

would win as many victories over the Syrians. This prophecy came true, and it was only after he had won several cities that Joash died, and his son Jeroboam II began to reign over the ten tribes (825 BC).

This Jeroboam was the thirteenth king of Israel, and during his long reign of forty-one years, he won back all the land east of the Jordan which was in the hands of the Syrians, and even went to attack the great city Damascus.



Joash of Israel shooting the arrow of deliverance.
Painting by William Dyce.



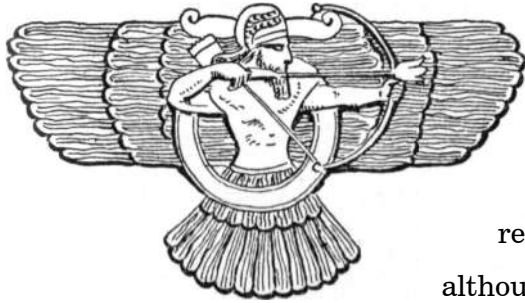
CIII. The Assyrians.

SYRIA was at this time threatened with a power which had arisen on her eastern border, and thus because her attention was suddenly directed elsewhere, Joash and Jeroboam were able to gain the upper hand in Israel's long struggle with her neighbor (2 Ki 13:5).

This power was the Assyrian Empire. Assyria was founded by As'shur, one of the sons of Shem, from whom the country received its name. It lay north of Sumer—for Asshur had left Sumer, which was his allotment, for the north, when Nimrod seized power there (Gen 10:11)—and was bounded by the Euphrates River on the west, and the mountains of Ararat on the north, and Zag'ros on the east. Asshur built Nin'e-veh, the principal city of Assyria, on the bank of the Tigris River, and he is listed in the Assyrian king lists as Assyria's first king.

Asshur, moreover, followed the ways of Nimrod in his capital, rather than the way of Noah, or Shem. His city, like Nimrod's city, was built of mud brick brought from the

south, instead of the more plentiful stone which was found in Assyria in the foothills of Ararat. Asshur, as king, was also deified, as Nimrod taught, and worshipped as the principal god of the Assyrians, along with the Assyrian counterparts of the Chaldean gods.



Here is a picture of Asshur as he is often found in the Assyrian inscriptions. The horns represent authority, the wings represent deity, although one famous As-syr-i-ol'o-gist believes they

were originally the wings of the dove, which was the emblem of the Semarim. The circle represents immortality or eternity, for Asshur's lifespan was much longer than that of his descendants.

Thus it was that the chronicle of the kingdom—battles, foreign and diplomatic affairs, and the like—was daily read aloud to Asshur's image in Nineveh, as long as the kingdom endured. Furthermore, the kings of the Assyrians, who were Asshur's descendants in direct line, were believed to rule in his stead only by the god's explicit sanction!

The Assyrian kings occupied their time with the royal pursuits learned from Nimrod, which were building and beautifying their cities, palaces, and temples; waging war; and hunting. They were so mad for these pastimes that Assyrian art, besides depicting its gods and mythology, is almost nothing more than a record of the conquests of its kings, over man and beast alike.

After the Assyrians joined with the sons of Shem to drive the Cushites from their land, the Assyrians established their own monarchy separate from the Sumerians. The two kingdoms dwelt side by side in peace for a time: the kings of Assyria and Babylon made treaties with each other, and the royal house of one kingdom furnished daughters to be the wives of the princes of the other.

Once an Assyrian princess had become the queen of the Babylonian monarch, and their son ascended the Babylonian throne in his turn. But when a usurper killed him to gain the throne, the Assyrian king marched his army to Babylon, defeated and slew the usurper, and restored the Babylonian kingdom to another grandson.

In 1301 BC, or at the time of the rule of the Judges in Israel, one of the Assyrian kings changed the previous policy of friendship toward Babylon, and instead marched against

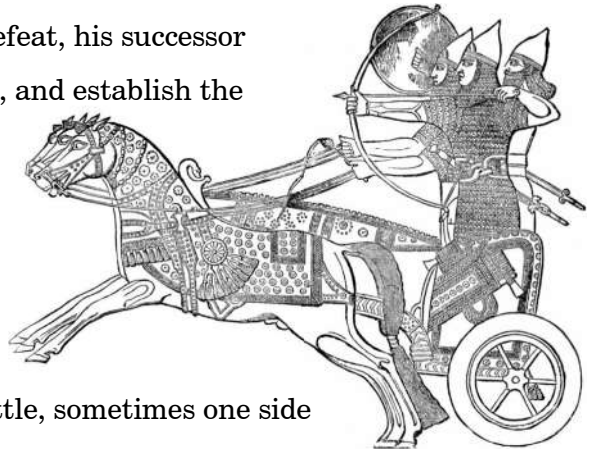
the city and conquered it. He ruled from Babylon himself for twenty-one years, and established a branch of his family as the new Babylonian royal family.

Thus Babylon was ruled by an Assyrian dynasty for more than five hundred years; however, during that time there were frequent skirmishes between the Assyrian and Babylonian kingdoms. After a revolt by the Babylonians in 1210 BC, in which the Assyrian king was slain in a great defeat, his successor on the throne undertook to organize the country, and establish the troops of Assyria with authority and regularity.

When next the Babylonians came against Assyria, they were completely defeated by the now superior Assyrian troops. Thus the rivalry between the two kingdoms increased; and

when the two armies had occasion to meet in battle, sometimes one side would be victorious, and sometimes the other, so evenly were they matched.

No more intermarriages of the royal houses occurred, or treaties between the kingdoms; and wars between them were nearly constant, which occupied both kingdoms for some time.



CIV. A Cruel Conqueror.

IN 883 BC, which was the year after Jehu had slain the kings of Israel and Judah, and Athaliah usurped the throne of David, a new king ascended the throne in Assyria. His name was Asshur-naz'ir-pal, and with his reign the most flourishing period of the Assyrian state begins.

This king led military expeditions against his neighbors on all sides in the course of his reign. If a city or province submitted at once without resistance, Asshurnazirpal merely imposed a heavy tribute. If any defense was mounted against him, however, the city, once taken, was first plundered, then its king and chiefs were taken prisoner and were treated barbarously. The prisoners were tortured, then maimed for life, or executed in ways unsurpassed for cruelty. During this epoch in Assyria we have the first record of crucifixion, and burning at the stake, as a means of execution.