

Read the Bible in A Year: Chronological

Readings for June 7-13, 2020

This week's readings begin with the rest of Ecclesiastes, words of wisdom attributed to King Solomon. The readings then move back into the narrative of the history of Israel from 1 Kings and 2 Chronicles.

The 1 Kings reading will be in italic type and the 2 Chronicles reading will be in regular type. Sometimes the readings will seem repetitive as the same account is retold in a different place.

Ecclesiastes: Philosophical Reflections of King Solomon (cont.)

Wisdom:

A good name is better than fine perfume and the day of death better than the day of birth.

It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of everyone; the living should take this to heart.

Frustration is better than laughter, because a sad face is good for the heart.

The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of pleasure.

It is better to heed the rebuke of a wise person than to listen to the song of fools.

Like the crackling of thorns under the pot, so is the laughter of fools. This too is meaningless.

Extortion turns a wise person into a fool, and a bribe corrupts the heart.

The end of a matter is better than its beginning, and patience is better than pride.

Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of fools.

Do not say, "Why were the old days better than these?" For it is not wise to ask such questions.

Wisdom, like an inheritance, is a good thing and benefits those who see the sun.

Wisdom is a shelter as money is a shelter, but the advantage of knowledge is this: Wisdom preserves those who have it.

Consider what God has done: Who can straighten what he has made crooked? When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad, consider this: God has made the one as well as the other. Therefore, no one can discover anything about their future.

In this meaningless life of mine I have seen both of these: the righteous perishing in their righteousness, and the wicked living long in their wickedness.

Do not be over-righteous, neither be overwise— why destroy yourself? Do not be over-wicked, and do not be a fool— why die before your time? It is good to grasp the one and not let go of the other. Whoever fears God will avoid all extremes.

Wisdom makes one wise person more powerful than ten rulers in a city.

Indeed, there is no one on earth who is righteous, no one who does what is right and never sins.

Do not pay attention to every word people say, or you may hear your servant cursing you—for you know in your heart that many times you yourself have cursed others.

All this I tested by wisdom and I said, “I am determined to be wise”— but this was beyond me. Whatever exists is far off and most profound—who can discover it? So I turned my mind to understand, to investigate and to search out wisdom and the scheme of things and to understand the stupidity of wickedness and the madness of folly.

I find more bitter than death the woman who is a snare, whose heart is a trap and whose hands are chains. The man who pleases God will escape her, but the sinner she will ensnare.

“Look,” says the Teacher, “this is what I have discovered: Adding one thing to another to discover the scheme of things— while I was still searching but not finding— I found one upright man among a thousand, but not one upright woman among them all. This only have I found: God created mankind upright, but they have gone in search of many schemes.”

Who is like the wise? Who knows the explanation of things? A person’s wisdom brightens their face and changes its hard appearance.

Obey the King:

Obey the king’s command, I say, because you took an oath before God. Do not be in a hurry to leave the king’s presence. Do not stand up for a bad cause, for he will do whatever he pleases. Since a king’s word is supreme, who can say to him, “What are you doing?”

Whoever obeys his command will come to no harm, and the wise heart will know the proper time and procedure. For there is a proper time and procedure for every matter, though a person may be weighed down by misery.

Since no one knows the future, who can tell someone else what is to come? As no one has power over the wind to contain it, so no one has power over the time of their death.

As no one is discharged in time of war, so wickedness will not release those who practice it.

All this I saw, as I applied my mind to everything done under the sun. There is a time when a man lords it over others to his own hurt. Then too, I saw the wicked buried—those who used to come and go from the holy place and receive praise in the city where they did this. This too is meaningless.

When the sentence for a crime is not quickly carried out, people’s hearts are filled with schemes to do wrong. Although a wicked person who commits a hundred crimes may live a long time, I know that it will go better with those who fear God, who are reverent before him. Yet because the wicked do not fear God, it will not go well with them, and their days will not lengthen like a shadow.

There is something else meaningless that occurs on earth: the righteous who get what the wicked deserve, and the wicked who get what the righteous deserve. This too, I say, is meaningless. So I commend the enjoyment of life, because there is nothing better for a person under the sun than to eat and drink and be glad. Then joy will accompany them in their toil all the days of the life God has given them under the sun.

When I applied my mind to know wisdom and to observe the labor that is done on earth—people getting no sleep day or night— then I saw all that God has done. No one can comprehend what goes on under the sun. Despite all their efforts to search it out, no one can discover its meaning. Even if the wise claim they know, they cannot really comprehend it.

A Common Destiny for All:

So, I reflected on all this and concluded that the righteous and the wise and what they do are in God's hands, but no one knows whether love or hate awaits them. All share a common destiny—the righteous and the wicked, the good and the bad, the clean and the unclean, those who offer sacrifices and those who do not.

As it is with the good, so with the sinful; as it is with those who take oaths, so with those who are afraid to take them.

This is the evil in everything that happens under the sun: The same destiny overtakes all. The hearts of people, moreover, are full of evil and there is madness in their hearts while they live, and afterward they join the dead. Anyone who is among the living has hope¹—even a live dog is better off than a dead lion!

For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing; they have no further reward, and even their name is forgotten. Their love, their hate and their jealousy have long since vanished; never again will they have a part in anything that happens under the sun.

Go, eat your food with gladness, and drink your wine with a joyful heart, for God has already approved what you do. Always be clothed in white, and always anoint your head with oil. Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love, all the days of this meaningless life that God has given you under the sun—all your meaningless days. For this is your lot in life and in your toilsome labor under the sun. Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the realm of the dead, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom.

I have seen something else under the sun: The race is not to the swift or the battle to the strong, nor does food come to the wise or wealth to the brilliant or favor to the learned; but time and chance happen to them all.

Moreover, no one knows when their hour will come: As fish are caught in a cruel net, or birds are taken in a snare, so people are trapped by evil times that fall unexpectedly upon them.

Wisdom Better Than Folly

I also saw under the sun this example of wisdom that greatly impressed me: There was once a small city with only a few people in it. And a powerful king came against it, surrounded it and built huge siege works against it. Now there lived in that city a man poor but wise, and he saved the city by his wisdom. But nobody remembered that poor man. So I said, "Wisdom is better than strength." But the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are no longer heeded.

The quiet words of the wise are more to be heeded than the shouts of a ruler of fools. Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner destroys much good.

As dead flies give perfume a bad smell, so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor.

The heart of the wise inclines to the right, but the heart of the fool to the left.

Even as fools walk along the road, they lack sense and show everyone how stupid they are.

If a ruler's anger rises against you, do not leave your post; calmness can lay great offenses to rest.

There is an evil I have seen under the sun, the sort of error that arises from a ruler: Fools are put in many high positions, while the rich occupy the low ones. I have seen slaves on horseback, while princes go on foot like slaves.

Whoever digs a pit may fall into it; whoever breaks through a wall may be bitten by a snake. Whoever quarries stones may be injured by them; whoever splits logs may be endangered by them.

If the ax is dull and its edge unsharpened, more strength is needed, but skill will bring success.

If a snake bites before it is charmed, the charmer receives no fee.

Words from the mouth of the wise are gracious, but fools are consumed by their own lips. At the beginning their words are folly; at the end they are wicked madness—and fools multiply words.

No one knows what is coming— who can tell someone else what will happen after them?

The toil of fools wearies them; they do not know the way to town.

Woe to the land whose king was a servant and whose princes feast in the morning. Blessed is the land whose king is of noble birth and whose princes eat at a proper time— for strength and not for drunkenness.

Through laziness, the rafters sag; because of idle hands, the house leaks.

A feast is made for laughter, wine makes life merry, and money is the answer for everything.

Do not revile the king even in your thoughts, or curse the rich in your bedroom, because a bird in the sky may carry your words, and a bird on the wing may report what you say.

Invest in Many Ventures

Ship your grain across the sea; after many days you may receive a return. Invest in seven ventures, yes, in eight; you do not know what disaster may come upon the land.

If clouds are full of water, they pour rain on the earth. Whether a tree falls to the south or to the north, in the place where it falls, there it will lie. Whoever watches the wind will not plant; whoever looks at the clouds will not reap.

As you do not know the path of the wind, or how the body is formedⁱⁿ in a mother's womb, so you cannot understand the work of God, the Maker of all things.

Sow your seed in the morning, and at evening let your hands not be idle, for you do not know which will succeed, whether this or that, or whether both will do equally well.

Remember Your Creator While Young

Light is sweet, and it pleases the eyes to see the sun.

However many years anyone may live, let them enjoy them all. But let them remember the days of darkness, for there will be many. Everything to come is meaningless.

You who are young, be happy while you are young, and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth. Follow the ways of your heart and whatever your eyes see, but know that for all these things. God will bring you into judgment. So then, banish anxiety from your heart and cast off the troubles of your body, for youth and vigor are meaningless.

Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, "I find no pleasure in them"— before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars grow dark, and the clouds return after the rain; when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men stoop, when the grinders cease because they are few, and those looking through the windows grow dim; when the doors to the street are closed and the sound of grinding fades; when people rise up at the sound of birds, but all their songs grow faint; when people are afraid of heights and of dangers in the streets; when the almond tree blossoms and the grasshopper drags itself along and desire no longer is stirred. Then people go to their eternal home and mourners go about the streets.

Remember him—before the silver cord is severed, and the golden bowl is broken; before the pitcher is shattered at the spring, and the wheel broken at the well, and the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.

"Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher. "Everything is meaningless!"

The Conclusion of the Matter

Not only was the Teacher wise, but he also imparted knowledge to the people. He pondered and searched out and set in order many proverbs. The Teacher searched to find just the right words, and what he wrote was upright and true.

The words of the wise are like goads, their collected sayings like firmly embedded nails—given by one shepherd. Be warned, my son, of anything in addition to them.

Of making many books there is no end, and much study wearies the body.

Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.

Back to the narrative of the history of the people of God, the nation of Israel... Solomon has died, and the expectation is that his son Rehoboam will succeed him as king over all Israel and Judah. But that is not how it goes...

