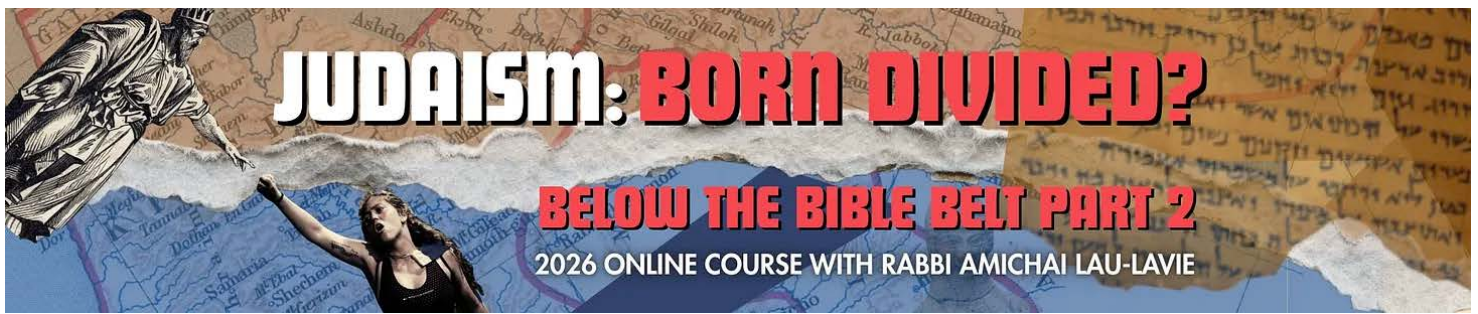




The Last Passover: A Political Parable about the Limits of Liberation

March 22, 2026

SOURCE 1

The judicial reform that is increasingly polarizing the people of Israel into two separate camps has given rise to civic initiatives calling for a separation between "Israel" and "Judah."

In contrast to the latter, which would be conservative-religious and include Jerusalem as well as the West Bank, they propose the establishment of a liberal Israel that would encompass Tel Aviv and the coastal plain cities.

These calls are not yet mainstream, perhaps even fantastical, but they are consistent and their reference is clear: the Biblical separation between the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, which lasted for centuries and was interrupted only by the exile of Israel.

It seems that those indulging this idea, which appears risky to some and compellingly realistic to others, have not really examined the original event—those two kingdoms that once existed in the land of Israel. In their glory days, they extended as far as the Euphrates River—today's Iraq—and in less fortunate times were awash with blood, loss and exile.



Are they indeed relevant to us? The answer may be both frightening and hopeful. The root of today's crisis, seemingly, does not stem only from the implementation or lack of official implementation of the 'judicial reform,' but rather is the fruit of longstanding anger, humiliation, fear, hatred and vengeance between the two tribes in Israel.

SOURCE 2

One of Jeroboam's first acts of sovereignty, following closely upon his open revolt against Rehoboam and his election as king over the northern tribes, was the break with Jerusalem and the re-establishment of Sichem as the capital of the new kingdom. This stroke shattered the centralized administration of public affairs, carefully built up by Solomon. But Jeroboam knew that further steps were required to cement the recently-won independence. In order to estrange the

Ephraimites from Jerusalem, which later was bound up with the dynasty of David, a break with Solomon's temple was imperative. The custom of sacrificing in Jerusalem had to be abolished. Above all there had to be found a means of cutting off the northern tribes from the contact with Judah and its capital, which manifested itself again and again in the time-honoured institution of ascent to the Temple.



Shemaryahu Talmon, *The Cult and Calendar Reform of Jeroboam I*

SOURCE 3

וַיַּעַשׂ יִרְבְּעָם אֶת הַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁמִינִי בַחֲמֵשֶׁה-עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ כִּתְּחָא אֲשֶׁר בִּיהוּדָה וַיַּעַל עַל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ בְּנֵי עֲשָׂה בְּבֵית-אֵל לְזָבַח לַעֲגָלִים אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂה וְהַעֲמִיד בְּבֵית אֵל אֶת-כֹּהֲנֵי הַבָּמֹת אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וַיַּעַל עַל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂה בְּבֵית-אֵל בַּחֲמֵשֶׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם בַּחֲדָשׁ הַשְּׁמִינִי בַחֲדָשׁ אֲשֶׁר-בָּדָא מֶלֶכָּא וַיַּעַשׂ חֹג לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיַּעַל עַל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לְהַקְטִיר:

Jeroboam established a festival on the fifteenth day of the eighth month; in imitation of the festival in Judah, he established one at Bethel, and he ascended the altar there. On the fifteenth day of the eighth month—the month in which he had contrived of his own mind to establish a festival for the Israelites—Jeroboam ascended the altar that he had made in Bethel.

