

THE KINGS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH

Verse by Verse Notes

Jim Cowie

CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction	10
Israel's First Three Kings - Saul, David, and Solomon	15
Map of the Divided Kingdom	
Rehoboam - The Indiscreet (Judah)	
Jeroboam - The Ambitious Manipulator (Israel)	
Abijah - The Belligerent (Judah)	
Asa - Judah's First Reformer (Judah)	
The Chronological Data of the Kings of Israel	
Nadab - The Liberal (Israel)	
Baasha - The Unheeding Avenger (Israel)	
The Chronological Data of the Kings of Judah	
Elah - The Apathetic Drunkard (Israel)	
Zimri - The Reckless Assassin (Israel)	
Omri - The Statute-maker (Israel)	
Ahab - Israel's Worst King (Israel)	
Ahab of Israel and Jehoshaphat of Judah	
Jehoshaphat - The Enigmatic Educator (Judah)	
Ahaziah - The Clumsy Pagan (Israel)	
Jehoram - The Moderate (Israel)	
Jehoram of Israel and Jehoshaphat of Judah	
Jehoram - The Ill-fated Murderer (Judah)	
Ahaziah - The Doomed Puppet (Judah)	
Jehu - Yahweh's Avenger (Israel)	
Athaliah - "That wicked woman" (Judah)	
Joash - The Ungrateful Dependant (Judah)	
Amaziah - The Offensive Infidel (Judah)	
Jehoahaz - The Oppressed Idolater (Israel)	
Jehoash - The Indifferent Deliverer (Israel)	
Jeroboam - The Militant Restorer (Israel)	
Uzziah - The Presumptuous Pragmatist (Judah)	
Why Matthew excluded four rulers	
Jotham - The Upright (Judah)	
Ahaz - The Perfidious Idolater (Judah)	
Zachariah - The Unfortunate (Israel)	

Shallum - The Ephemeral (Israel)
Menahem - The Rapacious Exactor (Israel)
The kings of Assyria and the rulers of Babylon
Pekaiah - The Obscure (Israel)
Pekah - The Contemptible (Israel)
Hoshea - The Treacherous (Israel)
Hezekiah - Yahweh's Trusting Servant (Judah)
Manasseh - The Murderous Corruptor (Judah)
Amon - The Reprobate (Judah)
Josiah - The Youthful Reformer (Judah)
Jehoahaz - The Preferred (Judah)
Jehoiakim - The Arrogant Tyrant (Judah)
Jehoiachin - The Helpless (Judah)
Zedekiah - The Profane Rebel (Judah)
History from the death of Josiah to the fall of Jerusalem.

ABBREVIATIONS USED

AV	Authorised Version
Ges.	Gesenius Hebrew & Chaldee Lexicon
Gray	Commentary 1 & 2 Kings (John Gray)
Oxford	Helps to the Study of the Bible (Oxford University Press)
RSV	Revised Standard Version
Roth.	Emphasized Bible translated by J.B. Rotherham
Yng.	Young's Literal Translation of the Bible

The **meanings** of Hebrew words provided in these notes are from Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible and Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament, unless otherwise noted.

Conventions used in the notes

Italic is used to indicate Hebrew or Greek words

Bold Italic is used to indicate words from the Bible text being commented on.

Bold is used for emphasis

FOREWORD

These notes were originally the product of a Bible study class held in Brisbane during 1974 and 1975 upon the theme “The Kings of Israel and Judah.” The class undertook the study of the lives and characters of 39 kings who ruled over Israel and Judah from the division of the kingdom of Solomon in 931 BC to the overthrow of Judah in 586 BC.

A great deal of valuable instruction and exhortation can be derived from a consideration of the affairs of God’s ecclesia in this period of its history and these notes were prepared so that others might share some of the benefits of this study which is aptly suited to the times in which we live.

The life of each king is considered separately in essay and summary form, to which has been added verse by verse notes to assist study of the text. Every attempt has been made however, to retain a measure of synchronisation between contemporary kings as this is the method employed by the Divine chronicler.

The notes span the following sections of scripture:-

1 Kings chapters 12 to 22; 2 Kings chapters 1 to 25; and 2 Chronicles chapters 10 to 36.

Not all chapters listed receive consideration and those chapters dealing with the lives of Elijah and Elisha have been excluded except where they record events in the lives of the two great prophets that are interwoven with the lives of the kings under consideration. It also follows that where the history of the kings is repeated in almost identical form in the companion record it has been omitted as additional notes would serve no purpose.

In re-issuing these notes to the Brotherhood after many years of unavailability the publishers hope that they will be a helpful source of information for Bible students who undertake a study of the kings of Israel and Judah. A prayerful and careful study of this portion of the Scriptures is a most rewarding exercise and is commended to all.