Israel Rebels Against Rehoboam

Rehoboam (Solomon's son) went to Shechem, for all Israel had gone to Shechem to make him king. When Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who was still in Egypt, heard of it (for he had fled from King Solomon and stayed in Egypt), they called and sent for him. And Jeroboam and all the congregation of Israel came and spoke to Rehoboam, saying, "Your father made our yoke unbearable. Now, therefore, make the grievous service to your father and the heavy yoke he put upon us lighter, and we will serve you." He said to them, "Depart for three days, and then come back to me." And the people departed.

King Rehoboam consulted with the old men who advised his father Solomon while he was still alive and asked, "How do you advise me to answer the people?" And they spoke to him, saying, "If you will be a servant to this people this day and will serve them and answer them and speak kind words to them, they will be your servants forever." But he rejected the advice that the old men gave him and consulted with the young men who grew up with him and who stood before him, and he said to them, "What advice do you give on how we should answer this people, who have spoken to me saying, 'Make the yoke your father put on us lighter'?" And the young men who grew up with him said, "Thus shall you answer this people who said to you, 'Your father made our yoke heavy, but make it lighter for us'; thus shall you say to them, 'My little finger will be thicker than my father's loins! Whereas my father loaded you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your burden. My father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions!'"

So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam on the third day, just as the king had appointed, saying, "Come to me again the third day." The king answered the people roughly and forsook the counsel the old men gave him, and instead spoke to them following the advice of the young men. He said, "My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your burden. My father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions." Thus the king did not listen to the people, for the cause was from the LORD, that He might fulfill His saying, which the LORD spoke by Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

So when all Israel saw that the king did not listen to them, the people responded to the king, saying, "What portion do we have in David? We also do not have an inheritance in the son of Jesse. To your tents, O Israel, and see to your own house, David!" So the people of Israel departed to their tents. But the people of Israel living in the cities of Judah were ruled over by Rehoboam.

Then King Rehoboam sent Adoniram, who was in charge of the forced labor, and all Israel stoned him to death. As a result, King Rehoboam quickly mounted his chariot and fled to Jerusalem. So Israel rebelled against the house of David, and it remains so even to this day.

When all Israel heard that Jeroboam had returned, they sent and called him before the congregation and made him king over all Israel. Only the tribe of Judah followed the house of David.

Rehoboam went to Shechem because all Israel journeyed to Shechem to make him king. It happened that Jeroboam the son of Nebat heard this—he was in Egypt, where he fled from King Solomon—so he returned from Egypt. So, they sent for him and called him.

And Jeroboam and all Israel came and spoke to Rehoboam saying, “Your father made our yoke heavy. Now therefore, lighten your father’s labor and heavy yoke that he put on us, and we will serve you.” He responded, “Return again to me in three days.” So the people left.

Then King Rehoboam consulted with the elders who stood in the presence of Solomon his father when he was alive saying, “How do you counsel that I should give a response to this people?” They said to him, “If you are good to this people and please them and speak well to them, then they will be servants to you all your days.” But he abandoned the counsel of the elders that they gave to him. And he consulted the young men who grew up and stood before him. ⁹ Rehoboam said to them, “What do you counsel that we give as a response to this people who have spoken to me, ‘Lighten the yoke that your father placed on us’?” The young men who had grown up with him said, “So you should speak to the people who have spoken to you saying, ‘Your father made our yoke heavy, but you lighten it from us.’ So you will say to them, ‘My little *finger* is thicker than my father’s waist! Whereas my father placed a heavy yoke on you, I will add to your yoke. My father chastened you with whips, but I will scourge you with scorpions.’”

So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam on the third day, as the king had ordered saying, “Return to me on the third day.” Then the king answered them harshly. King Rehoboam rejected the advice of the elders. He spoke to them with the advice of the young men, saying, “My father made your yoke heavy, but I will increase it. My father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.” The king did not listen to the people, for the event occurred because of God, that the LORD might establish His word that He spoke through Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

When all Israel saw that the king would not listen to them, the people answered the king saying, “What portion do we have in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse. O Israel, each man to your tent. Now look after your own house, O David!” Then all Israel departed to their tents. The sons of Israel dwelled in the cities of Judah, and Rehoboam reigned over them. Then King Rehoboam sent Hadoram, who was over the forced labor, and the sons of Israel stoned him to death. And King Rehoboam hurried to mount his chariot and to flee to Jerusalem. So Israel has rebelled against the house of David until this day.

When Rehoboam arrived at Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah along with the tribe of Benjamin, a hundred and eighty thousand chosen men who were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel and to bring the kingdom back to Rehoboam the son of Solomon. But the word of God came to Shemaiah the man of God, saying: Speak to Rehoboam the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to all the house of Judah and Benjamin and to the remnant of the people, saying, “Thus says the LORD: You shall not go up, nor fight against your brothers the children of Israel. Every man is to return to his house, for this thing is from Me.” They listened therefore to the word of the LORD and turned to depart, according to the word of the LORD.

When Rehoboam came to Jerusalem, he called together from the house of Judah and Benjamin one hundred and eighty thousand choice men to make war and to battle with Israel in order to restore the kingdom to Rehoboam. But the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah the man of God saying: Speak to Rehoboam, son of Solomon and king of Judah, and to all Israel in Judah and Benjamin, “So says the LORD: You are not to go up and fight against your brothers. Each man must return to his house, for this event is from Me.” So they obeyed the word of the LORD and turned back from attacking Jeroboam.

Jeroboam's Golden Calves

Then Jeroboam built Shechem in Mount Ephraim and lived there and went out from there and built Peniel. Jeroboam said in his heart, "The kingdom will return to the house of David. If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again to their lord, even to Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah."

At that point, the king got some advice and made two golden calves and said to the people, "It is too difficult for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt." He set one in Bethel, and he put the other in Dan. This was a sin, for the people went to worship before the one, even all the way in Dan.

He also made houses on high places and appointed priests from among all the people who were not Levites. Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like the feast in Judah, and he offered sacrifice on the altar. He did this in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he had made, and he stationed in Bethel the priests of the high places he had made. So he made offerings on the altar that he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, a holiday he imagined in his own heart, and ordained a feast for the children of Israel, and he sacrificed on the altar and burned incense.

Rehoboam Secures the Kingdom of Judah

So Rehoboam dwelled in Jerusalem and built siege cities in Judah. He built Bethlehem, Etam, Tekoa, Beth Zur *in the east*, Soko, Adullam, Gath, Mareshah *in the west*, Ziph, Adoraim, Lachish *in the south*, Azekah, Zorah, Aijalon *in the northwest*, and *central* Hebron, all of which were fortified cities in Judah and Benjamin. He strengthened the fortresses and set leaders in them with stockpiles of food, oil, and wine. And in all the cities he placed shields and spears, and he greatly strengthened these *places*. So he held Judah and Benjamin. And the priests and Levites in all Israel came before him from all their territories. For the Levites left their pasture lands and properties, and they traveled to Judah and Jerusalem because Jeroboam and his sons excluded them from serving as priests to the LORD. And he set for himself priests for the high places and for the goat and calf idols that he made. And those who set their hearts to seek the LORD God of Israel followed after them from all the tribes of Israel, and they came to Jerusalem to sacrifice to the LORD God of their fathers. So they strengthened the kingdom of Judah and supported Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, for three years, for they walked in the way of David and Solomon for three years.



The nation of Israel is now divided into two kingdoms- the Northern Kingdom (Israel) under the reign of Jeroboam, and the Southern Kingdom (Judah) under the reign of Rehoboam. The center of worship for Judah is the temple in Jerusalem. Israel's worship is now located at Dan and Bethel where Jeroboam erected the golden calves. To put this in an historical setting- this is about 925 B.C.

The Prophets from Judah and Bethel

A man of God came out of Judah (Southern Kingdom) to Bethel (in the Northern Kingdom) by the word of the LORD while Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense. He cried against the altar by the word of the LORD and said, "O altar, altar, thus says the LORD: 'A child named Josiah will be born in the house of David, and he will sacrifice upon you the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and these men's bones shall be burned upon you.'" He gave a sign the same day, saying, "This is the sign that the LORD has spoken: 'The altar will be torn apart, and the ashes that are upon it will be poured out.'"

When King Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God who had cried against the altar in Bethel, he reached out his hand from the altar, saying, "Arrest him!" And the hand that he put forth against him dried up so that he could not pull it back in again. The altar also was torn, and the ashes poured out from the altar, just as the man of God had said it would as a sign of the LORD. The king answered and said to the man of God, "Seek the face of the LORD your God, and pray for me, that my hand will be healed." And the man of God interceded with the LORD, and the king's hand was healed and became as it was before. The king said to the man of God, "Come home with me and refresh yourself, and I will give you a reward." The man of God said to the king, "If you were to give me half your house, I would not go with you, nor will I eat bread nor drink water in this place, for so I was commanded by the word of the LORD, saying: You shall eat no bread, nor drink water nor return by the same way that you came." So he went another way and did not return by the same way he came to Bethel.

Now there lived an old prophet in Bethel, and his sons came and told him all that the man of God had done that day in Bethel. They also told their father the words that he had spoken to the king. Their father said to them, "What way did he go?" For his sons had seen the way the man of God who came from Judah had gone. He said to his sons, "Saddle my donkey." So they saddled the donkey for him, and he rode on it. He went after the man of God and found him sitting under an oak, and he said to him, "Are you the man of God who came from Judah?" And he said, "I am." Then he said to him, "Come home with me and eat bread." The man of God from Judah said, "I may not return with you or go in with you, nor will I eat bread nor drink water with you in this place, for I was commanded by the word of the LORD: You shall eat no bread and drink no water there nor return by the way you came."

The prophet from Bethel said to him, "I am a prophet like you, and an angel spoke to me by the word of the LORD, saying, 'Bring him back with you into your house so that he may eat bread and drink water.'" But he had lied to him. So he went back with him to his house and ate bread and drank water.

Then as they sat at the table, the word of the LORD came to the prophet who brought him back, and he cried out to the man of God who came from Judah, saying, "Thus says the LORD: Since you have disobeyed the mouth of the LORD and have not kept the commandment that the LORD your God commanded you, but instead came back and have eaten bread and drunk water in the place of which the LORD told you to eat no bread and drink no water, your carcass will not be buried in the tomb of your fathers!"