[1 Kings, 12:32-33](#)

SOURCE 4

Mother took me to the lepers' cave for the first time on the fifteenth day of the eighth month. I remember the date because of the Festival of Rain, which turned me into the most famous boy in Zeredah. The story spread quickly throughout the entire land of Ephraim. Everyone wanted to hear about the little boy who had managed to fool the king's soldiers and save his townspeople.

Yochi Brandes, *The Secret Book of Kings* (Translation: Dan Libenson)



SOURCE 5

Jeroboam's revolt against the Kingdom of Judah was political, social, and even religious, and unlike other biblical rebellions (such as that of David against Saul) it was nonviolent.

...Jeroboam was a charismatic leader who refused to submit to the cruel tax system imposed by Solomon and his son and heir Rehoboam. His revolt erupted only after Rehoboam had threatened the already overtaxed people with further impositions: "My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke; my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions" (I Kings 12:14).

The Bible describes the festival that Jeroboam instituted—or to use its term "devised of his own heart" (I Kings 12:32)—as a negative initiative.

If we examine this new festival carefully, we find that it need not necessarily be regarded as an act of idol worship. The festival was observed exactly one month after Sukkot, which falls on the fifteenth day of the seventh month: "And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month" (I Kings 12:32). The biblical narrator emphasizes that this was "like the feast that is in Judah" (ibid.). Accordingly, Jeroboam did not create a new festival, but rather instituted a type of leap year, as it were, thereby placing Sukkot in the following month as a type of Second Sukkot, just as the fourteenth of Iyar was determined in the Torah as a Second Passover for those who had been unable to observe the original festival due to ritual impurity (Num. 9:6–12). Accordingly, while this indeed constitutes a new occasion not mentioned in the Torah, it is grounded in the biblical calendar and its method of innovation is not without a basis.

Some commentators have suggested that Jeroboam reinstated an ancient northern harvest festival celebrated a month later than the occasion marked further south in Judah. The colder climate in the north meant that crops ripened later, thus justifying the setting of a later date for the harvest festival. Be this as it may, Jeroboam's act was crucially important: those who control the calendar control the guiding mechanism of

the life of the people. By creating an autonomous calendar for the north, Jeroboam ensured that from this point forward the calendar of Israel—and thus the daily life of her people—would be separate from those of Judah.

Jeroboam's protest was manifested not only in the dimension of time, but also in the place he chose for his festival. By creating an alternative center for worship, he achieved his political goals: to avoid the need for residents of the north to conduct the pilgrimage to Jerusalem and to undermine the centralized religious (and hence economic) force of the city.

Jeroboam's act symbolizes a return to the ancient revelation and the primordial foundation of the people, while circumventing the Judean religious authority in Jerusalem.

In her historical novel *Kings III*, Yochi Brandes depicts Jeroboam as an enlightened leader with an unusual monotheistic and pluralistic vision. She portrays him making a



coronation speech in which he calls to the assembled masses:

My brothers, my beloved, my people . . . I hereby announce the resumption of the ancient festivals of all the tribes of Israel. God loves all our festivals: The rain festival of Ephraim, the fire festival of Menashe, the dairy festival of Benjamin . . . And God loves the harvest festival of Judah, too, just as He loves the festivals of the other tribes—no less, but also no more. We will all continue to celebrate the Festival of Liberty, the Wheat Harvest Festival, and Sukkot—the three central festivals of the people of Israel. But each tribe will celebrate the other festivals separately, as our ancestors did before us. The separate festivals do not harm the unity of the people . . . I direct my call from the top of Mt. Gerizim to the mountains of Judah: . . . My brothers, my beloved, people of Judah—do not split yourselves off from us. Return to us and let us all be one people and one kingdom, as God promised to our ancestors.