J. A. Cowie

INTRODUCTION

OBJECT OF THE STUDY

The object of this brief review of the kings is to derive useful lessons for modern ecclesial life from that era of ecclesial history. By a careful examination of the significant characters presented in the records of Kings and Chronicles and reflection on the reasons for their successes and failures; the virtues and faults of their reigns, and the effect each had upon the destiny of their nation, the student gains greater insight into human behaviour and is made more sensitive to the many pitfalls which often brought the kings of Israel and Judah 'very low'. There is also much that is positive in this study providing encouragement in the service of our God through the examples of the faithful who punctuated this long period of Israel's history.

A STUDY IN LEADERSHIP

This is essentially a study in leadership for the principal characters were rulers of God's people. The primary focus is on men of responsibility who were tantamount to ecclesial leaders and should have been "shepherds of the flock" of Israel. As such the period of the kings is useful ground for any who have leadership responsibilities in ecclesial and family life today.

ISRAEL AND JUDAH - GOD'S ECCLESIA

Israel and Judah were the ecclesia of God (1 Chron. 29:23; Exod. 19:5-6; Acts 7:38; Jer. 3:14&20; Rom. 11:1-5). As an ecclesia (though at times apostate) all Israelites stood related to the covenants of promise. Each individual lived a life and developed a character which finally determined his eternal destiny. The lives and characters of the kings are recorded by God as both a warning and exhortation to all subsequent generations of covenant bearers whose future will be determined upon the same basis.

A Divine appraisal or summary of each king is inserted in the record of their reigns, whether it was long or short. This is evidence that "the judge of all the earth", whose "eyes run to and fro through the whole earth", was keenly interested in the ways and the actions of the kings as they led His ecclesia in their era. With unerring accuracy He made his final and irreversible assessment of them at the end of their reign (Heb. 13:17).

It will be the object of these notes to highlight the lessons that may be learnt from the record of the kings of Israel and Judah "written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the age are come."

THE ORIGIN OF THE BOOK OF KINGS

The Kings and Chronicles represent an expansive historical record which is distinctly religious in its tenor. Severe indictment or commendation are encountered according to each ruler's approach to the things of God. The unbiased and direct manner with which the acts of each king are recorded indicates authorship from outside the court of the king. No royal scribe or court historian would record the history of monarchs in such unequivocal and authoritative fashion. Not only would it endanger his position but, in the case of some kings, his life as well. The records were written by men who though fully acquainted with

the details of the lives of the kings were not connected with them in any way that might have biased or influenced what they wrote. They were concerned with recording God's view of each king rather than that which the king might have wished to be recorded of himself.

The prophets undoubtedly were the recorders of the history of this period. Neither the royal scribes or the priests could have satisfactorily performed the task that God's prophets accomplished so well. Their names are often mentioned in the Divine summaries appended to each king. The prophets also played a prominent role in the anointing and subsequent accession of kings as the following list shows:

Samuel - Saul (1 Sam. 10:1), and David (1 Sam. 16:12-13); **Nathan** - Solomon (1 Kings 1:11-27,34); **Ahijah** - Jeroboam (1 Kings 11:29-38); **Jehu** - Doom against Baasha (1 Kings 16:1-4,7); **Elisha** - Jehu (2 Kings 9:1-12).

The records of prophets being involved with kings, usually to condemn them, are numerous, but in particular the history of Elijah and Elisha covers 19 chapters from 1 Kings 17 to 2 Kings 13. Who would have such a complete knowledge but the prophets themselves? Furthermore it is noteworthy that many words and phrases used by the writers of these records are echoed by Isaiah, Jeremiah and other O.T. prophets of this period.

THE SCHOOL OF THE PROPHETS

A brief summary of the development of the school of the prophets and their role in Israel will be useful background to our study of the kings.

- 1) The association of many prophets together commenced in the days of Samuel. Before his time the only prophets mentioned were Abraham (Gen. 20:7); Aaron (Exod. 7:1); Miriam and Deborah, and the unnamed prophet of Jud. 6:8. Moses was also a prophet (Deut. 18:15), but nowhere is it recorded that prophets gathered in groups until the days of Samuel (1 Sam. 10:5, 10-12). If not the founder, Samuel was certainly the first significant leader of the school of the prophets (1 Sam. 19:20).
- 2) Samuel's yearly circuit of Bethel, Gilgal, Mizpeh and return to Ramah (1 Sam. 7:15-17), was probably in connection with the schools of the prophets he had established.
- 3) Jezebel murdered groups of prophets (1 Kings 18:4). These were described as Yahweh's prophets (1 Kings 9:10,14).
- 4) There were evidently communities of prophets in most cities around Samuel's circuit and its immediate vicinity (2 Kings 2:3,5).
- 5) Elisha's dealings with the sons of the prophets were many. He was clearly their acknowledged leader (2 Kings 4:1,38; 6:1-3).
- 6) They were manifestly an independent group, having their inception before the monarchy, and therefore well able to play the part of independent Divine recorders.
- 7) The 'seers' were actually prophets (1 Sam. 9:9). The word in the Hebrew is *ra'ah* meaning 'to see'. Samuel himself is described as a seer (1 Sam. 9:19).
- 8) Prophets and seers recorded the history of Kings (1 Chron. 29:29; 2 Chron. 9:29,12:15).

