



JULY REFLECTION GUIDE

DAY 183-213

As we continue our reading of all the Kings that reign in the Northern and Southern Kingdom & the prophets speaking to these nations this month [this CHART of Israel/Judah's Kings and Prophets](#) might be helpful to keep on hand.

This month's reading about of the Divided Kingdom of Israel is filled with idolatry, selfishness, pride, betrayal, murder and jealousy. We have this record of the decline of the kings to show the fulfilled prophetic promise the Lord made to Israel when they asked for a king. In I Samuel 8:6-20, the Lord describes Israel's rejection of Him as their King. He paints a picture of how an earthly king will treat the people. He knew all of this was coming and told them so.

The stories of the Kings are here to teach us that when our hearts turn from God, they ultimately always turn to ourselves. We begin to trust ourselves more than we trust God. We try to fix things ourselves instead of humbly asking for forgiveness and then suffer the consequences of the problems our selfishness created.

- **Do you see this pattern of sin in your own life at times? What do you think God has to tell us in this downward spiral of these wicked kings?**

Here's what Tara-Leigh had to say about this month's reading:

"Because God had promised to continue the line of kings through the tribe of Judah, He always seems to be on their side especially, but He takes good care of the Northern Kingdom of Israel as well. The Northern Kingdom has a string of exclusively bad kings, but God still sends the prophet Elijah to help set things straight. Elijah has a pretty lonely life of speaking hard truths to the kings and the people, but he has a rich intimacy with God that sustains him nonetheless. Over the 350-ish years of the divided kingdom, God sends several prophets to warn both Northern Israel and Southern Judah about what's going to happen. Both of them will be overcome by other nations: Assyria will defeat Northern Israel, and Babylon will defeat Southern Judah and take them into captivity -- this is called the Babylonian captivity. But God also promises them that there's a timeline on all this. He's not casting them off; He's refining them. And He will bring them back into the land in 70 years. God's prophets keep reminding His people that His character has remained the same through all the generations, through all their sins, through all their wanderings, and that He's always aiming to bring His people back to Himself. Not only that, but He keeps giving us glimpses of the coming Messiah, the servant-king who will first come and die, and then return to establish an eternal kingdom of peace on earth!"

- **What characteristic of God stood out to you this month?**
- **Give examples of where you saw that characteristic on display?**

Days 183-187, 189, 196, 200, 209- II Kings 1-19

NORTHERN KINGDOM/ISRAEL - In this month's reading, we see their fall to Assyria.

Here's some key things we see happen in the North:

In II Kings 3 (Day 183), we see **King Jeroram** along with the King of Judah and Edom come together against Moab. Instead of inquiring of the Lord first, they waited until they were in a desperate situation to cry out to the Lord.

- **Why do we often wait until we are desperate to seek God's wisdom instead of seeing him first?**

In II Kings 9 (Day 185) we see **Jehu** begin to reign after killing both Israel and Judah's king. He is out to destroy all of the worshippers of Baal in accordance with Elijah's prophecy, but he leaves up the golden calves in Dan and Bethel.

Tara-Leigh reminds us that...*"God promises to bless Jehu, even though he's not as thorough with the idol-demolishing as he was with the people-demolishing. And his heart eventually goes astray too. The hardest enemies to defeat are the idols in our own hearts."*

- **Do you find this statement, "The hardest enemies to defeat are the idols in our own hearts" to be true in your life?**

In II Kings 14 (Day 187) **King Jeroboam II** restores the kingdom to its former glory under King Solomon, but his death marked the end of the 4th generation promise that was made by God and now we begin to see the Northern Kingdom of Israel quickly fall to Assyria. We see the culmination of that in **II Kings 17:22-23**

"The Israelites persisted in all the sins of Jeroboam and did not turn away from them until the Lord removed them from his presence, as he had warned through all his servants the prophets. So the people of Israel were taken from their homeland into exile in Assyria, and they are still there."

- **What do we learn about God's character by studying the fall of Israel to Assyria?**
 - God is patient & loving, but He does not allow persistent sin to go unpunished.
-

SOUTHERN KINGDOM/JUDAH - In this month's reading, we begin to see the Southern Kingdom's fall to Babylon that will continue until the end of II Kings.