Brandes's interpretation has been the subject of sharp criticism, and it is certainly true that it is

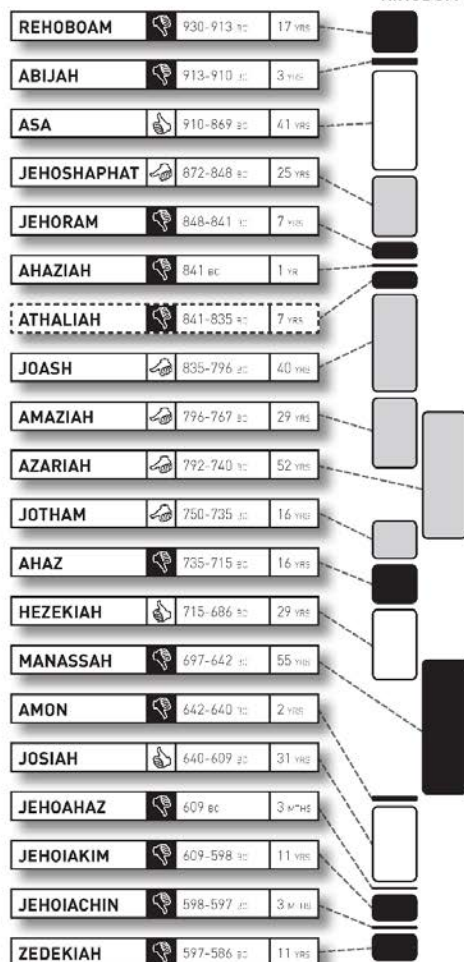
incompatible with the usual reading of the biblical text. But to those willing to take a fresh look at the story, this subversive reading and its model of ritual pluralism in ancient Israel are not unreasonable.. Any religious behavior and any religious text or ceremony always has political and social dimensions.

THE KINGS OF JUDAH & ISRAEL

FROM 1 & 2 KINGS

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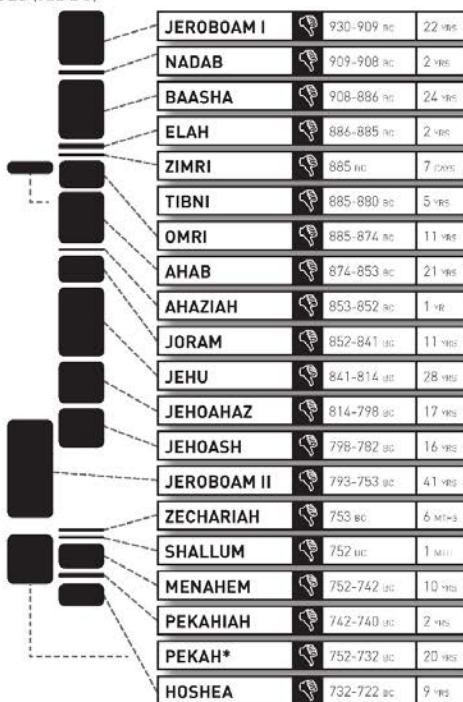
KINGS OF JUDAH



JUDAH EXILED BY BABYLON [586 BC]

KINGDOM DIVIDES [922 BC]

KINGS OF ISRAEL



ISRAEL ASSIMILATED BY ASSYRIA [722 BC]

KEY

- "Did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, as his father David had done."
- "Did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, but not as his father David had done," (i.e. completely rid the land of idolatry)
- "Did what was evil in the eyes of the LORD."

* Pekah's 20-year reign presumably includes a period of rule as rival to Menahem.

