

The Pattern of Crime and Punishment in the Hebrew Bible

David Noel Freedman. *The Nine Commandments*: New York, NY: Doubleday, 2000.

No		Where Broken	Violator(s)
1-2	no other gods; no idols	Ex 32 (2 nd book)	Israelites at Sinai
3	vain	Lev 24 (3 rd book)	Unnamed man
4	Sabbath	Num 15 (4 th book)	Unnamed man
5	honor father and mother		
6	theft	Josh 6:18-19 & Josh 7:20-26 (6 th book)	Achan and his family.
7	murder <i>ratsach</i>	Jud 19-21 (7 th book)	Concubine from Bethlehem
8	adultery	2 Samuel 11-12 cf (8 th book)	David and Bathsheba
9	bear false witness	1 Kings 21 (9 th book)	Ahab and Jezebel

Bearing False Witness: **Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kings 21)**

History (ca. 1000-850 B.C.E.):

Solomon succeeded David, and the Hebrew nation prospered and grew. It was viewed with prestige and respect by its neighbors.

Following Solomon's death 40 years after taking the throne of David, the nation could not hold together under Solomon's son, Rehoboam. In about 900 B.C.E., the kingdom split into the northern kingdom of Israel, led by Jeroboam, and the Southern kingdom of Judah, led by Rehoboam.

The "capital" of Israel is Shechem, and Jeroboam has shrines (with an idol in the form of a calf) set up at Bethel and Dan. The Israelites therefore did not have to go to Jerusalem to worship.

Samaria will eventually become the seat of power in Israel under the Omri Dynasty.

Politics

Both Judah and Israel follow the two leader paradigm. Elijah is the principal (recorded) prophet of the period, and he prophesies against the Baalistic practices of Ahab's queen, Jezebel. Note that the stories of this period are told by the "victors" (the Yahwists), who are actually probably a minority in Israel at the time of Elijah. Religious syncretism was tolerated until the Deuteronomistic reforms of Hezekiah and Josiah (ca. 640 B.C.E.).

JUDAH	ISRAEL
Rehoboam—922 (931)	922 (931)—Jeroboam I
Abijam—915 (913)	
Asa—913 (911)	
	901 (910)—Nadab
	900 (909)—Baasha
	877 (886)—Elah
	876 (885)—Zimri
	876 (Omri, Tibni 885)—Omri (Omri 880)
Jehoshaphat—873 (870)	869 (874)—Ahab
	850 (853)—Ahaziah
Jehoram—849 (848)	849 (852)—Jehoram
Ahaziah—842 (841)	842 (841)—Jehu
Athaliah—842 (841)	
Jehoash—837 (835)	
	815 (814)—Jehoahaz
	801 (798)—Jehoash
Amaziah—800 (796)	
	786 (782)—Jeroboam II
Uzziah—783 (767)	
	746 (753)—Zechariah
	745 (752)—Shallum
	745 (752)—Menahem
Jotham—742 (740)	
	738 (742)—Pekahiah
	737 (740)—Pekah
Ahaz—735 (732)	
	732 (732)—Hoshea
Hezekiah—715 (716)	721 (723/22)—Fall of Samaria
Manasseh—687 (687)	
Amon—642 (643)	
Josiah—640 (641)	
Jehoahaz—609 (609)	
Jehoiakim—609 (609)	
Jehoiachin—598 (598)	
Zedekiah—597 (597)	
Fall of Jerusalem — 587 (586)	

What is Bearing False Witness?

It deals specifically with providing false testimony in a legal setting in an attempt to do harm to another person (Freedman, 139). The law dates to the Code of Hammurabi (ca. 1900 B.C.E.).

It does not specifically refer to “general lying.”

Freedman’s hypothesis is that violation of the 9th commandment has to take place in the 9th book of the Bible: Kings.

Naboth, Ahab, and Jezebel

In 1 Kings 21, Ahab, King of Israel, has returned from a battle with the Arameans who marched against Samaria.

Ahab wants a piece of vineyard property. Naboth who owns it, refuses to sell. Ahab complains to his foreign wife, Jezebel, about this.

She sets it up so that two “scoundrels” falsely accuse Naboth of “cursing God and *King*” (ie, Ahab),” and so Naboth is stoned. With Naboth out of the way, Ahab can claim the land, which he does. Of course he (like Macbeth) doesn’t know anything of Jezebel’s plotting.

The LORD essentially condemns Ahab for all of these actions (as well as allowing idol worship), but then when Ahab repents, God relents, and places his wrath on Ahabs sons. *The “curse” of God is: “Anyone belonging to Ahab who dies in the city the dogs shall eat; and anyone who dies in the open country the birds of the air shall eat.”* This means that the Omride dynasty will completely fall.

In 2 Kings 9, is recorded the beginning of civil war between Jehu and Jehoram of Israel. Jehu commands that she be thrown off the city wall. Not much of her can be found after she's trampled by horses, thus fulfilling Elijah's prophecy that she will be eaten by dogs and none shall bury her (and that she shall be like dung of the fields of Jezreel [2 Kings 9:37]).