiglath could protect him. Rehoboam who was one of the middle-aged kings that was invaded by Shishak king of Egypt when the treasures of the Lords temple was taken away (2 Kgs 14:25-28).

⁵³ Bill T. Arnold and Richard S. Hess, eds., *Ancient Israel's History: An Introduction to Issues and Sources* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 386, 387.

⁵⁴ Arnold and Hess, *Ancient Israel's History*, 380, 381.

Jehoahaz, Jehoiachin only reigned for three months in Jerusalem (2 Kgs 24:8) due to the invasion. Nebuchadnezzar left Jehoiachin's son called Zedekiah to rule. Zedekiah the twenty-one years old (2 Kgs 24:18) was evil and the Lord allowed the Babylonians to take Judah captive again in Zedekiah's eleventh year (2 Kgs 24:19,20; 25:1-6). So, several kings were reigning at a young age because they were enthroned by Nebuchadnezzar and Pharaoh Neco at a young age.

The Influence of Young Adults in the Kingdom of Judah

Many of the young kings that encouraged Baal worship and the desecration of the temple were themselves negatively influenced by their pagan wives, mothers and apostate fathers. The daughters of Ahab and some of the evil kings also raised some of the young kings to worship idols, so some of them went on to do the exact same with their children.

The ones that had a positive influence over Israel did good even though their parents were evil, only some brought in partial reformation. So, although a negative upbringing can lead one to do evil, it is not a sentence to become evil. God is still able to use an individual surrounded by bad influence to be an influence for reformation.

Conclusion

This section provides a conclusion based on the three research questions. This will be illustrated by the two pie graphs which reflect the age groups and the influence the kings had in Judah. The first graph illustrates findings in regards to the different age groups (figure 1). The second graph contains their condition and influence (figure 2).

Approximately 70% of the kings in the southern kingdom of Judah were young individuals. In regards to why many reigned as young individuals there are three findings. First, some were often early to the throne because their predecessors died early. Second, others were taken captive young so younger relatives were placed on the throne and sometimes by foreign kings. Third, there were others of whom their fathers didn't die young, nor were they replaced or appointed by foreign kings.

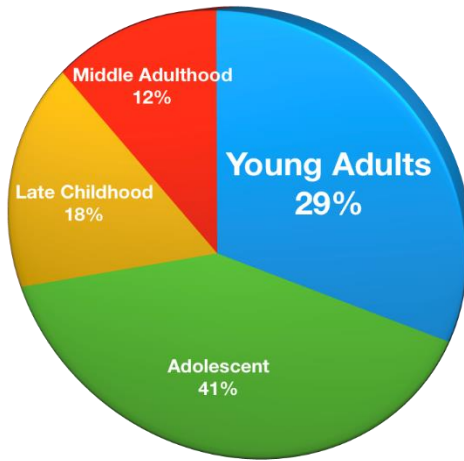


Figure 1. Judah's kings: different age groups.

The chart below reflects the findings from the second research question, it deals with their condition and influence on the nation (figure 2).

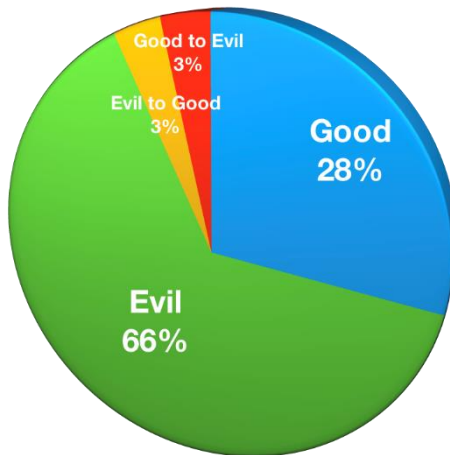


Figure 2. Judah's kings: condition and influence.

The chart reveals that although many were young, the majority had an evil influence over Israel (66%). There are five reasons for the overwhelming evil influence. First, the lack of mentorship. Second,

following bad example of predecessors by going against Gods word. Third, being unequally yoked. Fourth, alliance with evil kings. Finally, friendship with the ungodly.

Two of the youngest kings (Joash and Josiah) which represent 18% of the 20 kings are responsible for great works of reformation. The successful kings seem to have succeeded in the exact five things wherein the kings with evil influence failed. The reasons for success are good mentorship in which personal interest and consistency from both parties made a tremendous difference. Second, obedience to Gods word. Third, avoidance of being unequally yoked. The fourth was the avoidance of bad company. Finally, no alliance with Ahab, his sons or any other evil king. Only Jehoshaphat made an alliance with Ahab and survived, but he almost lost his life because of that association.

Implications

There are seven main implications for the Church. First, God is willing to work with young people and the church must give them opportunities to lead. Second, great caution has to be taken when young people are given leadership roles because they can easily be influenced. Third, younger people who are mentored through servant leadership have greater chances to be successful.

Fourth, the influence of parents, friends, and spouse can be the influence for failure or success for young people. A good response towards this finding would be to guide young people in their selection of friends and spouses. Fifth, there must be calculated efforts to lead youth people to develop a strong relationship with God. This is because the priests not only prepared them to lead the nation, but helped them establish a relationship with God. Therefore, true mentorship is a servant mentorship that is not only focused on imparting skills and knowledge; but to lead the mentee to have a stronger relationship with God.

Sixth, the restoration of Manasseh reveals Gods interest to continue to use leaders that have failed. So, the Church must discipline leaders in a redemptive manner. It's obvious that God's dealings with Manas-

seh and David are distinct, however; these erring leaders were not forsaken and forgotten to find their own ways in life.

If the Church seeks to follow Gods redemptive discipline model, this is the way to go about it. Godly discipline is not condemning the guilty, its saving and re-incorporating the erring in the Church and mission field. The Church must work for their salvation and even give them the opportunity to serve God again. However, these individuals must show fruits of repentance.

They may not work in the same office or at the same position. But they must be given some sort of work to do for the Lord. The fall of leaders doesn't mean their calling was not true nor that they can't be used by God anymore. The Church needs to seriously evaluate how this can be done because God doesn't discard broken vessels, instead he makes new vessels out of them.

Finally, all the vassal young kings that were set up by foreign dignitaries failed. These dignitaries had a different religion and did not have a genuine interest for Israel at heart. Instead, they placed kings that were willing to forsake the fear of the Lord. This suggests that the Church must reject outside influence of leaders that do not fear the Lord nor uphold the fundamental belief of the Church.