SOURCE 6

וישלח יחזקיהו על-כל-ישראל ויהודה וגם-אגרות כתב על-אפרים ומנשה לבוא לבית-יהוה בירושלם לעשות פסח ליהוה אלהי ישראל: ויעץ המלך ושריו וכל-הקהל בירושלם לעשות הפסח בחדש השני: כי לא יכלו לעשתו בעת ההיא כי הכהנים לא-התקדשו למדי והעם לא-נאספו לירושלם: וישר הדבר בעיני המלך ובעיני כל-הקהל: ויעמידו דבר להעביר קול בכל-ישראל מבאר-שבע ועד-דן לבוא לעשות פסח ליהוה אלהי-ישראל בירושלם כי לא לרב עשו כפתוב: וילכו הרצים באגרות מיד המלך ושריו בכל-ישראל ויהודה וכמצות המלך לאמר בני ישראל שובו אלי-יהוה אלהי אברהם יצחק וישראל וישב אל-הפליטה הנשארת לכם מכף מלכי אשור: ואל-תהיו כאבותיכם ונאחזכם אשר מעלו ביהוה אלהי אבותיהם ויתגם לשמה כאשר אתם ראים: עתה אל-תקשו ערפכם כאבותיכם תנו-יד ליהוה ובאו למקדשו אשר הקדיש לעולם ועבדו את-יהוה אלהיכם וישב מכם חרון אפו: כי בשובכם על-יהוה אחיכם ובניכם לרחמים לפני שוביכם ולשוב לארץ הזאת כי-חנן ורחום יהוה אלהיכם ולא-יסייר פנים מכם אם-תשובו אליו: ויהיו הרצים עברים מעיר לעיר בארץ-אפרים ומנשה ועד-זבלון ויהיו משחיקים עליהם ומלעגים בהם:

אֲר־אֲנָשִׁים מֵאֲשֶׁר וּמִנִּשָּׂה וּמִזְבִּלֹן וְנָכְנְעוּ וַיָּבֹאוּ לִירוּשָׁלַם: גַּם בִּיהוּדָה הִתְהַיָּד הָאֱלֹהִים לָתֵת לָהֶם לֵב אֶחָד לַעֲשׂוֹת מִצְוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַשָּׂרִים בְּדִבְרֵי יְהוָה: וַיֵּאָסְפוּ יְרוּשָׁלַם עִם־רֹב לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־חֹג הַמִּצְוֹת בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁנִי קֹהֶל לְרֹב מְאֹד: וַיִּקְרְאוּ וַיִּסְרְרוּ אֶת־הַמִּצְבָּחוֹת אֲשֶׁר בִּירוּשָׁלַם וְאֶת כָּל־הַמִּקְטָרוֹת הַסִּיר וַיִּשְׁלִיכוּ לְנַחַל קִדְרוֹן: וַיִּשְׁחֲטוּ הַפֶּסַח בְּאַרְבַּעַה עָשָׂר לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁנִי וְהַכְּהֲנִים וְהַלְוִיִּם נִקְלְמוּ וַיִּתְקַדְּשׁוּ וַיָּבִיאוּ עֹלוֹת בֵּית יְהוָה: וַיַּעֲמְדוּ עַל־עַמּוּדָם כְּמִשְׁפָּטָם כְּתוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה אִישׁ־הָאֱלֹהִים הַכְּהֲנִים זִרְקִים אֶת־הַדָּם מִיַּד הַלְוִיִּם: כִּי־רַבַּת בִּקְהֵל אֲשֶׁר לֹא־הִתְקַדְּשׁוּ וְהַלְוִיִּם עַל־שְׂחִיטַת הַפֶּסַח לֵכֵל לֹא טָהוֹר לְהַקְדִּישׁ לַיהוָה: כִּי מִרְבֵּית הָעָם רֹבַת מֵאֲפֹרִים וּמִנִּשָּׂה יִשְׁשָׁבֶר וּזְבִלֹן לֹא הִטְהָרוּ כִּי־אָכְלוּ אֶת־הַפֶּסַח בְּלֹא כְכָתוּב כִּי־הִתְפַּלֵּל יִחְזַקְיָהוּ עֲלֵיהֶם לֵאמֹר יְהוָה הַטּוֹב יִכְפֹּר בְּעַד: כָּל־לִבָּבוּ הָלִין לְדְרוֹשׁ הָאֱלֹהִים: יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתַי וְלֹא כְטִהַרַת הַקֹּדֶשׁ: וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה אֶל־יִחְזַקְיָהוּ וַיִּרְפָּא אֶת־הָעָם:

וַיִּשְׁמְחוּ: כָּל־קֹהֶל יְהוּדָה וְהַכְּהֲנִים וְהַלְוִיִּם וְכָל־הַקֹּהֶל הַבָּאִים מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל וְהַגִּרִּים הַבָּאִים מֵאֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהַיּוֹשְׁבִים בִּיהוּדָה: וַתְּהִי שִׂמְחָה־גְדוֹלָה בִּירוּשָׁלַם כִּי מִיָּמֵי שְׁלֹמֹה בֶן־דָּוִד מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא כָזָאת בִּירוּשָׁלַם:

Hezekiah sent word to all Israel and Judah; he also wrote letters to Ephraim and Manasseh to come to the House of GOD in Jerusalem to keep the Passover for the ETERNAL God of Israel.

The king and his officers and the congregation in Jerusalem had agreed to keep the Passover in the second month,

for at the time, they were unable to keep it, for not enough priests had sanctified themselves, nor had the people assembled in Jerusalem.

The king and the whole congregation thought it proper

to issue a decree and proclaim throughout all Israel from Beer-sheba to Dan that they come and keep the Passover for the ETERNAL God of Israel in Jerusalem—not often did they act in accord with what was written.

The couriers went out with the letters from the king and his officers through all Israel and Judah, by order of the king, proclaiming, “O you Israelites! Return to the ETERNAL God of your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, and [God] will return to the remnant of you who

escaped from the hand of the kings of Assyria.

Do not be like your ancestors and kindred who trespassed against the ETERNAL God of their ancestors and were turned into a horror, as you see.

Now do not be stiffnecked like your ancestors; submit yourselves to GOD and come to the sanctuary that has been consecrated forever, and serve the ETERNAL your God, whose anger may hopefully turn back from you.

If you return to GOD, your brothers and children will be regarded with compassion by their captors, and will return to this land; the ETERNAL your God, being gracious and merciful, will not turn away from you if you return.”

As the couriers passed from town to town in the land of Ephraim and Manasseh till they reached Zebulun, they were laughed at and mocked.

Some of the people of Asher and Manasseh and Zebulun, however, were contrite, and came to Jerusalem.

The hand of God was on Judah, too, making them of a single mind to carry out the command of the king and

officers concerning the ordinance of GOD.

A great crowd assembled at Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the second month, a very great congregation.

They set to and removed the altars that were in Jerusalem, and they removed all the incense stands and threw them into Wadi Kidron.

They slaughtered the passover sacrifice on the fourteenth of the second month. The priests and Levites were ashamed, and they sanctified themselves and brought burnt offerings to the House of GOD.

They took their stations, as was their rule according to the Teaching of Moses, agent of God. The priests dashed the blood [that they received] from the Levites.

Since many in the congregation had not sanctified themselves, the Levites were in charge of slaughtering the passover sacrifice for everyone who was not pure, so as to consecrate them to GOD.

For most of the people—many from Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun—had not purified themselves, yet they ate the passover sacrifice in violation of what was written. Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, “The good GOD will provide atonement for

all who set their mind on worshiping God—the ETERNAL God of their ancestors—even if they are not purified for the sanctuary.”

GOD heard Hezekiah and healed the people.

All the congregation of Judah and the priests and the Levites and all the congregation that came from Israel, and the resident aliens who came from the land of Israel and who lived in Judah, rejoiced.

There was great rejoicing in Jerusalem, for since the time of King Solomon son of David of Israel nothing like it had happened in Jerusalem.

[II Chronicles 30](#)

SOURCE 7

The Chronicler does not offer a systematic review of the history of the northern kingdom. Nevertheless, he had some form of the Book of Kings and thus, he knows that the northern kingdom came to an end in Hezekiah's time (2 Kgs 18:9–10). Thus, the Chronicler seizes upon Hezekiah's reign by viewing it as the first historical opportunity for the reunification of the people under Davidic rule, and even more importantly, around the Jerusalem Temple.

This is why the Chronicler has Hezekiah making such great efforts to include the inhabitants of the former northern kingdom in the belated Passover celebrations, even presenting it as an opportunity for the northerners to reverse their state of misfortune...This opportunity for political and cultic reunification of the people also explains why the Chronicler was prepared to make allowances for Hezekiah not following the letter of the law in terms of how he proceeded with and executed the delayed Passover.