Here are the key things we see happen in the South:

In II Kings 1 (Day 183), we see **King Ahaziah** who reigned for 2 years. We see him seek revenge on Elijah and try to get him arrested. Ahaziah had forgotten God's power and thought his authority would overrule God's judgment. Elijah calls down fire from heaven to consume the men.

- **Have you ever thought you knew better than God? What did you learn from that experience?**

In II Kings 2 (Day 183), we see **prophets Elijah and Elisha** in their final time together. Elijah asks Elisha, "What shall I do for you?" and Elisha asks for a double portion of his spirit upon him. Much like the biological firstborn would receive a double portion of inheritance, he is asking to be Elijah's spiritual firstborn. Elijah knows that he doesn't have the authority to give Elisha that power, only God does. But we see that God's spirit is evident in Elisha as he puts on Elijah's cloak and parts the Jordan. Elisha didn't try to imitate Elijah, these prophets had different giftings & callings, but shared the same faith. They both had an important part to play in God's kingdom.

➔ **Do you ever find yourself comparing your gifting/calling to others? How has he called you according to your strengths to further His kingdom?**

In II Kings 14/II Chr. 25 (Day 187), here's what Tara-Leigh says about **King Amaziah**, *"Amaziah was a pretty good king, especially at first. But 25:2 tells us that even his good actions weren't done with a fully yielded heart. And this shows up in how he handles a few of God's commands -- initially, that he left the high places of idol worship intact."*

➤ **What does it look like to have a "fully yielded heart"?**

➤ **Why do you think it mattered whether the high places were left intact or not?**

Then we see Amaziah be victorious in battle, but this God-given victory leads him down a path of pride, because he forgets who had granted him success. He gets prideful after this victory and plans to go to war with Israel, which is a much larger kingdom at this point. He is taken captive by them and his son Azariah becomes king.

➤ **Has pride ever led you to do something foolish? Did you suffer any consequences?**

In II Kings 16-17 (II Chr. 28), we learn of **King Ahaz**.

Here's what Tara-Leigh says about him:

"Ahaz goes to the King of Assyria. He tries to bribe him into helping Judah, using money he stole from the Temple. Ahaz even rearranges the Temple according to the specifications of the King of Assyria instead of God's specifications. Talk about walking in the fear of man, not of God! It seems like the King of Assyria pretends like he's going to help, but then doesn't fulfill his end of the deal. He sacrifices to more foreign gods. Then he destroys the holy vessels of the Temple and locks the Temple. He commissioned the priest Uriah to make a replica of a foreign altar for him and the priest did it! King Ahaz goes all over town setting up altars of his own...one on every corner. And 28:23 says, 'they were the ruin of him and of all Israel.'" Our sins often have consequences not only for us, but for those around us.

In II Kings 18 (Day 200), we see **Hezekiah**, the son of Ahaz. While Ahaz was terrible, Hezekiah, turned out to be one of Judah's two best kings. He's one of the only two kings scripture says lived up to the level of David. He restores the temple and sacrificial system as well as the Passover festival. He even invites Israel to celebrate Passover in Judah, this is the first time since Solomon that both kingdoms have celebrated together. And Hezekiah was finally the one to tear down the high places.

Tara-Leigh says: *"Hezekiah knew God's character, and God knew the people's hearts. And remember how God despised all those ritually perfect sacrifices they'd made with unrepentant hearts? He's always after the heart. So we see Him focused on the heart here too. These imperfect practices done with hearts of repentance are received with heavy doses of God's mercy. He is eager to forgive."*

Despite Hezekiah's dedication to the Lord, ultimately his pride led him to boast in the abundance that God had blessed him with. This pride ultimately gave Babylon a foothold into overtaking Judah.

- **What do we learn about God from the lives of King Ahaz and King Hezekiah?**
- **What do we learn about our human hearts from studying their lives?**

The author of II Kings directly connects the Israelites' apostasy—led by their wicked kings—to their national destruction. Despite repeated warnings from God's prophets to turn from their ways and return to God, the people continued to live in sin. To their regret, they did not believe that God would allow their nation to be ruined by foreign invaders. Yet God did not forget His promise to David, either. God saved a remnant from among the people and kept the royal line intact so that one day His people could return to their land to await the promised Redeemer.