THE CHRONICLES OF THE KINGS

The phrase “The chronicles of the Kings” is found 30 times in the books of Kings and Chronicles; 12 times concerning the kings of Judah (first mention 1Kings 14:29), and 18 times concerning the kings of Israel (first mention 1Kings 14:19).

It is apparent that these “chronicles” were records kept by God’s prophets of the affairs of the ruling monarch of each kingdom and that in due course they were assembled and completed to form the books of Kings and Chronicles as we have them today.

THE ACTS OF THE KINGS

The word “acts” is used 50 times in the books of Kings and Chronicles for they are primarily records of the acts or works of men who ruled God’s people. They will be judged according to the same rule that has applied to responsible men of all ages; “Behold I come quickly and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be” (Rev. 22:12). “Works” or fruits reflect what is in the heart (Matt. 7:16-20, Luke 6:43-45), and therefore the final judgement will be upon the basis of what a man has done, whether it be good or evil (2 Cor. 5:10, Rom. 2:5-16).

It is sobering to reflect upon the fact that as God recorded the “acts” of the kings of Israel and Judah, so He is also recording our “acts” in a special record known amongst us as “a book of the life” as distinct from “The Book of Life”. Psa. 56:8, Mal. 3:16, and Rev. 20:12 make reference to these personal records of our lives and character, commenced at the time we become responsible to Divine judgement.

The final assessment of our “acts” will determine whether or not our name is found still recorded in “The Book of Life” by the Judge before whom “we must all stand”. If in that record there are found sins unrepented of, and therefore unforgiven; works of the flesh and “acts” that testify to “an evil heart of unbelief”, then inevitably the Divine condemnation will also be recorded therein, as it was in the case of every wicked or unfaithful king in Israel and Judah. On the other hand, if the Judge finds a record of worthy “acts”; the fruit of a good and responsive heart having produced works of faith out of a character reflecting his own; and manifested in a man who, knowing his weakness and dependence upon God’s mercy and strength, repented of his sins and sought forgiveness, then the Divine assessment will be one of commendation as it was in the case of just a few kings in Judah.

It remains to be seen if God will reveal the history of our lives to future generations of mortals in the Kingdom Age for their “learning and admonition” as he has revealed the lives and characters of the kings to us. One thing is certain however. Very few of the kings, if any, would have realised that the affairs of their lives and their “acts” would be preserved for the scrutiny of all subsequent generations.

Finally, some mention should be made of the important relationship between “acts” and character. Character is the mature product of faith and obedience developed by the influence of the word of God upon the mind and heart under trial. As an individual grows in faith, and obedience to the Divine will he is conformed in measure to the moral image or pattern of Christ who was the perfect manifestation of his Father’s character. A man’s works over a period of time testify to his character. Hence Christ’s intention to judge a man “according to that which he hath done” (Rom. 2:6; 2 Cor. 5:10). In this context the following maxim is not without some force:-

Sow an Act - Reap a Habit, Sow a Habit - Reap a Character, Sow a Character - Reap a Destiny.
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CHRONOLOGY OF THE KINGS

Chronology is a rewarding study in itself but its real value lies in the light it throws upon the surrounding text. Studied in conjunction with the text it is a valuable aid to deeper understanding of the Divine record of the Kings.

Unfortunately, experience has shown that it is extremely difficult to arrive at an absolutely certain chronological table for the period of Israel's history between 931 and 586 BC. The issue is confused by some contradictory synchronisms and other difficulties apparently due to interpolation and errors in the transcription of the text. Some commentators even suggest that there were differing dating systems employed in Judah and Israel. These difficulties will only be fully appreciated by those who attempt to reconstruct the chronology of the period. However, despite the many difficulties, much valuable detail is available enabling a reasonable reconstruction to be made, though dogmatism in some areas is impossible.

Most authorities now agree that 931 BC was the year of the division of the kingdom of Solomon and that 723 BC was the year of Israel's collapse at the hand of Shalmaneser king of Assyria. 586 BC is generally agreed to be the year of the dissolution of Judah's kingdom and the demise of Zedekiah its last king at the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon.