After he had eaten bread and had drunk, he saddled the donkey for the prophet whom he had brought back. As he was going, a lion met him on the way and killed him, and his body was thrown in the road, and both the donkey and lion stood by it. Some men passed by and saw the body thrown in the road with the lion standing by the body, and they came and told the story in the city where the old prophet lived. When the prophet who brought him back from the way heard about it, he said, "It is the man of God who was disobedient to the word of the LORD, and thus the LORD has delivered him to the lion, which has torn and slain him, according to the word of the LORD that He spoke to him." He said to his sons, "Saddle my donkey," and they saddled it. He then went and found his body thrown in the road, and the donkey and the lion were still standing by the body. The lion had not eaten the body nor attacked the donkey. The prophet picked up the body of the man of God and laid it on his donkey and brought it back.

The old prophet came to the city to mourn and to bury him. He laid his body in his own tomb, and they mourned over him, saying, "Alas, my brother!" And after he had buried him, he said to his sons, "When I am dead, bury me in the grave in which the man of God is buried; lay my bones beside his bones. For the saying that he cried out by the word of the LORD against the altar in Bethel and against all the houses of the high places that are in the cities of Samaria shall surely come to pass."

After this event Jeroboam did not turn from his evil ways, but made priests for the high places again from among all the people. Any who would, he consecrated to be priests of the high places. This matter became sin to the house of Jeroboam, so as to cut it off and to destroy it from the face of the earth.

Ahijah Prophecies Against Jeroboam

At that time, Jeroboam's son Abijah became sick. Jeroboam said to his wife, "Please get up and disguise yourself, so that you will not be recognized as the wife of Jeroboam and go to Shiloh. There you will find Ahijah the prophet, who told me that I would be king over this people. Take ten loaves, cakes, and a jar of honey, and go to him. He will tell you what will happen to our child." Jeroboam's wife did so and arose and went to Shiloh, to the house of Ahijah.

But Ahijah could not see, for in his old age he had gone blind. The LORD said to Ahijah, "The wife of Jeroboam has come to ask you about her son, for he is sick. You shall say thus and thus to her, for when she comes, she will be disguised as another woman." And so when Ahijah heard the sound of her feet as she came in the door, he said, "Come in, wife of Jeroboam. Why do you disguise yourself as another? I have been sent to you with bad news. Go tell Jeroboam, 'Thus says the LORD God of Israel: I raised you up from among the people and made you prince over My people Israel, and took the kingdom away from the house of David and gave it you. Yet you have not been as My servant David, who kept My commandments and who followed Me with all his heart to do only that which was right in My eyes, but you have sinned more than all who were before you, for you have gone and made other gods and molded images and provoked Me to anger and have cast Me behind your back. Therefore I will bring disaster upon the house of Jeroboam and will cut off from Jeroboam all males, both slave and free in Israel, and will take away the remnant of the house of Jeroboam, as a man takes away refuse until it is all gone. Descendants of Jeroboam who die in the city will be eaten by dogs, and those who die in the field will be eaten by the birds of the air, for the LORD has spoken it.' Arise therefore and go to your own house. When your feet enter the city, the child will die. All Israel will mourn for him and bury him, for he alone from the house of Jeroboam will come to the grave, because in him there is found some good thing toward the LORD God of Israel. Moreover the LORD will raise up a king over Israel who will destroy the house of Jeroboam this day and from now on. For the LORD will smite Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water, and He will uproot Israel from this good land, which he gave to their fathers, and will scatter them beyond the river, because they have made their Asherah poles, provoking the LORD to anger. He shall give Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam who sinned and who led Israel to sin."

Jeroboam's wife arose and departed and came to Tirzah. As she arrived at the threshold of the door, the child died, and they buried him, and all Israel mourned for him, according to the word of the LORD, which He spoke by the hand of His servant Ahijah the prophet.

Meanwhile, in the Southern Kingdom (Judah)...

Rehoboam the son of Solomon reigned in Judah. Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the LORD had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel to put His name there. And his mother's name was Naamah, an Ammonitess.

Judah did evil in the sight of the LORD, and the people provoked Him to jealousy with the sins they committed, even worse than their fathers had done. For they also built high places and images and Asherah poles on every high hill and under every green tree. There were also male cult prostitutes in the land, and they did according to all the abominations of the nations that the LORD cast out before the children of Israel.

So King Rehoboam was strong and reigned in Jerusalem. For Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned for seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city that the LORD had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put His name there. His mother's name was Naamah the Ammonite. And he acted evil because he did not set his heart to seek out the LORD.

Rehoboam took Mahalath for a wife, the daughter of both Jerimoth the son of David and of Abihail the daughter of Eliab the son of Jesse, and she bore sons to him: Jeush, Shemariah, and Zaham. Then after her he took Maakah the daughter of Absalom. And she bore to him Abijah, Attai, Ziza, and Shelomith. And Rehoboam loved Maakah the daughter of Absalom more than his other wives and concubines (for he took eighteen wives and sixty concubines), and he had twenty-eight sons and sixty daughters.

And Rehoboam set Abijah the son of Maakah as chief and head over his brothers for he *planned* to make him king. And he was discerning and spread out all his sons to all the lands of Judah and Benjamin, even among the fortified cities, and he provided for them an abundance of provisions and wives.

Egypt Attacks Jerusalem (in Judah, the Southern Kingdom)

Now when the reign of Rehoboam was established and strong, he, and all of Israel (the term Israel here refers to the people of God, not the Northern Kingdom) with him, abandoned the law of the LORD. And in the fifth year of King Rehoboam, Shishak king of Egypt went up against Jerusalem for they had acted unfaithfully against the LORD, with one thousand two hundred chariots and sixty thousand horses. The people were without number who came with him from Egypt—Libyans, Sukkiktes, and Ethiopians. And he captured the fortified cities that were in Judah, and he came even to Jerusalem.

Then Shemaiah the prophet came to Rehoboam and the rulers of Judah who were assembled in Jerusalem before Shishak, and he said to them, "So the LORD says: You have abandoned Me, so I have abandoned you into the hand of Shishak." Then the king and the rulers of Israel humbled themselves and said, "The LORD is righteous." So when the LORD observed that they had humbled themselves, the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah, "They have humbled themselves, so I will not destroy them. I will let some of them escape, and My anger will not pour out against Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak. For they will be slaves to him so that they experience My labor and the labor of the kingdoms of other lands."

So Shishak king of Egypt went up against Jerusalem and took away the treasures of the house of the LORD and of the palace of the king. He took everything, even the gold shields that Solomon made. And King Rehoboam made bronze shields in their place and entrusted them to the hands of the rulers of the guards, those who guarded the entrance to the king's palace. And it happened that whenever the king came to the house of the LORD, the guards came and carried the *shields* and then returned them to the guardroom. And when he humbled himself, the anger of the LORD turned away from him so that there was not a complete annihilation. Moreover, there were some good things in Judah *during this time*.

In the fifth year of King Rehoboam, Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem. He took away all the treasures of the house of the Lord and the treasures of the king's house, even all the shields of gold which Solomon had made. King Rehoboam replaced them with bronze shields and committed them to the hands of the chief of the guard who guarded the king's house. And whenever the king entered the house of the Lord, the guards carried them and brought them back into the guard chamber.

Now, are not the acts of Rehoboam written from beginning to end in the annals of Shemaiah the prophet and Iddo the seer, according to genealogy? And there were battles between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all their days. And Rehoboam slept with his fathers and was buried in the City of David, and Abijah ruled in his place.

Now the rest of the acts of Rehoboam and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? There was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all their days. Rehoboam slept with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the City of David. And his mother's name was Naamah, an Ammonitess. And Abijah his son reigned in his stead.

Abijah (Rehoboam's Son) is now King of Judah (Southern Kingdom)

Now in the eighteenth year of King Jeroboam (of Israel, the Northern Kingdom) the son of Nebat (we will see these markers throughout the history of the kings- it sets the change in power in one kingdom in context of who is in power in the other kingdom), Abijah became king over Judah.

Abijah reigned three years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Maakah, the daughter of Abishalom. He walked in all the sins of his father that he had done before him, and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God as the heart of his father (ancestor) David had been. Nevertheless, for David's sake, the LORD his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem, to set up his son after him and to establish Jerusalem, because David did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD and did not turn aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter involving Uriah the Hittite.

In the eighteenth year of King Jeroboam, Abijah became king of Judah. He reigned for three years in Judah, and his mother's name was Micaiah, the granddaughter of Uriel of Gibeah. And there was a war between Abijah (Judah-Southern Kingdom) and Jeroboam (Israel- Northern Kingdom). Abijah set the battle in order with an army of valiant men of war, four hundred thousand choice men. Jeroboam also drew up battle lines against him with an army of eight hundred thousand men, mighty men of valor.

Then Abijah went up to Mount Zemaraim that is in the hills of Ephraim, and he said, "Listen to me, Jeroboam and all Israel! Do you all not know that the LORD God of Israel has perpetually given the kingdom of Israel to David, even to him and to his sons with a covenant of salt? And Jeroboam the son of Nebat, the servant of Solomon son of David, stood up and rebelled against his lord *Rehoboam*. Then vain, worthless men gathered together around him and defied Rehoboam son of Solomon. And Rehoboam was young and timid in heart and was not strong before them. And now you think that you can withstand before the kingdom of the LORD by the hand of the sons of David. And you all are a great multitude, and with you are the golden calves that Jeroboam has made for you to be gods. Have you all not driven out the priests of the LORD, even the Levites and sons of Aaron, and made for yourselves priests from the peoples of other lands? Whoever comes to be dedicated and has in his hand a young bull or seven rams becomes a priest to what is not a god. But for us, the LORD is our God, and we have not abandoned Him. And our priests serve the LORD and are sons of Aaron, Levites with their service. They sacrifice burnt offerings to the LORD every morning and evening and put out an incense of spices. They also set the showbread in place on the ritual table and set the golden lampstand with its lamps to burn every evening. For we keep the duty of the LORD our God, but you all have abandoned Him. God is with us as a leader, and His priests with their battle trumpets to call for

battle against you all. O sons of Israel, do not fight against the LORD the God of your fathers because you will not find success.”