- **He is a God of justice, yet still faithful to His people. Do you see the unrelenting love and faithfulness of the Lord in the lives of His people? Name some examples from II Kings & II Chronicles**

Days 186, 187, 189, 194, 196, 200 - II Chronicles 24-31

Much of II Chronicles 24-31 is just a retelling of what we saw in II Kings. We see this crazy cycle of rejection of God and then return to Him. We see the nation deteriorating before our eyes. An interesting thing that emerges is that the structural state of the physical Temple corresponds to the spiritual state of the people of the time.

There is an important theme we can't miss in II Kings & II Chronicles... actions have consequences. "Repent! Because sin will incur judgment," God warned in effect through the prophets, but Israel and Judah had to learn the hard way that God means what He says.

- **Consider your own heart. Is this a hard lesson for you to learn that actions have consequences?**
- **Why is this such a struggle for the Israelites and for us?**

During our reading this month, we were introduced to the Northern Kingdom Prophets Elijah, Elisha, Jonah, Amos & Hosea, as well as the Southern Kingdom prophets Micah & Isaiah.

Here's what Tara-Leigh tells us about the prophets:

"Prophets are powerful people in ancient Israel -- we've repeatedly seen how they're the ones who anoint kings, especially when a line of heirs is interrupted. There's no voting, because God is the one who runs their nation-state, and He speaks through the prophets."

Day 188 - Jonah

Jonah is unique in that rather than focusing on the words of the prophet, it focuses on the prophet's actions. Jonah was one of the few prophets from the northern kingdom of Israel and he prophesied during the reign of Jeroboam II, who was evil in the sight of the Lord.

Here's what Tara-Leigh says about Jonah:

"He seems to have a real "us" versus "them" mentality. We're all naturally inclined toward people who are like us -- who look like us and act like us and dress like us. That's very normal. But that's exactly the problem. Since God Himself isn't confined to a body, and we're all made in His image, then there's something in every single person that has a point of connection for Him. So He spreads His love out to people from among every nation. And Jonah's arrogant attitude -- whether it's racist or self-righteous or both -- is not going to cut it for a person following YHWH. God doesn't let him off the hook."

➤ **What do we learn from Jonah about how to treat others who are not "like" us?**

We see Jonah run from God, then run to God, then run with God and finally run against God. He doesn't want to share God with his enemies so he runs away, then he repents and returns to God, reluctantly goes to tell his enemies of God, and when they repent, he is mad at God for showing them mercy. When the call of God came to him, Jonah could not see beyond his own selfish desire for God to punish the Assyrians.

➤ **Do you ever find yourself running from God—your desires pulling you one way, God's desires pulling you another?**

Jonah 2:9 shows us when the prophet comes to the realization that he can't outrun the Lord. "But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you what I have vowed I will pay. Salvation belongs to the Lord!"

The book of Jonah finds us asking ourselves these questions:

- **Why is it so hard for us to have compassion for those we consider enemies?**
- **Are we truly ok with a God who loves our enemies?**

Days 190, 191, 194 - Isaiah 1-13

Here's a good overview of how to read Isaiah from Tara-Leigh:

"In these 66 chapters, there are 3 general sections of prophecy. And first we should establish that prophecy as we understand it here is more of "truth speaking" generality — that means, technically, you can prophesy about something that has already happened. Isaiah is writing to the southern kingdom of Judah, and in the first section, which is chapters 1-39, he's talking a lot about what's BEEN happening in the northern kingdom of Israel and how God is dealing with their sins. The middle section, Chapters 40-55, includes prophecies of the coming Messiah, which would happen about 700 years later. In the last section, Chapters 56-66, Isaiah prophesies about the final judgment and restoration, when God establishes the new heavens and the new earth. Those are things we still await."

Isaiah was a prophet who lived in Jerusalem and spoke to the people in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. His message was one of justice and judgment mixed with hope and deliverance. Isaiah promises a future king from David's line that will be God's blessing to the Nations. He prophesied under the reign of four Judean kings—Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah—and he likely met his death under a fifth, the evil King Manasseh.