Not wishing to enter into a detailed consideration of the chronology of the period the author has for the purpose of these notes adopted the following chronological table from the commentary on 1 and 2 Kings by John Gray which is largely based on the chronological scheme elaborated by Edwin R. Thiele in his work *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*. Gray makes some significant modifications to Thiele's work and although there are still areas of difficulty with his chart, it seems the most satisfactory among those encountered so far.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

ISRAEL		JUDAH	
Jeroboam I	931-910	Rehoboam	930-914
Nadab	910-909	Abijah	913-911
Baasha	909-886	Asa	911-871
Elah	886-885		
Omri (rule disputed)	885-881		
(undisputed)	881-874		
Ahab	874-853	Jehoshaphat	871-847
Ahaziah (co-regent)	855		
(sole king)	853-852	Jehoram (co-regent)	853
Jehoram	852-841	(sole king)	848-841
Jehu	841-814	Ahaziah	841
		Athaliah	841-836
Jehoahaz	813-797	Joash	835-796
Jehoash (co-regent)	799	Amaziah (co-regent)	798
(sole king)	796-781	(sole king)	795-767
Jeroboam II (co-regent)	794	Azariah/Uzziah (co-regent)	791
(sole king)	781-754	(sole king)	766-740
Zechariah	754-753		
Shallum	753		
Menahem's rising	753	Jotham (co-regent)	750
Menahem established	751-742	(sole king)	739-734
Pekahiah	742-741	Ahaz (co-regent)	734
Pekah	740-732/1	(recognised by Tiglath-pileser)	732
		(formal accession)	730
Hoshea	731-723	(reign)	730-715
Fall of Samaria	723-722	Hezekiah (co-regent)	729
		(sole king)	714-686
		Manasseh (co-regent)	695
		(sole king)	685-641
		Amon	640-639
		Josiah	639-609
		Jehoahaz (3 months)	609
		Jehoiakim	608-597
		Jehoiachin (3 months)	597
		Zedekiah	596-586
		Fall of Jerusalem	586

ISRAEL'S FIRST THREE KINGS

SAUL, DAVID, and SOLOMON

Although the scope of this study does not include Saul, David, and Solomon, no study of the kings of Israel and Judah would be complete without some reference to these three kings and the effect of their reigns upon the subsequent history of the kingdom. The following is a brief summary of their lives and character with special emphasis on the manner in which they influenced the direction of the kingdom's affairs in subsequent years.

SAUL

Israel's first king was a tragic figure who made a good start but finished his life miserably, in utter despair and hopelessness, having been abandoned by God for his disobedience and rebellion.

The tragic failure of the man chosen by God to be Israel's first king in response to their plea to Samuel, "Make us a king to judge us like all the nations" is the subject of Divine comment through the prophet Hosea (chapter 13:9-11). There Yahweh said; "I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath." Israel had rejected their heavenly King and desired a visible monarch to lead them into war and judge them after the manner of the surrounding nations. This was the fulfilment of the prophecy of Deut. 17:14. God therefore, in anger, gave them a king of the sort they envisaged, and when he had proven himself unworthy by repeated disobedience to specific Divine commandments, removed him "in his wrath."

In Hosea 13:9 the reason for Saul's failure is perhaps hinted at in the words "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself." Saul had no-one else to blame for his failure but himself. He was given every chance to succeed. All that was required of him was obedience, but he was unable to resist the voice of the people on the two principal occasions that his faith and obedience were tested by God. Following his rejection, he rapidly declined into a state bordering on insanity characterised by repeated attempts to eliminate his obvious successor.

Saul's decline is directly attributable to his pride. Following his rejection "from being king" (1 Sam. 15:23), he clung to the throne almost as though it was an inherent right (1 Sam. 20:30-31), and refused to make way for his Divinely appointed successor. The last years of Saul's life were spent in sorrow and bitterness and the record of Samuel frequently portrays his schizophrenia as he pursued David with murderous intent and then on occasions was moved to protest his love for the man he sought to destroy.

An evil spirit had overtaken Saul as he witnessed David's success in war and his own eclipse in the eyes of the nation (1 Sam. 18:6-9; cp. 1 Sam. 8:19-20), and then watched him grow in stature as he "behaved himself wisely" in the affairs of state (1 Sam. 18:12-16). It became obvious to all, including Saul, that "Yahweh was with David", and this only served to highlight the fact that God had abandoned Saul. The frequent frustration of his evil

designs against David increased Saul's awareness of his isolation from God and finally culminated in his desperate bid to regain contact with the deceased Samuel through the medium of a witch. The pathetic picture of "the anointed of Yahweh" grovelling at the feet of a woman whose class he had sought to destroy at the commencement of his reign (1 Sam. 28:9) reveals the full circle turned by a man who had "rejected the word of Yahweh" and had become the victim of his own bitterness, hatred and jealousy. How the words of the old prophet must have burned in the mind of Saul as he crawled across the Valley of Jezreel, back to his troops on Mt. Gilboa following his disastrous visit to Endor: "Behold to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of **witchcraft**, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry" (1 Sam. 15:22-23).