So Jeroboam went around them with an ambush to come from behind them. Those from Israel were in front of Judah, while the ambush was behind them. Then Judah turned and saw that the battle was both in front of and behind them. Then they cried out to the LORD, and the priests sounded their trumpets. Then the men from Judah shouted out; and it happened when Judah shouted out, God struck down Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah. The men of Israel fled before Judah, and God gave them into their hand. Abijah and his people struck them down with a great slaughter, and the slain from Israel who fell that day were five hundred thousand choice men. So the sons of Israel were subdued at that time, and the people of Judah were strong for they depended on the LORD God of their fathers.

And Abijah chased after Jeroboam and captured cities from him: Bethel, Jeshanah, and Ephron with their surrounding villages. And Jeroboam did not again recover his strength in the days of Abijah, and the LORD struck down Jeroboam, and he died.

So Abijah grew strong and took fourteen wives and had twenty-two sons and sixteen daughters. And the remainder of the acts of Abijah, both his ways and words, are written in the story of the prophet Iddo.

The war begun between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continued all the days of his life. Now the rest of the acts of Abijah and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? And there was war between Abijah and Jeroboam. Abijah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the City of David, and Asa his son reigned in his place.

Asa (Abijah's Son) is now King of Judah (Southern Kingdom)

And Abijah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the City of David. Asa his son then reigned in his place. In his days the land was quiet for ten years.

Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the LORD his God. He took down the foreign altars and high places, and he shattered the pillars and cut down the images of Asherah. Then he urged Judah to seek the LORD the God of their fathers and to keep the law and commandments. And he also removed all the high places and incense altars in the cities in Judah. And the kingdom was at rest under Asa. He built fortified cities in Judah because the land was quiet; and there was no war in these years, for the LORD gave peace to him. And he said to Judah, “Let us build up these cities and let us surround them with walls, towers, gates, and bars for the land before us is still ours because we have sought after the LORD our God. We have sought Him, and He has given us peace all around.” So they built and had success.

And it happened that Asa had an army from Judah carrying large shields and spears numbering three hundred thousand. And from Benjamin he had an army carrying shields and bows numbering two hundred eighty thousand. All of these were mighty men of valor.

In the twentieth year of Jeroboam king of Israel, Asa became king over Judah. He reigned forty-one years in Jerusalem, and his grandmother's name was Maakah, the daughter of Abishalom. Asa did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father (ancestor) David had done. He expelled the male cult prostitutes from the land and removed all the idols that his fathers had made. In addition he even deposed his grandmother Maakah as queen, because she had made an idol in a grove. Asa destroyed her idol and burned it by the Kidron brook. But the high places were not all removed, even though Asa's heart was wholly devoted to the LORD all his days. He brought into the house of the LORD the things that both his father and he himself had dedicated, the silver and gold and cups.

Meanwhile, in the Northern Kingdom (Israel)...

The rest of the acts of Jeroboam, how he waged war and how he reigned, are written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel. Jeroboam reigned twenty-two years, and then he slept with his fathers, and Nadab, his son, reigned in his stead.

Jeroboam's son, Nadab succeeds his father after his death...

Nadab the son of Jeroboam began to reign over Israel in the second year of Asa king of Judah and reigned over Israel two years. He did evil in the sight of the Lord and walked in the way of his father and in his sin with which he made Israel to sin.

But his reign did not last long...

Baasha the son of Ahijah of the house of Issachar conspired against Nadab, and Baasha killed him at Gibbethon, which belonged to the Philistines, for Nadab and all Israel laid siege to Gibbethon. It was in the third year of Asa king of Judah that Baasha killed him and took his throne.

When he became king, Baasha killed all the house of Jeroboam. No one from Jeroboam's family was left breathing. He completely destroyed them, according to the word of the Lord which He spoke by His servant Ahijah the Shilonite, because of the sins of Jeroboam which he sinned and which he made Israel sin, by his provocation with which he provoked the Lord God of Israel to anger.

Now the rest of the acts of Nadab and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

And there was war between Asa king of Judah and Baasha king of Israel all their days.

In the third year of Asa king of Judah, Baasha the son of Ahijah began to reign over all Israel in Tirzah, and he did so twenty-four years. He did evil in the sight of the Lord and walked in the way of Jeroboam and in his sin with which he made Israel to sin.

Back to the action in Judah, under Asa's reign...

Zerah the Ethiopian Cushite came out against Judah with an army of a million men and three hundred chariots. And he came up to Mareshah. Then Asa went out to engage him, and they arranged for battle in the Valley of Zephathah near Mareshah. And Asa cried out the LORD his God, and said, "LORD, it is nothing with You to help, whether with many or with those who have no power. Help us, O LORD our God; for we trust in You, and in Your name we come against this multitude. O LORD, You are our God. Let no man prevail against You."

So the LORD struck down the Ethiopian Cushites before Asa and Judah, and the Cushites fled. Then Asa and those with him pursued them until Gerar. And the Cushites fell till there was not one left alive because they were struck down before the LORD and His army. And those *in Judah* carried off a very great plunder. And they struck down all the cities surrounding Gerar because the terror of the LORD was on them. And they plundered all the cities because there was a great amount of possessions in them. And they also struck the tents holding livestock, and they carried off sheep and a great amount of camels. Then they returned to Jerusalem.

The Reforms of Asa

Then the Spirit of God came on Azariah the son of Oded, and he went out to meet Asa and said to him, "Listen to me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: The LORD is with you while you are with Him. If you all seek Him, He will be found with you. But if you forsake Him, He will forsake you. For a long time Israel has been without the true God, and without a teaching priest and without law, but when in their trouble they turned to the LORD God of Israel, and sought Him, He was found by them. And at that time there was no peace to the one traveling in or out because there was a great panic on all those who dwelt in the land. They were broken to pieces, nation against nation and city against city, because God confused them with every type of distress. But you all must be strong and not lose heart, for there is a reward for your deeds."

And when Asa heard these words of the prophecy of *Azariah son of Oded* the prophet, he was encouraged and removed the detestable idols from the entire land of Judah and Benjamin and from the cities that he captured in the hills of Ephraim. And he repaired the altar of the LORD that was before the vestibule of the LORD. And he gathered together all of Judah and Benjamin and those who had settled among them from Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon, for these had come down to him from Israel in a great number when they saw that the LORD his God was with him.

These were gathered in Jerusalem in the third month in the fifteenth year in the reign of Asa. They sacrificed to the LORD that day from the plunder that they brought in, seven hundred oxen and seven thousand sheep. And they entered into a covenant to seek the LORD God of their fathers with all their heart and soul. But whoever would not seek the LORD God of Israel would be put to death, whether young or old, man or woman. They swore an oath to the LORD in a loud voice, with shouting, trumpets, and horns. And all Judah rejoiced over this oath because they swore with their whole heart and they sought Him with all their desire; and He was found by them, and the LORD gave them rest all around.

King Asa even removed his mother Maakah from being queen mother because she had made a detestable image for Asherah. Asa cut down her image, crushed it, and burned it in the Kidron Valley. But they did not remove the high places from Israel. Nevertheless the heart of Asa was wholly committed all his days. He brought into the house of God the sacred gifts of his father and his own sacred gifts—silver, gold, and utensils.

And there was no war until the thirty-fifth year of the reign of Asa.

Asa's Last Years

But in the thirty-sixth year of the reign of Asa, Baasha king of Israel went up against Judah and built Ramah and did not allow anyone to come in or go out to Asa king of Judah. Then Asa removed silver and gold from the storehouses of the house of the LORD and palace of the king, and he sent it to Ben-Hadad king of Aram in Syria, who lived in Damascus, saying, "There is a covenant between me and you as between my father and your father. I am sending you silver and gold. Go and break your covenant with Baasha king of Israel so that he might leave me." And Ben-Hadad listened to King Asa, and he sent the commanders of his armies against the cities of Israel. They struck down Ijon, Dan, Abel Maim, and all the depot cities of Naphtali. And it happened when Baasha heard this, that he stopped building Ramah and he ceased his work. Then King Asa took all of Judah, and they took the stones of Ramah and its timber that Baasha had used to build, and he built with them Geba and Mizpah.

Baasha king of Israel went up against Judah and fortified Ramah so he could prevent anyone from going out or coming in to Asa king of Judah. Then Asa took all the silver and the gold that were left in the treasures of the house of the LORD, as well as the treasures of the king's house, and delivered them into the hand of his

servants, and he sent them to Ben-Hadad, the son of Tabrimmon, the son of Hezion, king of Aram, who lived at Damascus, saying, "There is a treaty between me and you and between my father and your father. I have sent to you a present of silver and gold. Come and break your treaty with Baasha king of Israel, so he will depart from me." So Ben-Hadad listened to King Asa and sent the commanders of his armies against the cities of Israel and conquered Ijon, Dan, Abel Beth Maakah, and all Kinnereth, along with all the land of Naphtali. When Baasha heard about it, he halted the fortification of Ramah and moved to Tirzah. Then King Asa made a proclamation throughout all Judah—none was exempted—and they took away the stones of Ramah and the timber with which Baasha had built, and King Asa used them to build Geba of Benjamin as well as Mizpah.

And at that time Hanani the seer came to King Asa of Judah saying, "Because you depended on the king of Aram and did not depend on the LORD your God, therefore the army of the king of Aram escaped from your hand. Were not the Cushites and Libyans a very large army with chariots and horses, but when you depended on the LORD, He gave them to your hand. For the eyes of the LORD move about on all the earth to strengthen the heart that is completely toward Him. You have acted foolishly in this, and from this point forward you will have wars." Then Asa was angry with the seer and placed him in prison stocks, for he was enraged by these words. Asa even oppressed some of the people during this time.