During this time the nation of Judah offered meaningless sacrifices in God's temple at Jerusalem and committed injustices throughout the nation. The people of Judah turned their backs on God which created the need for Isaiah's pronouncements of judgment—declarations made in the hope that God's chosen people would return to Him.

The first 39 chapters Isaiah addresses how God is dealing with what is happening in the Northern Kingdom of Israel and he is warning the Southern Kingdom of Judah to pay attention so it doesn't happen to them. A theme that we see

emerge is that failure of a human king to respond to God's invitation results in a divine king taking initiative to respond.

- **Have you ever noticed that God takes initiative when humans don't respond to him? Share some examples.**

In **Isaiah 5**, Tara-Leigh tells us that *"God is compared to a vine keeper and the Israelites are compared to wild grapes. But in the Hebrew, the term actually is more like, "stinking things." Not so flattering and not exactly what God wants to grow in His garden. So God removes the protective hedge around the vineyard and the wild grapes are trampled."*

- **What do we learn about God's character in Isaiah 5?**

Days 197-199 - Isaiah 13-28

This section of Isaiah is 15 chapters of prophetic speeches to pagan nations. Starting with Babylon who will eventually conquer the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

Here's what Tara-Leigh says

"God's sovereignty shows up right off the bat in this scenario. In 13:3, He refers to Babylon as "my consecrated ones". As far as they're concerned, they have not consecrated themselves to YHWH. No sir. But the point of this terminology is to show that GOD has consecrated them -- or set them apart -- for His own purposes. He has a plan to use them and their sinful ways to work out His long-term plans to bless His people -- initially through discipline, but then through restoration. Babylon will think they're doing their own thing, but they'll be fulfilling God's plan. And the fact that it's written out more than 100 years in advance serves as evidence that the idea didn't originate with them. Then, even though God is using their sin to accomplish His will -- as He does with all sin -- He still punishes it -- as He does with all sin. So He's telling them how they will eventually be overtaken in return for what they did to His people."

- **Do you have a hard time wrapping your mind around God's sovereignty? And that He can use their sin to accomplish His will?**

Later in this section we see Isaiah address Egypt, here's what Tara-Leigh says:

"In 19:18. It says, "In that day there will be five cities in the land of Egypt that speak the language of Canaan and swear allegiance to the Lord of hosts." Verse 21 says, "And the Lord will make himself known to the Egyptians." But that's not all! Verse 23 says, "In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and Assyria will come into Egypt, and Egypt into Assyria, and the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians." Assyria and Egypt, two of the most powerful enemies of God's people, will worship Him. In verse 25, He calls them, "Egypt, My people" and "Assyria, the work of My hands", right alongside "Israel, My inheritance." This is stunning and really reveals God's heart of love for a multinational family. He continues to show us the beautiful diversity of His family. And as you're picturing this, try to remember that none of these people are white. Don't worry -- we'll join this family eventually white people, but we're still a few hundred years off."

- **What do these verses reveal to us about God's vision for His family?**

Days 203-206 - Isaiah 29-39

This section is referred to as the “6 woes or laments”

1. Isaiah uses Israel’s unfolding tragedy with Assyria as a warning sign for the people of Judah. He says both kingdoms have spent a little too much time with wine and not enough time with the Word.
2. The second woe is to a city named Ariel, which is most likely a nickname for Jerusalem. God sends a foreign arm to set up a siege against the city, but then He shows up with His army of heaven and the enemies flee.
3. The third woe is indirectly addressed to Judah. They’re the ones who have been trying to make an alliance with Egypt, their former captors, so that they can have someone to get their back against big, bad Assyria. This may seem like a wise diplomatic move, but the problem is that they didn’t consult God about any of this, and they didn’t trust Him to protect them.
4. This is a reinforced woe to Judah. “Woe to those who go down to Egypt.” God tells them that they will seek help from Egypt, but Egypt will be rendered helpless themselves.
5. In Isaiah’s day, wealth has made them complacent. He specifically addresses the complacent women and calls them to repent. He warns them that they’re living in a false sense of security, when in fact, things are about to get really bad within the year.
6. The 6th and final woe is pronounced to the destroyer and the traitor -- which ultimately points to those who have wounded God’s people in Judah. They will serve God’s purposes in bringing Judah to repentance, but then they themselves will be judged.