Various factors point to an early fourth century B.C.E. date for Chronicles. This was a time when there was a growing danger of a split between the Judean community that was centered around the Jerusalem temple on the one hand and the polity based in Samaria on the other hand...The Chronicler's positive depiction of Hezekiah's outreach to the northerners, even at the expense of setting aside strict adherence to Torah law, would reflect the premium that the Chronicler put on communal unity and cooperation as a bulwark for preventing any possible split in the community.

Sadly, the Chronicler's ideal vision did not come to pass, as the Samaritan split-off, which was made irrevocable with the establishment of the Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim during the time of Alexander the Great, was only the first of many Jewish sects that were to characterize later Second Temple Judaism.

But the Chronicler's full and enthusiastic support for Hezekiah's efforts to bring about national unity, even while making accommodations that only had a very tangential parallel in strict Torah law, can serve as an inspiration for us now.

[Dr.David A. Glatt-Gilad, Why did King Hezekiah celebrate his inaugural passover a month late?](#)

SOURCE 8

Why the laughter at first? And why the sudden crowds?

The story here is about the calendar.

For generations, since Jeroboam son of Nebat, the first king of the north, the northern kingdom had kept a different festival calendar — even shifting Sukkot a month later than Judah's, to keep northerners from making pilgrimage to Jerusalem. After the fall of Samaria, that northern calendar still held among the survivors.

When Hezekiah's envoys arrived the first time, northerners simply thought: You're too early. Passover's next month.

So Hezekiah made another daring move. He shifted the Passover to the second month. There is already some context for this in the Torah - although it may have been an invention of this time, inserted into the Torah later. But either way - Second Passover is introduced as a way to make sure even those who can't observe this central holiday at

its right time - on the full moon of spring, can have a second chance. In this case - the official reason is that Hezekiah's priests were not yet ready and the northern pilgrims were too far away. On the surface, it was a practical choice — the priests hadn't yet finished purifying the Temple, the people can't be gathered in time. But it was also a masterstroke: he aligned Jerusalem's calendar to the north's. He erased the symbolic barrier Jeroboam had built a century earlier.

And then the people came. By the thousands.. For the first time in generations, they celebrated as one people, in one city, in one act of worship.

The sages were uneasy with this — Hezekiah's move broke with tradition. But there is no denying its brilliance. Jeroboam had used the calendar to divide the people; Hezekiah used it to unite them. The rescheduling worked as a political-theological strategy: re-knitting Israel and Judah around Jerusalem by using a legitimate legal provision rather than innovation, thus underscoring the Chronicler's theme of covenant restoration under proper priestly leadership.

This was reform and repair not just of walls and altars, but of time itself. Hezekiah understood that faith is not frozen. Sometimes, you shift the date. Sometimes, you bend the ritual. Because the greater commandment is to heal what has been broken, to call the scattered home, and to remind them they are one. It worked, at least for a while.