And...meanwhile in the Kingdom of Israel (Northern Kingdom)

Then the word of the LORD came to Jehu the son of Hanani against King Baasha, saying, "I exalted you out of the dust and made you prince over My people Israel, and you have walked in the way of Jeroboam and have made My people Israel to sin, to provoke Me to anger with their sins. See, I will take away the posterity of Baasha and the posterity of his house and will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat. Those from the house of Baasha who die in the city will be eaten by dogs, and those who die in the fields will be eaten by the birds of the air."

Now the rest of the acts of Baasha and what he did and his might, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? So Baasha slept with his fathers and was buried in Tirzah, and Elah his son reigned in his place. And so it was by the hand of the prophet Jehu the son of Hanani that the word of the LORD came against Baasha and his house, for all the evil that he did in the sight of the LORD in provoking Him to anger with the work of his hands because he acted like the house of Jeroboam and also because he killed it.

Now, Elah, the son of Baasha begins his reign over Israel...but it doesn't last long...

In the twenty-sixth year of Asa king of Judah, Elah the son of Baasha began to reign over Israel in Tirzah, and he did so two years. His servant Zimri, commander of half his chariots, conspired against him, and when he was in Tirzah, drinking himself drunk in the house of Arza, manager of his house in Tirzah, Zimri went in and smote him and killed him. This took place in the twenty-seventh year of Asa king of Judah, and Zimri reigned in his place.

Now the rest of the acts of Elah and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

Now Zimri begins his reign over Israel... but again, it's a short one...

When Zimri began to reign, as soon as he was seated on his throne, he executed all the household of Baasha. He left no males, neither of his relatives nor of his friends. Thus Zimri destroyed all the house of Baasha, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke against Baasha by Jehu the prophet, because of all the sins

of Baasha and the sins of Elah his son, by which they sinned and by which they made Israel to sin in provoking the LORD God of Israel to anger with their vanities.

In the twenty-seventh year of Asa king of Judah, Zimri reigned seven days in Tirzah. Now the troops were encamped against Gibbethon, which belonged to the Philistines. The troops who were encamped heard how Zimri had conspired and had slain the king. As a result, all Israel made Omri, the commander of the army, king over Israel that day in the camp.

And now, it's Omri's turn to be King of Israel

Omri went up from Gibbethon and all Israel with him, and they besieged Tirzah. When Zimri saw that the city had fallen, he went into the citadel of the king's house and burned the king's house over him with fire, and he died, because of his sins which he sinned in doing evil in the sight of the LORD, in walking in the way of Jeroboam and in his sin which he did to make Israel to sin. Now the rest of the acts of Zimri and his treason, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

Then the people of Israel were divided into two parts. Half of the people followed Tibni the son of Ginath to make him king, and half followed Omri. But the people who followed Omri defeated the people who followed Tibni, the son of Ginath. So Tibni died, and Omri reigned.

In the thirty-first year of Asa king of Judah, Omri began to reign over Israel, and he did so twelve years. He reigned six years in Tirzah. He bought the hill of Samaria from Shemer for two talents of silver. He fortified the hill and named the city he built after the name of Shemer, owner of the hill, calling it "Samaria." But Omri did evil in the eyes of the LORD and did worse than all who preceded him, for he walked in all the ways of Jeroboam the son of Nebat and in his sin with which he made Israel to sin to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger with their vanities. Now the rest of the acts Omri performed and his might that he showed, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? So Omri slept with his fathers and was buried in Samaria, and Ahab his son reigned in his place.

And now, Ahab begins his reign as King of Israel...

In the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, Ahab the son of Omri began to reign over Israel, and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty-two years. Ahab the son of Omri did more evil in the sight of the LORD than all who were before him. The sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat were seen as minor for him to walk in, for he took Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians, as his wife and went and served Baal and worshipped him. He raised an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. Ahab made an Asherah and did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel who preceded him. In his days, Hiel the Bethelite built Jericho. He laid the foundation at the expense of his firstborn Abiram and set up the gates at the cost of the life of his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the LORD, which He spoke by Joshua the son of Nun.

And Back in Judah (Southern Kingdom), Asa's Long Reign Ends as He Dies...

The rest of all the acts of Asa and all his might and all that he did and the cities that he built, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? When he was old, he got a disease in his feet. Asa then slept with his fathers and was buried with them in the city of his father David, and Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his place.

The events of Asa from beginning to end are written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. In the thirty-ninth year of the reign of Asa, he had a sickness in his feet until his sickness became grave. Even in his disease he did not seek after the LORD, but the physicians. So Asa slept with his fathers; he died in the forty-

first year of his reign. And they buried him in the tomb that he cut for himself in the City of David. And they placed him on a place filled with all types of spices mixed with ointments, and then they burned him up with a very great conflagration.

Jehoshaphat, Asa's son takes over the reign of Judah (Southern Kingdom)

Then Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his place, and he grew strong against Israel. He put an army in all the fortified cities of Judah and set military garrisons in the land of Judah, even in the cities of Ephraim that Asa his father had captured.

Now the LORD was with Jehoshaphat, for he walked in the previous ways of David his father (ancestor), and he did not seek out the Baal cult. For he sought out the God of his fathers and walked in his commandments, rather than the deeds of Israel. So the LORD made firm the kingdom in his hand, and all Judah gave a tribute to Jehoshaphat. So he had an abundance of riches and honor. His heart was raised up for the ways of the LORD. He even removed the high places and Asherah poles from Judah.

In the third year of his reign he sent officials, Ben-Hail, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nethanel, and Micaiah, to teach in the cities of Jerusalem, and with them were also the Levites: Shemaiah, Nethaniah, Zebadiah, Asahel, Shemiramoth, Jehonathan, Adonijah, Tobijah, and Tob-Adonijah, who were Levites. And with these were also Elishama and Jehoram, who were priests. They taught *the people* in Judah, and they used the Book of the Law of the LORD and they traveled about all the cities of Judah and taught the people.

The terror of the LORD came on all the kingdoms of the land that surrounded Judah, and they did not bring war against Jehoshaphat. Some from the Philistine peoples brought gifts to Jehoshaphat such as silver for tribute. The Arabians even brought seven thousand seven hundred rams and seven thousand seven hundred goats to him. Jehoshaphat continued to increase in greatness, and he built citadels and storehouses in Judah. And he had much property in the cities of Judah, and the men of war, mighty men of valor, were in Jerusalem.

This was their divisions by the houses of their father: From Judah, the commanders of thousands: Adnah the commander with three hundred thousand mighty men of valor. Beside him was Jehohanan the commander with two hundred eighty thousand mighty men of war. Beside him was Amasiah the son of Zikri, a volunteer for the LORD with two hundred thousand mighty men of war. From Benjamin: Eliada a mighty man of war with two hundred thousand men armed with bow and shield. Beside him was Jehozabad with one hundred and eighty thousand equipped for warfare. These were serving the king in addition to those the king placed in the fortified cities throughout Judah.

Back to the Kingdom of Israel under the reign of Ahab...

We meet the prophet, Elijah...

Elijah predicts the drought...

Now Elijah the Tishbite, who was one of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the LORD God of Israel lives before whom I stand, there will not be dew or rain these years except by my word." The word of the LORD came to him, saying, "Go from here and turn eastward and hide by the Kerith brook, which is east of the Jordan. You shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there." So he went and did according to the word of the LORD, for he went and lived by the Kerith brook, which is east of the

Jordan. The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook.

After some time, the brook dried up because there had been no rain in the land. The word of the LORD came to him, saying, "Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and live there. I have commanded a widow there to provide for you." So he got up and went to Zarephath, and when he came to the gate of the city, a widow was there gathering sticks. He called to her and said, "Please get a small cup of water for me to drink." As she was going to get it, he called to her and said, "Please bring me a morsel of bread in your hand." She said, "As the LORD your God lives, I do not have bread, but only a handful of meal in a barrel and a little oil in a jar. I am gathering two sticks, that I can go in and make it for me and my son, so we may eat it and die."

Elijah said to her, "Do not fear; go and do as you have said, but make a little cake for me first, and bring it to me, and afterward, make some for your son and you, for thus says the LORD God of Israel: The barrel of meal will not run out, nor will the jar of oil empty, until the day that the LORD sends rain upon the earth." She went and did what Elijah told her to do, and she, he, and her household ate many days. The barrel of meal did not run out, nor did the jar of oil empty, according to the word of the LORD, which He spoke by Elijah.

Later on, the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, became terribly sick, so much so that he had no breath left in him. She said to Elijah, "What do I have to do with you, O you man of God? Have you come to remind me of my sin and to kill my son?" And he said to her, "Give me your son," and he took him out of her arms and carried him up to a loft where he slept and laid him on his own bed.²⁰ He cried to the LORD and said, "O LORD, my God, have You brought tragedy upon the widow with whom I live by killing her son?" And he stretched himself upon the child three times and cried to the LORD and said, "O LORD, my God, I pray that You let this child's soul come into him again." The LORD heard the voice of Elijah, and the soul of the child came into him again, and he was revived. Elijah took the child and brought him down out of the chamber into the house and returned him to his mother, and Elijah said, "See, your son lives!" The woman said to Elijah, "Now, because of this, I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is truth!"

Elijah Confronts Ahab

After many days, in the third year, the word of the LORD came to Elijah, saying, "Go and present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain upon the earth." Elijah went to show himself to Ahab. And there was a great famine in Samaria.

Ahab called Obadiah, who was the governor of his house. (Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly. When Jezebel killed the prophets of the LORD, Obadiah took a hundred prophets and hid them in groups of fifty in a cave and fed them with bread and water.) And Ahab said to Obadiah, "Go into the land, to all the springs of water and to all the brooks. Perhaps we will find grass to save the horses and mules, so that we do not lose all the beasts." So they divided the land between them to search throughout it. Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself.

