

Israel Dispersed

2 Kings 17

2 Kings 18:9-12

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When the Lord's people broke from each other to form two kingdoms – Israel in the north, Judah in the south – Jeroboam had become the king of Israel. He turned the people of Israel away from the Lord. He set up two golden calves for them to worship, placing them at either end of his kingdom – one in the north at Dan, the other in the south at Bethel. The people worshiped worthless idols, so they became worthless themselves. They practiced divination and sorcery. They even sacrificed their own children.

Again and again the Lord sent prophets to warn the people of Israel, "Turn from all your evil ways. Obey the commands of the Lord. Follow the Law of the Lord given to your ancestors." But the Israelites wouldn't listen. Two hundred years later it was much the same. The golden calves were still in place, and idol worship was the norm.

Shalmaneser king of Assyria invaded and laid siege to Samaria, the capital of Israel. After three years Samaria surrendered. The people of Israel were exiled and were dispersed throughout the Assyrian empire.

Others were moved onto the land. The Lord sent lions among them, and some of them were killed. In Assyria, Shalmaneser was informed about the lions and was told, "These people don't know the right way to worship the god of that land. That's why this has happened."

One of the priests who had been exiled from Samaria was sent back. He taught the new residents how to worship the Lord. They worshiped the Lord, but they also continued to worship idols, the gods of the lands they had come from.