Isaiah declares God’s trustworthiness to the people of Judah, who will be inclined to doubt it as all of this is unfolding. He wants to remind them who God is.

In the midst of everything they know being turned on its head, everything they’ve found their identity and hope in being shaken, Isaiah reminds them in 33:6, *“He will be the stability of Your times”. Nothing else is worth building your life on. He says, “the fear of the Lord is Zion’s treasure.”*

➤ **What do we learn from these “woes” about trusting in God instead of our own schemes and plans?**

Days 207-208, 210-213 - Isaiah 40-66

In this final section of the book, we begin to see Isaiah write prophecies of a hope beyond their Babylonian Exile. The book of Isaiah provides us with the most comprehensive prophetic picture of Jesus Christ in the entire Old Testament. In fact, it is the Old Testament book that is the most quoted in the New Testament.

Read Isaiah 53

➤ **Discuss all the references to Jesus. What stands out to you about these references?**

We see clearly through the book of Isaiah a strong presence of judgment and of hope for salvation. The presence of judgment indicates that it is necessary for salvation to occur. Before we can have salvation, we must have a need for it!

➤ **Why is judgment necessary for salvation?**

Isaiah’s overall message is also a call for believers to care for people and treat them fairly because of God’s love for them. He is critical of the way the people have oppressed and mistreated others.

- **Do you see anything in your own life or our world currently that might fall under Isaiah's critique of injustice?**

Day 192-193 - Amos

We see the theme of injustice continue in Amos. The prophet Amos was "a grower of sycamore figs" as well as a shepherd. Amos's connection to the simple life of the people made its way into the center of his prophecies, as he showed a heart for the oppressed and the voiceless in the world.

Amos prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, king of Judah, and Jeroboam II, king of Israel. Though he came from the southern kingdom of Judah, Amos delivered his prophecy against the northern kingdom of Israel and the surrounding nations. They used Amos's status as a foreigner as an excuse to ignore his message of judgment for their sins.

While most of the prophets spoke fairly equally of redemption and restoration in their prophecies against Israel and Judah, Amos devoted only the final five verses of his prophecy to restoration. Prior to that, God's word through Amos was directed against the privileged people of Israel, who took advantage of others, and who only looked out for their own concerns. Amos holds God's people accountable for their ill-treatment of others. It repeatedly points out the failure of the people to fully embrace God's idea of justice.

Amos warns them in 5:15, *"Hate evil, and love good, and establish justice in the gate; it may be that the Lord, the God of hosts, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph."*

- **What do we learn about the heart of God from the book of Amos?**

Day 195 - Micah

Micah prophesied during the tragic fall of Israel to the Assyrian Empire & during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah in Judah. During this period, while Israel was imploding from the effects of evil and unfaithful leadership, Judah seemed to be on a roller-coaster ride—ascending to the heights of its destiny in one generation, only to fall into the doldrums in another. In Judah at this time, good kings and evil kings alternated with each other, a pattern seen in the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah.

Here's what Tara-Leigh says about Micah -

"He's sometimes viewed as Isaiah Junior, because God appointed them both to speak the same message to the same people in the same approximate time frame. One primary difference, apart from the length, is that Isaiah's message was directed more toward the ruling authorities, while Micah speaks mainly to the general population."

The people during the time of Micah would hear his words and think..."That's not going to happen to us. We're too powerful." 3:11 says, *"They lean on the Lord and say, 'Is not the Lord in the midst of us? No disaster shall come upon us.'"* They're arrogant and in denial, Jerusalem will become a heap of ruins. Not only is Jerusalem destroyed just like he said, but the people are driven into exile in Babylon. Micah prophesied it in the 8th century BC, and it happened in the 6th century BC.