The sad end of Israel's first king—death by his own hand, was testimony to Hosea's words, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself." For a man who had destroyed himself by disobedience, rebellion and hatred this was the final **act** that sealed his eternal destiny.

It is not without significance that Saul's name does not appear in the records covering the history of the divided kingdom which constitute the scope of this present study. In fact it appears only once outside of the books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles and that is in Isa. 10:29 where incidental reference is made to "Gibea of Saul". It is almost as though the Spirit desired to forget about the man who made such a disastrous job of being Israel's first king. So much did David overshadow Saul that he fades from the record into almost total insignificance. His effect upon the nation was extremely limited and with his death any influence for good or evil which he may have exerted disappeared completely.

While Saul's failure may have had little effect upon Israel's subsequent history, it is interesting to note the curious parallels between Saul and Jeroboam the first king of the northern section of the divided kingdom known as 'Israel'. Doubtless Jeroboam did not pattern himself on Saul, but in similar circumstances and moved by the same motives his life and character resembled that of Saul in many particulars. Compare the records of 1 Sam. 15:17-23 and 1 Kings 11:26-39 and 12:25-33, and note that both were Divinely appointed and make a humble start. Both men failed when faced with a dilemma that required faith, and turned to their own devices to secure their position and power which was threatened by the departure of their subjects. Both were men of pride with an obsession for power, and manifested stubbornness in the face of Divine rebuke. Both were 'idolaters' who sacrificed without obedience. In contrast to Saul however, the effect of Jeroboam on the history of Israel was nothing short of catastrophic, for he became known as "Jeroboam the Son of Nebat who made Israel to sin".

Bro. L.G. Sargent summarised Saul in these words: "Bounding the view beyond were the mountains of Gilboa, scene of the defeat of Saul. To a mind filled with the history of Israel, those heights would call up the whole tragedy of the king who became haunted by the knowledge of his own rejection and filled with hatred of the successor whom God had chosen. It was the story of a man who by worldly standards was not irreligious, but who was lacking in the faith which could make the word of God a living reality in his life. Weakness in trust had in him its retribution; the ground of trust is removed, and as a result rebellion against the Divine judgement finds an outlet in the murderous pursuit of David; and "stubbornness" leads at last to the seeking of consolation in the witchcraft which stands in antithesis to the God who has forsaken him." (*Teaching of the Master*, page 15)

DAVID

Without any doubt “the Beloved” is the greatest figure in the period of Israel’s history from the Judges to the times of Christ. In the records of the kings he is represented as a monumental figure who stood before Israel as Christ now stands before the Ecclesia. His name is mentioned 70 times in the record under study, most frequently in the context of a comparison between his reign and that of his successors. He is set forth as the prime example of what Yahweh desired in a king, and consequently his character and reign became the standard by which all other kings were assessed (e.g. 1 Kings 14:8; 15:3-5). Much could be written concerning this great man but we will limit this consideration to a brief review of his character.

David possessed what Saul lacked; the desire to obey God’s appointments and submit to His will whatever the cost to himself. With David it was an inflexible rule that the Divine will always came before any other considerations, and because of this readiness to obey, God regarded him as “a man after his own heart” (Acts 13:21-22). David’s character had been formed early in life by his work as shepherd of his father’s flock; an experience that had taught him many lessons, not the least of which was implicit trust in God’s strength and providence (Psa. 23). The leading and tending of his father’s flock was also a perfect training ground for a man who was to lead the nation that Yahweh “the Shepherd of Israel” called the “sheep of his pasture” (Psa. 80:1; 79:13). David developed great skill as a shepherd and this prepared him well for the greater work of re-uniting, leading and feeding God’s flock who were in complete disarray and confusion after Saul’s death. As the Psalmist records: “He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds; from following the ewes great with young He brought him to feed Jacob His people, and Israel his inheritance. So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands” (Psa. 78:70-72).

It is an interesting exercise to compare and contrast the anointing of Saul with that of David. Samuel found David diligently keeping his father’s flock in Bethlehem (1 Sam. 16:11), but he found Saul wandering aimlessly in a vain search for his father’s lost asses (1 Sam. 9:1-10). These incidents serve to characterise the subsequent reigns of Saul and David. One man was never in control of the people he ruled, allowing them to rebel against “the commandments of Yahweh”; the other skilfully guided and united the flock of God and brought the nation of Israel to unprecedented heights of glory.

Some idea of the enormous impact of David’s life and reign upon the history of Israel is obtained by a consideration of the fact that many times Yahweh had cause to destroy Judah’s king for apostasy and evil idolatry but did not do so because of the “sure mercies of David”; the covenant which he had made with him in 2 Sam. 7 that “David my servant may have a light alway before me in Jerusalem” (1 Kings 11:36; 15:4; 2 Kings 8:19).

