

DIVISION AND DOWNFALL



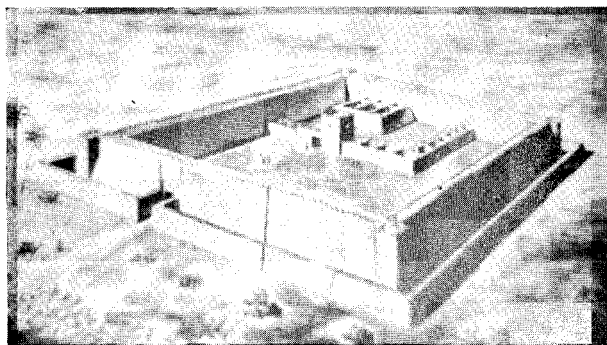
111. Hebrew seals from the 8th century B.C. (a) At the left is that of "Shema, servant of Jeroboam". (b) In the center is the seal of "Ushna, servant of Ahaz". (c) At the right, above and below, is the seal of Jotham, with an impression made from it, found at Ezion-geber

oval line encloses the letters and outside the line is a connected series of pomegranates.

A special class of the seals once belonged to royal officials. The typical inscription reads: "To X, servant of X" or "To X, servant of the king". In this connection the word "servant" is the designation of a person in the employ of the royal government. The best known of this class of seal is one found at Megiddo in 1904 (Fig. 111a). In the center is a beautifully executed lion in the act of roaring. Above the lion are letters which read, "To Shema", and below are the words "servant of Jeroboam". From the shapes of the letters we know that the king in this case is Jeroboam II; Shema was one of his officials, though he is unmentioned in the Bible. Another seal bears the inscription: "To Obadiah, servant of the king." This name brings to mind the Obadiah who was the prime minister of Ahab in the Omri Dynasty, one who risked his position to save the lives of a number of prophets (I Kings 18: 3-4). The writing, however, is evidently later than the 9th century, and the seal must belong to a royal official of a later date, otherwise unknown. There is only one inscribed Hebrew seal now known which must probably be dated in the 9th century. On it is a bull, and above and below the animal are the words: "To Shemaiah, son of Azariah"—a person unmentioned in the Bible, but his name and that of his father were very common.

In Judah during the early part of the 8th century

the great king was Uzziah, also known as Azariah (about 783-742 B.C.). The personal seals of two of his officials, each calling himself "the servant of Uzziyau" (Uzziah), have been found; one man was named Abiyau (Abijah) and the other Shebanyau (Shebaniah). One of Uzziah's deeds which can be verified archaeologically is the statement that he rebuilt Elath and restored it to Judah (II Kings 14: 22). The town of Elath is the same as Ezion-geber, which we encountered in the story of Solomon's reign. It was situated south of the Dead Sea, on the northeastern arm of the Red Sea which is called the Gulf of Aqabah. Here Solomon had built his great copper refinery, one which continued in use after his day. During the 10th and 9th centuries the smelter with its accompanying buildings covered only about one and a half acres, but it was surrounded by a double wall, with a three-doored gateway, fortifications strong enough for a large city (Fig. 112). Yet it appears to have been destroyed when Edom gained her independence from Judah during the forties of the 9th century. Uzziah's father had re-subjugated Edom, and now Uzziah himself rebuilt the smelter under a new name, Elath. Not only did the excavator, Nelson Glueck, discover the remains of Uzziah's city, but in it was a beautifully designed seal, in a copper casing, bearing the inscription *lytm* ("Belonging to Jotham") above the figure of a horned ram (Fig. 111c). While we cannot be sure, the seal's owner may well have been Uzziah's son of



112. A reconstruction of the smelter and refinery at Ezion-geber

the same name, who became regent during his father's leprosy before his own reign began. In any event, it is a good **Judean** name, and the owner did not feel it necessary to give his father's name. Elath and Edom were lost to Judah early in the reign of **Jotham's** son, Ahaz, that is, about 734 B.C. (II Kings 16 : 6, Revised Standard Version). In the Edomite city which succeeded the **Judean** the seal of an Edomite royal official was found impressed on a number of jars. This we know because his name, Qausanal, has in its first part the name of an Edomite deity, Qaus.

Beginning in 1956 Professor Y. Aharoni of Hebrew University began work on a high hill called **Ramat Rahel**, directly south of Jerusalem in Israel. Here he has uncovered a fort which had been erected in the 8th century B.C. ; it consists of a small open area surrounded by strong **casemate** fortifications (double walls connected by cross-walls). In one corner of the area a house or small palace had been erected. Most astonishing about the installation is the manner in which it was built with carefully cut and fitted blocks of masonry like that used earlier at Megiddo and **Samaria** (cf. Fig. 100). That is, wherever found it appears as royal construction. Yet in this instance the site is too small and too close to Jerusalem to serve either as a major government center or as a vitally needed fortification. Consequently, the excavator has made the interesting suggestion that **Ramat Rahel** was the separate quarter built for Uzziah during his final years when he was a leper (II Kings 15:5). While this view is not susceptible to proof, as a hypothesis it would easily explain the peculiar nature of the ruins.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> See Y. Aharoni, "The Excavation at Ramat Rahel", *The Biblical Archaeologist*, Vol. XXIV, No. 4 (Dec. 1961); and *Bulletin of the Israel Exploration Society*, Vol. XXIV (1960), pp. 73-116 (in Hebrew).

## THE FALL OF ISRAEL

In 745-744 a new Assyrian king **came** to the throne in Nineveh after a revolt ; he was Tiglath-pileser III (ca. 745-727 B.C.). Within the first years of his reign he was hard at work in Syria with a great army, beginning the complete subjugation of the whole Syro-Palestinian coastland. Soon northern Syria was firmly in his hands, and the eastern part of it was formed into an Assyrian province, ruled by an Assyrian governor from Arpad (cf. II Kings 18 : 34 ; 19 : 13).

Jeroboam II of Israel, its last strong king, died just before these events (about 746 B.C.). From then on, evidently because of Assyrian pressure, we hear of civil war and frequent revolts. Uzziah or Azariah of Judah was still king in Jerusalem, though he was a leper and confined to separate quarters. In Syria Tiglath-pileser was confronted with a coalition, headed by one Azriau (that is, Azariah) of Yauda. The last name is the Assyrian spelling of "Judah". Was Uzziah, then, the head of the opposition to Assyria in the West? This has seemed so improbable, especially since Tiglath-pileser seems to have opposed Azariah's forces, not in Palestine, but in northern Syria, that many scholars have felt that there must have been a northern Judah with a king who bore the name of the Hebrew God, Yahweh (in the abbreviation **Yau** which is customary in proper names). The trouble has been, however, that we have no other information about such a kingdom and little room for it among the known city-states of Syria. In the 19th century many scholars assumed that it was the southern Judah under Uzziah which was involved, and this view has recently been taken up **again**.<sup>10</sup> At a time when Uzziah was one of the strongest kings with one of the most stable governments in all Syria and Palestine, it seems difficult to suppose that there was another strong state named Judah, with a king of the same name as the **Judean** monarch. If not, then in the years 744-742 Uzziah or Azariah of Judah was one of the outstanding personalities of Western Asia and the focus for the opposition to Assyria. Even though he was a leper and his son, **Jotham**, was regent, he must have remained the real power in control of foreign affairs. He died about

<sup>10</sup> See especially Edwin R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* (Chicago, 1951), Chap. V, and *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. III (1944), pp. 155-63 ; W. F. Albright, *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, No. 100, p. 18, n. 8.