As Obadiah was going along, he met Elijah, and he recognized him and fell on his face and said, "Is that you, my lord Elijah?" And he answered him, "I am. Go, tell your lord, 'Elijah is here.'" He said, "What evil have I done that you would hand your servant into the hand of Ahab to put me to death? As the LORD your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom where my lord has not looked for you, and when they said, 'He is not here,' he made the kingdom and nation swear that they could not find you, and now you say, 'Go, tell your lord, 'Elijah is here!'' As soon as I am gone from you, the Spirit of the LORD will carry you to a place I do not know, and so when I come and tell Ahab and he cannot find you, he will execute me. But I, your servant, have feared the LORD since my youth. Were you not told what I did when Jezebel killed the prophets of the LORD, how I hid

a hundred men of the LORD's prophets in groups of fifty in a cave and fed them with bread and water? And now you say, 'Go, tell your lord, "Elijah is here,"' and he will execute me." Elijah said, "As the LORD of Hosts lives, before whom I stand, I will surely show myself to him today."

Elijah and the Prophets of Baal

So Obadiah went to meet Ahab and told him. And Ahab went to meet Elijah. When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, "Are you he that troubles Israel?" And he answered, "I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house, in that you have forsaken the commandments of the LORD and you have followed the Baals. Now send word out and gather for me all Israel on Mount Carmel, along with the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah who eat at Jezebel's table."

So Ahab called out all the children of Israel and gathered the prophets together on Mount Carmel. Elijah came to all the people and said, "How long will you stay between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him, but if Baal, then follow him." And the people did not say a word.

Then Elijah said to the people, "I alone remain a prophet of the LORD, but Baal's prophets number four hundred and fifty men. Therefore, let them give us two bulls, and let them choose one bull for themselves and cut it in pieces and lay it on some wood, but do not light a fire under it, and I will prepare the other bull, lay it on some wood, and not light a fire underneath it. And you call on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD, and the God that answers by fire, let Him be God." And all the people answered and said, "It is well spoken."

Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, "Choose one bull for yourselves and prepare it first, for there are many of you, and call on the name of your god, but do not light a fire underneath." They took the bull which was given to them, and they prepared it and called on the name of Baal from morning until noon, saying, "O Baal, hear us." But there was no voice, and no one answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made. By noon, Elijah mocked them, saying, "Cry out loud, for he is a god. Either he is talking or is gone away or is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and needs to be awakened." They cried out loud and cut themselves with knives and spears according to their custom until the blood gushed out on them. And as midday passed, they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice. But there was no voice. No one answered, no one paid attention.

Elijah said to all the people, "Come near to me." And all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD that was broken down. Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD came saying, "Israel shall be your name," and he built an altar in the name of the LORD with stones, and he made a trench around the altar, so deep that it could contain two seahs of seed. He arranged the wood and cut the bull in pieces and laid him on the wood and said, "Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice and on the wood." He said, "Do it a second time," and they did it a second time. And he said, "Do it a third time," and they did it the third time. The water ran all around the altar and also filled the trench with water.

At the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, Elijah the prophet came near and said, "The LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and that I am Your servant and that I have done all these things at Your word. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, so that this people may know that You are the LORD God and that You have turned their hearts back again." Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice and the wood and the stones and the dust and licked up the water that was in the trench. When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, "The LORD, He is God! The LORD, He is God!" Elijah said to them, "Arrest the prophets of Baal, and do not let one of them escape." And they arrested them, and Elijah brought them down to the Kishon brook and executed them there.

End of the Drought

Elijah said to Ahab, "Get up, eat and drink, for there is a sound of a heavy rainfall." So Ahab got up to eat and drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel, and he threw himself down on the ground and put his face between his knees. And he said to his servant, "Go up now, and look toward the sea." And he went up and looked and said, "There is nothing." And he said, "Go again," seven times. On the seventh time, he said, "A small cloud as small as a man's hand is rising out of the sea." And he said, "Go up and say to Ahab, 'Mount your chariot and get down, so that the rain does not stop you.'" In the meantime, the sky turned black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode and went to Jezreel. The hand of the LORD was on Elijah, and he girded up his loins and ran ahead of Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.

Elijah Flees from Jezebel

And Ahab told his wife Jezebel all that Elijah had done and how he had executed all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So let the gods do to me and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time." When he saw that she was serious, he arose and ran for his life to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there. But he went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a juniper tree and asked that he might die, saying, "It is enough! Now, O LORD, take my life, for I am not better than my fathers." As he lay and slept under the juniper tree, an angel touched him and said to him, "Arise and eat." He looked, and there was a cake baked on coals and a jar of water at his head. And he ate and drank and then lay down again. The angel of the LORD came again a second time and touched him and said, "Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for you." He arose and ate and drank and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mountain of God.

Elijah Hears the Voice of the LORD

He came to a cave and camped there, and the word of the LORD came to him, and He said to him, "Why are you here, Elijah?"

And he said, "I have been very zealous for the LORD, Lord of Hosts, for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, thrown down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword, and I alone am left, and they seek to take my life."

He said, "Go and stand on the mountain before the LORD."

And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind split the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. And after the wind, an earthquake came, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake, a fire came, but the LORD was not in the fire, and after the fire, a still, small voice. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood in the entrance to the cave.

And a voice came to him and said, "Why are you here, Elijah?"

And he said, "I have been very zealous for the LORD, Lord of Hosts, because the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, thrown down Your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword, and I alone am left, and they seek to take my life."

The LORD said to him, "Go, return on the road through the Wilderness of Damascus, and when you arrive, anoint Hazael to be king over Aram. And you shall anoint Jehu, the son of Nimshi, to be king over Israel, and

you shall anoint Elisha, the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah, to be prophet in your place. He who escapes the sword of Hazael will be killed by Jehu, and he who escapes the sword of Jehu will be killed by Elisha. Still, I have preserved seven thousand men in Israel for Myself, all of whose knees have not bowed to Baal and whose mouths have not kissed him."

The Call of Elisha

So he departed from there and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him and he with the twelfth, and Elijah passed by him and threw his cloak on him. He left the oxen and ran after Elijah and said, "Please let me kiss my father and mother, and then I will follow you." And he said to him, "Go back, for what have I done to you?" So he returned from following him and took a yoke of oxen and sacrificed them and boiled their flesh with the yokes from the oxen and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he got up and went after Elijah and ministered to him.

Back to Ahab, King of Israel (Northern Kingdom)...

Israel Faces a Challenge from Ben-Hadad and Forms an Alignment

Now Ben-Hadad the king of Aram gathered his army together. Thirty-two kings were with him, with horses and chariots, and he went up and besieged Samaria (the capital city of the Northern Kingdom, Israel) and fought against it. He sent messengers into the city to Ahab king of Israel and said to him, "Thus says Ben-Hadad: Your silver and gold is mine, as are your most attractive wives and children." The king of Israel answered, "My lord, O king, just as you have said, I and all that I own are yours."

The messengers came again and said, "Thus says Ben-Hadad: Although I have said that you must give me your silver and gold, your wives and your children, instead I will send my servants tomorrow about this time, and they will search your house and the houses of your servants, and whatever is precious to you, they will put it in their hands and take it away."

Then the king of Israel called all the elders of the land and said, "Please notice how this man is looking for trouble, for he has demanded I give him my wives and children and my silver and gold, and I have not denied his request." All the elders and all the people said to him, "Do not listen to him or consent to his demands." Therefore he said to the messengers of Ben-Hadad, "Tell my lord the king: I will comply with the first request of your servant, but this thing I will not do." And the messengers departed and brought him word again. Then Ben-Hadad sent messengers to him and said, "The gods do to me and then some if the dust of Samaria shall suffice for handfuls for all the people who follow me." The king of Israel answered, "Tell him: Let not he who puts on his armor boast himself as he who takes it off." When Ben-Hadad heard this message as he was drinking with the kings in the pavilions, he said to his servants, "Station yourselves!" And they stationed themselves against the city.

Then a prophet came to Ahab king of Israel, saying, "Thus says the LORD: Have you seen this great multitude? See, I will deliver it into your hand this day, and you shall know that I am the LORD." Ahab asked, "By whom?" And he said, "Thus says the LORD: By the young leaders of the provinces." Then he said, "Who shall order the battle?" And he answered, "You." Then he counted the young leaders of the provinces, and they were two hundred and thirty-two, and after them he counted all the people, all the children of Israel, and had seven thousand. They went out at noon. But Ben-Hadad and the thirty-two kings who helped him were getting drunk in the pavilions. The young leaders of the provinces went out first.

Ben-Hadad sent out scouts, and they told him, "Men from Samaria have come out." He said, "If they have come out peacefully, take them alive, and if they have come out for battle, take them alive." So these young

leaders of the provinces came out of the city, followed by the army. Each one killed his man, and the Arameans fled with Israel pursuing them, but Ben-Hadad, the king of Aram, escaped on a horse with the horsemen. The king of Israel (Ahab) went out and attacked the horses and chariots and killed a great number of Arameans.

The prophet came to the king of Israel and said, "Go, strengthen yourself and prepare, and see what you do, for next year the king of Aram will come up against you."

The servants of the king of Aram said to him, "Their gods are gods of the hills. That is why they were stronger than us, but if we fight against them in the plain, we will surely be stronger than they. Do this: Dismiss the kings, each from his position, and put commanders in their places, and assemble an army like the army that you lost, horse for horse and chariot for chariot, and we will fight them in the plain and will surely be stronger than they." And he listened to their advice and followed it.

The next year Ben-Hadad assembled the Arameans and went up to Aphek to fight against Israel. The children of Israel were assembled and were all present, and they went against them, and the children of Israel camped in front of them like two little flocks of kids, while the Arameans filled the country.

A man of God came and spoke to the king of Israel and said, "Thus says the LORD: Because the Arameans have said, 'The LORD is God of the hills, but He is not God of the valleys,' I will deliver all this great multitude into your hand, and you will know that I am the LORD."

They camped opposite each other for seven days, and on the seventh day, the battle was joined. The children of Israel killed a hundred thousand Aramean footmen in one day. But the rest fled into the city of Aphek, where a wall fell on twenty-seven thousand of the men who were left. And Ben-Hadad fled and came into the city into an inner chamber. His servants said to him, "We have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings. Please let us put sackcloth on our loins and ropes on our heads and go out to the king of Israel. Perhaps he will spare your life." So they girded sackcloth on their loins and put ropes on their heads and came to the king of Israel and said, "Your servant Ben-Hadad says, 'Please let me live.'" And he said, "Is he still alive? He is my brother!" Now the men were diligently looking for a positive sign and quickly took hold of it, and they said, "Your brother Ben-Hadad!" Then he said, "Go. You bring him." Then Ben-Hadad came to him and got into the chariot. Ben-Hadad said to him, "I will restore the cities which my father took from your father, and you shall make streets for yourself in Damascus, as my father made in Samaria." Then Ahab said, "I will send you away with this covenant." So he made a covenant with him and sent him away.