Bro. L.G. Sargent writes: “In beautiful contrast to Saul was the forefather of the Lord, whose faith was as true as a sheep’s in its shepherd, and who, in spite of one great sin, remained in his contrition “the man after God’s own heart.” David is the most profoundly God-conscious man in the Old Testament.” (*Teaching of the Master*, page 15)

SOLOMON

The accession to the throne of Solomon the son of David was different in every way to that of his father and, tragically for the nation, the impact of his reign upon the subsequent history of Israel was also vastly different. David's legacy to the nation has already been referred to in the summary of his life and character. By contrast Solomon's legacy to the nation was the introduction of a corruption that finally brought about its dissolution.

Solomon has the unenviable distinction of being the first king to introduce idolatry into Israel and is the man held solely responsible for the division of the kingdom—God's ecclesia. Whereas David unified and established the kingdom, Solomon corrupted and divided it (1 Kings 11:11).

A review of Solomon's life reveals some great achievements and some sad failures which are made all the more tragic because he had such a unique beginning and wonderful circumstances and opportunities for success. We will only attempt to briefly review his achievements and failures.

The early part of his reign is marked by achievements and success which made him the greatest king of his time (1 Kings 10:23). Never again did Israel reach the heights of glory attained in Solomon's early years. He was known world-wide for his unsurpassed wisdom (1 Kings 10:24), and for his many writings (1 Kings 4:32). The magnificence and splendour of the temple completed in his seventh year made Israel the centre of universal attention and wonder. Furthermore his early years were characterised by absolute peace and prosperity for Israel and the total unification of the people as they basked in the benefits derived from his greatness, prosperity and universal acclaim. In all of these things Solomon was an ample type of the Lord Jesus Christ in that time when he shall sit upon the throne of David ruling over the humbled nations in righteousness and peace, and presiding over the worship of his Father in "the house of prayer for all nations."

Solomon's failure was copybook, for in every particular of the demands made of a king under the Law he failed (Deut. 17:14-20). He was unheeding of the warning not to return to Egypt to acquire horses and sent his servants to buy horses and much else as well (1 Kings 10:28-29). He was unmindful of the commandment not to multiply wives to himself, and "loved many strange women" (1 Kings 11:1-2; Neh. 13:26). Furthermore he amassed enormous wealth so that silver became of no greater value in Jerusalem than stones (1 Kings 10:27). Every king was commanded to concentrate his mind upon the law of God and write out his own copy of that law (Deut. 17:18-20). Solomon however diversified his education and God gave him wisdom in all matters in which he sought out knowledge, according to His promise (1 Kings 4:29-31). Solomon became an oracle in all the philosophies and wisdom of his time, excelling all the great men of the east. There was in this an insidious danger which soon manifested itself.

Solomon's mind was occupied with matters that cannot be ascertained by searching. The origins of earth's creator, the reasons behind the established order of nature and the purpose of human existence, all matters of faith to men like David, vexed a philosophic mind and resulted in Solomon embarking upon a quest of experimentation with every lust and whim of the flesh (Ecc. 1:17; 2:1-11). Never before or since has there been a man as

full as Solomon, and as a consequence able to fulfil every desire of the flesh. He did so, and finally concluded that it was all “vanity and vexation of spirit.”

It was inevitable that under these circumstances apostasy would result, and in due course “his wives turned away his heart” and he served the gods of the surrounding nations, introducing a corrupt form of worship into Israel which remained for 350 years until the days of Josiah when it was finally eradicated completely (1 Kings 11:7). Yahweh was enraged by Solomon’s apostasy because it came about despite two unique appearances to him, warning him against “going after other gods” (1 Kings 11:9-10).

Finally, God once again appeared to Solomon to inform him that the kingdom would be rent from him except for the tribe of Judah (for David’s sake), and that he would be held solely responsible (1 Kings 11:11-13). For the phrase: “Forasmuch as this is done of thee”, Youngs Literal translation has: “Forasmuch as this is **with** thee”, which is clearly a subtle reference to the very law which Solomon had ignored. In the Law of the King (Deut. 17:14-20) which Solomon had broken in every particular, the king was instructed to copy out the book of the Law for himself. To this instruction is then added the words; “and it shall be **with** him” (verse 19), that he may daily ponder its message and remember its demands upon him. Instead of finding this Law **with** Solomon God found idolatry and rebellion against the provisions of the law governing the kings.

The last words of Solomon reveal that he eventually came to a full realisation of his disregard for the Law of the King, for he uses the language of Deut. 17:14-20 and quotes directly from it in Ecc. 12:8-14, saying; “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; fear God and keep his commandments: for this is the whole (or complete) man.”