Amichai Lau-Lavie, Below the Bible Belt

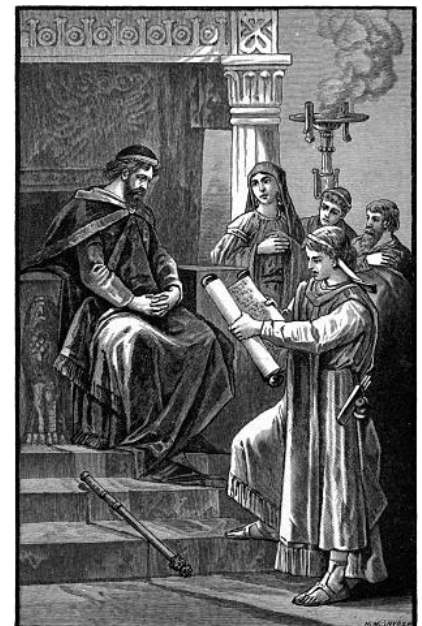
SOURCE 9

וַיֹּצֵא הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת-כָּל-הָעָם לֵאמֹר עֲשׂוּ לְפָסַח לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם כַּכְּתוּב עַל סֵפֶר הַבְּרִית הַזֶּה: כִּי לֹא נַעֲשֶׂה כַּפֶּסַח הַזֶּה מִיְמֵי הַשְּׁפָטִים אֲשֶׁר שָׁפְטוּ אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכָל יְמֵי מַלְכֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמַלְכֵי יְהוּדָה: כִּי אִם-בְּשִׁמְנֶה עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה לַמֶּלֶךְ יֵאֱשָׁיְהוּ נַעֲשֶׂה הַפֶּסַח הַזֶּה לַיהוָה בִּירוּשָׁלַם: וְגַם אֶת-הָאֲבוֹת וְאֶת-הַיָּדְעָנִים וְאֶת-הַתֹּרְפִים וְאֶת-הַגִּלְלִים וְאֶת כָּל-הַשִּׁקְצִים אֲשֶׁר נִרְאוּ בְּאֶרֶץ יְהוּדָה וּבִירוּשָׁלַם בְּעַר יֵאֱשָׁיְהוּ לְמַעַן הָקִים אֶת-דְּבַר הַתּוֹרָה הַכְּתוּבָה עַל-הַסֵּפֶר אֲשֶׁר מָצָא חִלְקִיָּהוּ הַכֹּהֵן בֵּית יְהוָה:

The king commanded all the people, "Offer the passover sacrifice to the ETERNAL your God as prescribed in this scroll of the covenant."

Now the passover sacrifice had not been offered in that manner in the days of the chieftains who ruled Israel, or during the days of the kings of Israel and the kings of Judah.

Only in the eighteenth year of King Josiah was such a passover sacrifice offered in that manner to GOD in Jerusalem.



Josiah also did away with the necromancers and the mediums, the oracle idols and the fetishes—all the detestable things that were to be seen in the land of Judah and Jerusalem. Thus he fulfilled the terms of the Teaching recorded in the scroll that the priest Hilkiah had found in the House of GOD.

[*II Kings, 23*](#)

SOURCE 10

The reign of King Josiah of Judah marks the climax of Israel's monarchic history — or at least it must have appeared that way at the time.

Josiah's messianic role arose from the theology of a new religious movement that dramatically changed what it meant to be an Israelite and laid the foundations for future Judaism and for Christianity. That movement ultimately produced the core documents of the Bible — chief among them, a book of the Law, discovered during renovations to the Jerusalem Temple in 622 BCE, the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign. That book, identified by most scholars as an original form of the book of Deuteronomy, sparked a revolution in ritual and a complete reformulation of Israelite identity. It contained the central

features of biblical monotheism: the exclusive worship of one God in one place; centralized, national observance of the main festivals of the Jewish Year (Passover, Tabernacles); and a range of legislation dealing with social welfare, justice, and personal morality.

This was the formative moment in the crystallization of the biblical tradition as we now know it...embellishing and elaborating the stories contained in the first four books of the Torah, they wove together regional variations of the stories of the patriarchs, placing the adventures of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in a world strangely reminiscent of the seventh century BCE and emphasizing the dominance of Judah over all Israel.

Israel Finkelstein, *The Bible unearthed : archaeology's new vision of ancient Israel and the origin of its sacred texts*

SOURCE 11

Loss, suffering, hopelessness: broken spirit, broken self. Our lives are broken off by death. The human condition is brokenness.

But there is also another kind of breaking, the breaking-open of the heart that puts us in touch with our deeper selves and that may even serve as a gateway to wholeness.

What is wholeness of self? Does it depend on outer connections — bonds between self and other, between self and world? Is it the feeling that one is part of a greater whole?

Or is it an inner connectedness? An awareness, a knowing-ness sustained from within, a bringing forth to consciousness the hidden parts of the self? And might this deepened consciousness offer a path to freedom?

Or is wholeness all these things — and perhaps more?

We dwell in a world of brokenness, but we yearn and strive for wholeness. It is elusive, but it is our birthright.

The pursuit of wholeness is the human calling.

Marcia Falk, [Night of Beginnings](#)

Next Session: April 19, 2026 - When Did “Israel” Begin?