A Prophet Condemns Ahab

Speaking in the word of the LORD, a certain man of the sons of the prophets said to his neighbor, "Strike me, please." But the man refused to strike him. Then he said to him, "Because you have not obeyed the voice of the LORD, as soon as you leave me, a lion will kill you." And as soon as he left him, a lion found and killed him. Then he found another man and said, "Strike me, please." And the man struck him so that he was wounded. So the prophet departed and waited by the road for the king and disguised himself with ashes on his face. ³As the king passed by, he cried to the king and said, "Your servant went out into the midst of the battle, and a man turned aside and brought a man to me and said, 'Keep this man, and if by any means he goes missing, then your life shall be given for his life, or else you shall pay a talent of silver.' As your servant was busy here and there, he disappeared." And the king of Israel said to him, "So shall your judgment be; you have decided it yourself." He quickly took the ashes away from his face, and the king of Israel recognized him as one of the prophets. He said to him, "Thus says the LORD, 'Because you have let go out of your hand a man whom I had appointed to utter destruction, you shall pay for his life with your life and his people with your people.'" The king of Israel went to his house in Samaria angry and depressed.

Naboth's Vineyard

Now Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard in Jezreel right by the palace of Ahab king of Samaria (Israel). And after this Ahab spoke to Naboth, saying, "Give me your vineyard, so that I can have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near to my house, and I will give you a better vineyard for it, or if you prefer, I will give you its worth in money." Naboth said to Ahab, "The LORD forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers. Ahab returned home angry and depressed because of the answer Naboth the Jezreelite had given him, for he had said, "I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers." He lay down on his bed and sulked and would not eat any bread. But Jezebel his wife came to him and said, "Why is your spirit so sad that you refuse to eat bread?" And he said to her, "Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite and said to him, 'Give me your vineyard for money; or else, if you prefer, I will give you another vineyard for it.' And he answered, 'I will not give you my vineyard.'"

Jezebel his wife said to him, "Are you not the governor of the kingdom of Israel? Get up and eat bread, and let your heart be happy, for I will get the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite for you." So she wrote letters in Ahab's name and sealed them with his seal and sent the letters to the elders and to the nobles that were in the city where Naboth lived. In the letters she wrote, "Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people, and set two men, sons of Belial, before him, to bear witness against him, saying, 'You blasphemed God and the king.' And then carry him out and stone him, so that he will die."

The men of his city, the elders and the nobles who lived in his city, did as Jezebel had sent word to them, as it was written in the letters that she had sent to them. They proclaimed a fast and set Naboth on high among the people. Two men, children of Belial, came in and sat in front of him, and the men of Belial witnessed against Naboth in the presence of the people, saying, "Naboth blasphemed God and the king." Then they carried him out of the city and stoned him to death. Then they sent word to Jezebel, saying, "Naboth has been stoned and is dead."

When Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned and was dead, she said to Ahab, "Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to sell to you for money, for Naboth is not alive, but dead." When Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, he got up to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it.

Elijah Returns to the Story and The LORD Condemns Ahab

The word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying: Arise, go down to meet Ahab, king of Israel, who is in Samaria. He is now in the vineyard of Naboth, where he has gone down to possess it. You shall speak to him, saying, "Thus says the LORD: Have you killed and also taken possession?" And you shall speak to him, saying, "Thus says the LORD: In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, dogs will lick your own blood!"

Ahab said to Elijah, "Have you found me, my enemy? And he answered, "I have found you, because you have sold yourself to work evil in the sight of the LORD. 'See, I will bring disaster upon you and will take away your posterity and will cut off all your males, both free and slave, who are left in Israel, and will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, for the provocation with which you have provoked Me to anger and made Israel to sin.' The LORD also spoke of Jezebel, saying, 'The dogs will eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.' Those from Ahab's family who die in the city will be eaten by dogs, and those who die in the field will be eaten by birds of the air."

But there were none compared to Ahab, who sold himself to evil deeds in the sight of the LORD, which Jezebel his wife stirred up. He performed the most abominable act in following idols like the Amorites, whom

the LORD cast out before the children of Israel. When Ahab heard those words, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth on his flesh and fasted and lay in sackcloth and walked meekly. The word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, "See how Ahab humbles himself before Me? Because he humbles himself before Me, I will not bring the disaster during his lifetime, but during his son's lifetime I will bring the disaster on his household."

Micaiah Prophecies Against Ahab

And there were three years without war between Aram and Israel. In the third year, Jehoshaphat king of Judah went to visit the king of Israel. The king of Israel said to his servants, "You know that Ramoth in Gilead is ours, but we have done nothing to take it out of the hand of the king of Aram!" And he said to Jehoshaphat, "Will you go with me to battle Ramoth Gilead?" And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, "I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses." Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, "Please ask for a word from the LORD today." Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, approximately four hundred men, and said to them, "Shall I go against Ramoth Gilead to battle, or shall I wait?" And they said, "Go up, for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king."

Jehoshaphat said, "Is there not a prophet of the LORD here whom we can ask?" And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "There is still one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we can inquire of the LORD. But I hate him because he never prophesies good for me, but always evil." And Jehoshaphat said, "Let not the king say so." Then the king of Israel called an officer and said, "Quickly, bring Micaiah the son of Imlah."

Now Jehoshaphat had great riches and honor, and he married into the family of Ahab. At the end of some years he went down to Ahab in Samaria. And Ahab slaughtered a great amount of sheep and oxen for Jehoshaphat and those who journeyed with him and then lured him up to Ramoth Gilead. And King Ahab of Israel said to King Jehoshaphat of Judah, "Will you go up with me to Ramoth Gilead?" And he responded, "I am as you are, and as your people also my people are. We will be with you in this war." And Jehoshaphat further said to the king of Israel, "Inquire today the word of the LORD on this." So the king of Israel gathered together four hundred prophets, and he inquired from them, "Should I go up to Ramoth Gilead for battle, or should I cease from this?" They said, "Go up, for God will give this to the hand of the king."

But Jehoshaphat said, "Is there not still here another prophet for the LORD from whom we might inquire?" Then the king of Israel responded to Jehoshaphat, "There is still one man from whom we can seek the LORD, but I hate him because he does not prophesy anything good for me but always disaster. He is Micaiah the son of Imlah." And Jehoshaphat said, "May the king not speak like this." So the king of Israel called to a court eunuch and said, "Hurry and bring Micaiah the son of Imlah."

The king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah each put on his robes and sat on his throne at the entrance of the gate of Samaria, and all the prophets prophesied before them. Zedekiah the son of Kenaanah made horns of iron and said, "Thus says the LORD: With these you shall push the Arameans until you have consumed them." All the prophets prophesied similarly, saying, "Go up to Ramoth Gilead and prosper, for the LORD will deliver it into the king's hand."

The servant who had gone to get Micaiah spoke to him, saying, "See here, the words of the prophets unanimously declare success for the king. Please let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak that which is good." Micaiah said, "As the LORD lives, I will speak whatever the LORD says to me." So he came to the king. And the king said to him, "Micaiah, shall we go against Ramoth Gilead to battle, or shall we wait?" And he answered him, "Go and prosper, for the LORD will deliver it into the hand of the king." The king said to him, "How many times must I admonish you to tell me only the truth in the name of the LORD?" And he

said, "I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep without a shepherd, and the LORD said, 'These have no master. Let every man return to his own house in peace.'"

The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Did I not tell you that he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?" And he said, "Hear, therefore, the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing beside Him on His right hand and on His left. The LORD said, 'Who will persuade Ahab so that he will go up and die at Ramoth Gilead?' And one said this, and another said that. Then a spirit came forth and stood before the LORD and said, 'I will persuade him.' The LORD said to him, 'How?' And he said, 'I will go and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' And He said, 'You will be successful and persuade him. Go forth, and do so.' Now therefore, the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouths of all your prophets here, and He has spoken evil concerning you!"

Then Zedekiah the son of Kenaanah walked up and struck Micaiah on the cheek and said, "Which way did the spirit of the LORD go from me in order to speak to you?" And Micaiah said, "You will see in that day, when you go into an inner chamber to hide." The king of Israel said, "Take Micaiah back to Amon the governor of the city and to Joash the king's son, and say, 'Thus says the king: Put this man in the prison, and feed him with reduced rations of bread and water until I return safely.'" Micaiah said, "If you return safely, the LORD has not spoken through me." And he said, "Listen, all you people!"

And the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah were sitting on their own thrones, clothed in their royal garments, at the threshing floor at the entrance at the gate of Samaria, and all the prophets were prophesying before them. Then Zedekiah the son of Kenaanah made for himself iron horns, and he said, "Thus says the LORD: With these you will thrust out the Arameans in Syria until they are finished." And all the prophets were prophesying the same, "Go up to Ramoth Gilead and find success, because the LORD has given the king into your hands."

And the messenger who went to call Micaiah said to him, "The words of the prophets are as one voice and *only* for good to the king, so may your word be like one of them, and you speak favorably." And Micaiah said, "As the LORD lives, whatever my God says, that will I speak." When he came to the king, the king said to him, "Micaiah, should we go up to Ramoth Gilead for battle, or should I cease?" He said, "All of you go up and be successful, and they will be given into your hands." Then the king said to him, "How many times must I cause you to swear that you speak to me only truth in the name of the LORD?" Then he said, "I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains like sheep that have no shepherd. The LORD said, 'There are no masters for them. Let each man return to his home in peace.'"