REHOBOAM –

The Indiscreet

(JUDAH)

HEBREW - Rechabam from a prim. root *Rechab*, to broaden and *am*, a people. Hence his name signifies “a people has enlarged.” (Oxford - “Who has enlarged a people”)

FIRST MENTION - 1 Kings 11:43 **LAST MENTION** - 2 Chron. 13:7

AGE AT ACCESSION - 41 **AT DEATH** - 58

LENGTH OF REIGN - 17 years from 930-914 BC

MOTHER - Naamah an Ammonitess (1 Kings 14:21; 2 Chron. 12:13). Her name means “pleasantness” (cp. her namesake Gen. 4:22). The fact that Rehoboam’s mother was an Ammonitess is twice emphasised and appears to be an allusion to Deut. 23:3, and a hint to one of the factors contributing to his apostasy.

CONTEMPORARY KING - Jeroboam 931-910 BC.

SUMMARY OF CHARACTER

The epithet “Rehoboam - the Indiscreet” points to the leading characteristic of the son of Solomon who presided over the division of the Kingdom of Israel (1 Kings 11:12). He was born one year before Solomon ascended the throne and grew up knowing nothing but the prosperity, peace and opulence of his father’s reign. This fact undoubtedly contributed to his lack of character development, his indiscretion, and his pronounced lack of sympathy for the common people.

Acceding to the throne at the age of 41 on the death of Solomon, Rehoboam faced a crucial moment at Shechem when he appeared before the people to receive confirmation of his sovereignty over the whole kingdom. Everything depended upon a correct reading of the temper of the people and a wise decision to ameliorate their conditions of service to the monarchy. Instead he manifested all the characteristics of a man who had been brought up as a spoilt child, living in the ‘lap’ of luxury and ease, growing up a stranger to hardship and work, and believing his position and status in life to be an inherent and inalienable right. Rehoboam’s inexperience and complete lack of political finesse and discretion stood in sharp contrast to the political acumen and cunning of Jeroboam the champion of the common people. He was simply no match for the wily and campaign hardened Jeroboam. God had clearly foreseen that Rehoboam by his own folly and greed would bring about a set of circumstances resulting in the division of the Kingdom (1 Kings 11:11-13,35-36).

During his reign Rehoboam encouraged the growth of his father’s idolatry so that heathen abominations flourished in Jerusalem and Judah. Even the lascivious worship of Ashtoreth was allowed to exist by the side of the worship of Yahweh and the worst immoralities were tolerated (1 Kings 14:22-24). Two basic reasons for his idolatry may be suggested. Firstly his mother was an Ammonitess (a “strange woman” whom Solomon had married even before he ascended the throne) and this is twice emphasised (1 Kings 14:21,31). Her influence upon Solomon and the young Rehoboam was most probably corrupting (1 Kings 11:5). Secondly, the example of his father must have had a telling effect upon him. It was

Solomon who had taught him to “train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it” (Prov. 22:6), yet Solomon turned to idolatry, setting his son an example which he was quick to follow.

The only wisdom manifested by Rehoboam during his reign was the thoughtful manner in which he dispersed his family throughout the cities of Judah and trained his sons in the affairs of state (2 Chron. 11:18-23). This perhaps reveals that he had learnt something about political survival from the disastrous events at Shechem. But when it is remembered that this was the man who as a boy was the object of the diligent and wise instruction of his father revealed in the Proverbs, Rehoboam was a bitter disappointment both to God and his people. He was a classic example of the pointlessness of sound instruction which is not supported by a sound and consistent example in the parents. Solomon’s legacy to the nation was also his legacy to Rehoboam. The foundations of truth and purity had been undermined and Rehoboam was content merely to emulate the divided allegiance of his father to his destruction. He left the ecclesia in a decayed and listless state after 17 years of steady decline.

HARMONY OF THE RECORDS OF REHOBAM'S REIGN

	1 Kings	2 Chron.
Began his reign aged 41	11:43	9:31
Journey to Shechem for coronation	12:1	10:1
Jeroboam leads a delegation to him	12:2-5	10:2-5
The counsel of the old and the young	12:6-11	10:6-11
Rehoboam’s foolish reply to people	12:12-15	10:12-15
The revolt of the ten tribes	12:16-17	10:16-17
Adoram stoned - Rehoboam flees	12:18-19	10:18-19
Retaliation prevented by Shemaiah	12:21-24	11:1-4
Fenced cities of Judah fortified		11:5-12
Levites migrate from northern kingdom		11:13-17
Rehoboam’s family - his wise arrangements		11:18-23
His idolatry & Judah’s apostasy	14:22-24	12:1
Invasion of Shishak king of Egypt	14:25-28	12:2-12
Final summary and obituary	14:29-31	12:13-16

VERSE BY VERSE NOTES

JOURNEY TO SHECHEM FOR CORONATION – 1 Kings 12:1-5

V.1 - **“Rehoboam went to Shechem: for all Israel were come...to make him king”** - Shechem means “the shoulder” (to shoulder a burden). Combining the meaning of the names Rehoboam (see above) and Shechem, this phrase may be paraphrased thus: “He who will enlarge a people came to shoulder a burden”. This was undoubtedly his intention in Shechem, but he proved unequal to the task. Abijah his son later gave his assessment of his father at this crisis in 2 Chron. 13:7 claiming Rehoboam was “young and tender-hearted” and inexperienced. At 41 Rehoboam was not “tender-hearted” but simply green and immature from a cloistered and luxurious existence.