- **Have you ever thought that no disaster would come on you if the Lord was in your midst? How is this a flawed perspective based on what we have read in the scripture so far?**

Tara-Leigh says this about Micah's prophecies of Jesus:

"Micah offers several warnings, but he always follows with a reminder that destruction and exile aren't the end for them; a remnant that will be preserved and God will begin to establish a kingdom of peace on the earth. God even says He'll gather the ones He has wounded and driven out of the land, and He'll carry them back to the land. So even though they do go into Babylonian captivity, they can expect to be back in this land again someday. And Micah 5:2 says that when they return, the King who will rule this new kingdom of peace will be born in Bethlehem. It's important for them to know that their Savior won't be some kind of outside help; He will come from among them. They've been looking to other nations and the gods of other nations to rescue them for too long. But their Savior, the One True God, will dwell in their midst, even in this land of oppression. But again, they're thinking literal king, not eternal king. They read this prophecy and imagine someone who can overpower Assyria and Babylon -- not someone who will overpower death and the grave.

- **If you had lived in Israel and heard these promises of a king, would you have believed that Jesus was the fulfillment of that promise?**

The key theme for this book comes in 6:8 - *"He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"* We should be on the lookout for "the lowly", those oppressed and on the fringes. Let's allow the words of Micah to break us out of our apathy about extending justice and kindness to others and press on toward a world that better resembles Jesus.

- **Who are the lowly in your circle of influence? What injustice do you see happening around you?**
- **How do we practically live out Micah 6:8 - "to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God"?**

Day 201-202 - Hosea

Hosea prophesied during the reign of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah in the southern kingdom of Judah, while Jeroboam II ruled the northern kingdom of Israel. More than any other prophet, Hosea linked his message closely with his personal life. By marrying Gomer who he knew would eventually betray his trust and by giving his children names that sent messages of judgment on Israel, Hosea's prophetic word flowed out of the life of his family.

Hosea starts off with an adulterous wife with a faithful husband and ends with an adulterous nation with a faithful God.

2:19-20 says, *"And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the Lord."*

The book of Hosea makes its theme clear: though God will bring judgment on sin, He will always bring His people back to Himself. God's love for Israel, a nation of people more interested in themselves than in God's direction for their lives, shines through.

Read Hosea 11.

- How do these verses make you feel?
- What characteristics of God do you see in these verses?

Not only does the book of Hosea provide an example of God's redemptive love to a people who have left God behind, but it also shows us what forgiveness and restoration look like in a close relationship. The book of Hosea shows us that no one is beyond the offer of our forgiveness because no one sits outside God's offer of forgiveness.

- Is there someone in your life that needs your forgiveness? How can you make steps towards forgiveness today?

Day 200, 206, 209 - Psalm 48, 76, 46, 80, 135

Psalm 48:13-14 says *"Tell the next generation that this is God, our God forever and ever. He will guide us forever"*

Psalm 76:7 says, *"But you, you are to be feared! Who can stand before you once your anger is roused?"*

Psalm 46:5 says this of Jerusalem *"God is within her; she shall not be moved. God will help her when morning dawns."*

Psalm 46:10 says, *"Be still and know that I am God."*

Psalm 80: 8-9. says, *"You brought a vine out of Egypt...You drove out the nations and planted it. You cleared the ground for it."*

Psalm 135:5-6 says, *"For I know that the Lord is great, and that our Lord is above all gods. Whatever the Lord pleases, he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps."*

- What stood out to you in these Psalms?
- What do we learn about God in these Psalms?

Additional Resources available at www.graceclarksville.com/womenintheword

Books:

- *30 Days to Understanding Your Bible* by Max Anders

Videos:

- [I & II Chronicles Overview Video](#)
- [I & II Kings Overview Video](#)
- [Jonah Overview Video](#)
- [Isaiah 1-39 Overview Video](#)
- [Isaiah 40-66 Overview Video](#)
- [Amos Overview Video](#)
- [Micah Overview Video](#)
- [Hosea Overview Video](#)

Websites for further studies:

- <https://bibleproject.com/> - Great overview videos by theme, book of the Bible and topic

- <https://www.blueletterbible.org/> - Choose a version of the Bible and click TOOLS next to the verse