Then the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Did I not say to you that he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?" So the *prophet* said, "Now hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne and the heavenly assembly was standing at His right and His left. And the LORD said, 'Who will deceive Ahab king of Israel so that he might go up and fall at Ramoth Gilead?' One was saying one thing, and another was saying something else. Then a spirit came out and stood before the LORD, and he said, 'I will deceive him.' Then the LORD said to him, 'How?' Then he said, 'I will go out and be a spirit of deception in the mouth of all the prophets.' Then the LORD said, 'You will deceive and find success. Go out and do this.' Now see that the LORD has put a spirit of deception in the mouth of your prophets. So the LORD has declared disaster over you."

Then Zedekiah the son of Kenaanah came near to Micaiah and struck him on the cheek. And he said, "Which way then did the spirit from the LORD pass from me to speak with you?" Then Micaiah said, "You will see *it* on the day when you enter an inner chamber to hide yourself." And the king of Israel said, "Seize Micaiah and take him to Amon, the governor of the city, and to Joash the son of the king, and you will say,

'So says the king: Put him in a prison, and feed him a little food and water until I return in peace.' " Then Micaiah said, "If you certainly return in peace, then the LORD has not spoken by me. Listen, all you people!

Ahab Dies in Battle

So Ahab the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramoth Gilead. The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "I will disguise myself and enter into the battle, but you wear your robes." And the king of Israel disguised himself and went into the battle. But the king of Aram ordered his thirty-two commanders who had control over his chariots, saying, "Fight neither against small nor great, but only against the king of Israel." So when the commanders of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, they said, "Surely it is the king of Israel." And they turned aside to fight against him, and Jehoshaphat cried out. When the commanders of the chariots realized that it was not the king of Israel, they turned away from pursuing him.

A certain man drew a bow at random and struck the king of Israel between the joints of the armor, and because of this, he said to the driver of his chariot, "Turn around and carry me out of the battle, for I am wounded." The battle intensified that day, and the king was propped up in his chariot against the Arameans and died that evening, and the blood ran out of the wound into the floor of the chariot. A proclamation went throughout the army as the sun was setting, saying, "Every man is to return to his city, and every man is to return to his own country."

So Ahab, the king of Israel, died and was brought to Samaria, and they buried him there. The chariot was washed in the pool of Samaria, and the dogs licked up the king's blood, and they washed his armor according to the word which the LORD spoke.

So Ahab the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramoth Gilead. Then the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "I will disguise myself and go into battle, but you will put on your clothes." So the king of Israel disguised himself, and they both entered into battle. And the king of Aram ordered the commanders of his chariots, "Do not wage war with the small or great but with the king of Israel alone." And it happened when the commanders of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat they said, "It is the king of Israel." So they turned on him to wage war. But Jehoshaphat cried out, and the LORD helped him, then God drew them away from the *king*. And it happened when the commanders of the chariots saw that he was not the king of Israel, then they turned away from him.

But a man pulled his bow at random and struck the king of Israel between his armor scales and body armor. He said to the commander of the chariot, "Turn and remove me from the battle because I am wounded." And the battle continued on that day, and the king of Israel was set up in his chariot before the Arameans until evening. Then he died when the sun set.

Now the rest of the acts of Ahab and all that he did and the ivory house that he built and all the cities that he built, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? So Ahab slept with his fathers. And Ahaziah his son reigned in his place.

Ahab's Son, Ahaziah, Takes Over the Reign of Israel (Northern Kingdom)

Ahaziah the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and he reigned two years over Israel. He did evil in the sight of the LORD and walked in the way of his father and in the way of his mother and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat who made Israel sin, for he served Baal and worshipped him and provoked the LORD God of Israel to anger, according to all that his father had done.

Back to the Kingdom of Judah

...and the Continued Reign of King Jehoshaphat

(After the battle against Aram in which Ahab was killed), Jehoshaphat king of Judah returned to his palace in Jerusalem in peace. And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and he said to King Jehoshaphat, "How do you help those who are wicked and love those who hate the Lord? Because of this, wrath has gone out against you from the Lord. However, some good things are found in you for you swept away the Asherah poles from the land, and you set your heart to seek after God."

The Reforms of Jehoshaphat

Jehoshaphat lived in Jerusalem, but he went out among the people from Beersheba to the hill country of Ephraim, and he brought them back to the LORD God of their fathers. And he set judges in the land among all the fortified cities of Judah, one by one. And he said to the judges, "Consider carefully what you do because you do not judge according to man but the LORD, and He is with you in the matter of judgment. So now may the fear of the LORD be on you. Consider and act *well* because there is no injustice, partiality, or bribe taking with the LORD our God." Moreover, Jehoshaphat appointed in Jerusalem some from the Levites and the priests and some from the heads of the families of Israel, in order to render judgment and decide disputes before the LORD; and they lived in Jerusalem. And he commanded them, "So you will act in the fear of the LORD, in honesty, and with a complete heart. And any dispute that comes before you all from your brothers who live in their cities, concerning bloodshed or offenses against law or commandment, against statutes or judgments, you will warn them, lest they trespass against the LORD and wrath come upon you and your brothers. Do this, and you will not trespass. Note that Amariah the chief priest is over you in all matters of the LORD; and Zebadiah the son of Ishmael, the ruler of the house of Judah, for all the king's matters; also, the Levites will be officials before you. Deal courageously, and the LORD will be with the good."

Jehoshaphat Defeats Moab and Ammon

After that, the Moabites and the Ammonites, together with some Meunites, came against Jehoshaphat for battle. And some came and declared this to Jehoshaphat, "A large multitude is coming against you from across the Dead Sea from Edom; and observe, they are in Hazezon Tamar" (that is, En Gedi). Then Jehoshaphat was fearful and set himself to seek the LORD, and he called for a fast throughout all Judah. And Judah was assembled to seek the LORD; even from all the cities of Judah, they came to obtain *aid* from the LORD. And Jehoshaphat stood in the midst of the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem in the house of the LORD before the new courtyard, and he said:

O LORD God of our fathers, are You not God in the heavens? And do You not rule over all the kingdoms of the nations? In Your hand are strength and might, and there is no one who can oppose You. Did You not, our God, drive out those who lived in this land before Your people Israel, and You gave it perpetually to the descendants of Abraham, who was in *covenant* love with You. And they have dwelled in it and have built in it for You a sanctuary for Your name saying, 'If disaster comes upon us, the sword, or judgment, or pestilence, or famine, then we will stand before this temple and before You because Your name is in this temple. And we will cry out to You in our distress, and You will hear and deliver. Now here are the sons of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir, whom You did not let Israel invade when they came out of the land of Egypt, when they turned away from them and did not destroy them. See how they are rewarding us by coming to drive us out of Your possession, which You have given us to inherit. O our God, will You not render judgment on them?

For we have not strength enough to stand before this great army that is coming against us. And we do not know what we should do, but our eyes are on You.

Now all of Judah was standing before the LORD, even their infants, wives, and children. And in the midst of the assembly the Spirit of the LORD came on Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite from the line of Asaph. And he said, "Pay attention all Judah, and those dwelling in Jerusalem, and King Jehoshaphat: Thus says the LORD to you, 'Do not fear, nor be dismayed because of this great army, for the battle is not yours, but God's. Tomorrow, go down against them. They will travel up by the Ascent of Ziz. You will find them at the back of the valley, before the Wilderness of Jeruel. It will not be *necessary* for you to fight in this *conflict*. Take your positions, stand, and observe the deliverance of the LORD for you, O Judah and Jerusalem.' Do not fear or be filled with terror. Tomorrow, go out before them, and the LORD will be with you."

Then Jehoshaphat bowed his face to the ground, and all Judah and those dwelling in Jerusalem fell before the LORD to worship Him. And the Levites from the descendants of the Kohathites and Korahites rose up to praise the LORD God of Israel with a very loud voice.

So they rose up early in the morning and went out to the Wilderness of Tekoa. And when they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Listen to me, Judah and those dwelling in Jerusalem. Believe in the LORD your God, and you will be supported. Believe His prophets, and you will succeed." And he consulted with the people and then appointed singers for the LORD and those praising Him in holy attire as they went before those equipped for battle saying, "Praise the LORD, for His mercy endures forever." When they began singing and praising, the LORD set ambushes against Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; so they were defeated. Then the Ammonites and Moabites stood up against those dwelling from Mount Seir to destroy and finish them. Then when they made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, each man attacked his companion to destroy each other.

And Judah came to the watchtower of the wilderness, and they turned to the vast army and saw only corpses lying on the ground. And no one was spared. Then Jehoshaphat and his people came to gather their plunder, and they found among them an abundance of riches with the corpses, and precious jewelry, which they took for themselves, more than they could carry. They were gathering the plunder for three days because there was so much to carry. On the fourth day they gathered at the Valley of Berakah, because there they blessed the LORD. For this reason people have called the name of this place the Valley of Berakah until this day.

Then they all returned, every man from Judah and Jerusalem, with Jehoshaphat as their head, to Jerusalem with joy because the LORD made them rejoice because of the *death* of their enemies. So they entered Jerusalem with harps, lyres, and trumpets to the house of the LORD. And it happened that the terror of God was on all the kingdoms of the lands who heard that the LORD had fought against the enemies of Israel. So the kingdom of Jehoshaphat was quiet, because his God gave him rest on all sides.

The End of Jehoshaphat's Reign

And Jehoshaphat reigned over Judah. He was thirty-five years old when he began his reign, and he was king in Jerusalem for twenty-five years. The name of his mother was Azubah the daughter of Shilhi. He walked in the way of his father Asa, and he did not turn aside from doing what was right in the eyes of the LORD. Only the high places were not taken down. The people had yet to set their hearts to the God of their fathers.

Also, Jehoshaphat king of Judah was united with Ahaziah king of Israel, who acted wickedly. Jehoshaphat joined with him to make ships to travel to Tarshish, and they made ships in Ezion Geber. And Eliezer son of

Dodavahu from Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat saying, "Because you have joined with Ahaziah, the LORD will tear down your works." So the ships were wrecked, so that they were not able to journey to Tarshish.

The remainder of the acts of Jehoshaphat, from beginning to end, are written in the annals of Jehu son of Hanani, which are taken up in the book of the kings of Israel.