Shechem was perhaps the most historically significant place in the entire land and the natural centre of the northern tribes. A brief history of Shechem reveals its significance:

- God's first promise in the land and Abraham's first altar was built here - Gen. 12:6-7
- Jacob hid idols taken from Shechem beneath the oak here - Gen. 35:4
- Shechem became a city of the Levites - Josh. 21:21
- It also became a city of refuge - Josh. 20:7
- The blessings & cursings of the Law were declared here - Josh. 8:30-35
- Joshua's final exhortation to Israel was delivered at Shechem - Josh. 24:1

The coronation having been arranged in Shechem and not in Jerusalem probably indicates the re-emergence of tribal difficulties and rivalries which had existed in the early part of David's reign and as late as Sheba's revolt (2 Sam. 20:1). Rehoboam appears to have been forced, in what was a delicate situation, to fall in with this arrangement. The burdens of Solomon's reign and his idolatry had placed enormous strains on the unity of the tribes. The record indicates that all Israel intended to confirm Rehoboam as king, providing he made some concessions, despite the prophecy of Ahijah (1 Kings 11:29-40). Doubtless this prophecy was now fairly widely known and the time was opportune for the people to press for lighter burdens than had been endured under Solomon. It is not surprising that Shechem was the city chosen by Jeroboam as the initial capital of the new northern kingdom of Israel (1 Kings 12:25).

V.2 - **"when Jeroboam the son of Nebat...heard of it"** - Jeroboam had been abruptly introduced into the record in 1 Kings 11:26 as a rival for the throne and was Divinely selected for the task according to the prophecy of Ahijah. Having previously fled from the face of Solomon into Egypt, he had returned immediately on news of his death. This would seem to indicate, by inference, that whereas Solomon was considered a strong king, Rehoboam was viewed as weak and vulnerable.

V.3 - **"they sent and called him"** - Clearly many in the northern tribes already viewed Jeroboam as a potential leader in their campaign for better conditions and he was drafted to lead their delegation to Rehoboam. Being a man of ambition, Jeroboam skilfully used this opportunity to further his own cause. It is a common human failing to cloak personal ambition with an evident zeal for the cause of the oppressed (cp. Num. 16:1-3).

V.4 - **"Thy father made our yoke grievous"** - The *yoke* (*ol*) was not absolutely resented by Israel. They had willingly entered into their situation as servants of the king in the days of Samuel (1 Sam. 8:10-20). It was the severity of the yoke brought about by the massive taxation required to sustain Solomon's opulence that troubled them! They wanted some alleviation of their burdens through concessions such as rebate on taxes, and reduction of the *corvee* (tribute). They had every intention of serving Rehoboam should he grant concessions, but God had different intentions which were soon to be worked out through Rehoboam's folly.

V.5 - **"Depart ye yet for three days"** - Rehoboam sought an inordinate amount of time for consultation considering the obvious disquiet of the people. This was a most unwise decision under the circumstances, for it allowed Jeroboam and his supporters to foment

revolt. They needed time and Rehoboam foolishly gave it to them. Rehoboam's failure to read the mood of the nation before arriving at Shechem is surely a testimony to his immaturity, blindness, and detachment from his people.

THE COUNSEL OF THE OLD AND THE YOUNG – 1 Kings 12:6-11

V.6 - **"Rehoboam consulted with the old men"** - These were the *zeqenim*; the old men or elders (the term indicates both age and status). They had been advisers and counsellors for Solomon for many years and were men who understood the times. Rehoboam had the sense to consult the wise old men first, but that is where it ended. The same Hebrew word *yaats* is translated "consulted" and "advise" in the verse.

V.7 - **"If thou wilt be a servant unto this people"** - The word *servant* is *ebed*, from the primary root *abad* which is used for "servants" in this verse. There is a sort of play on words here. The old men counsel Rehoboam to become the people's servant in order to guarantee their service to him. The principle is that of Luke 22:26 upon which Brother Roberts commented; "If any man desires to be distinguished above others, the way to achieve his desire is to make himself the general servant and promoter of the well-being of others by which he becomes indispensable to all, and therefore the first of all" (*Nazareth Revisited* pg.322).

"and speak good words to them" - The companion record in 2 Chron. 10:7 adds, "and please them", i.e. gratify them. This was very sound advice in light of the mood of the people but it was not what Rehoboam wanted to hear.

V.8 - **"he forsook the counsel of the old men"** - *Forsook* is *azab* a primary root signifying to loosen, i.e. relinquish. Roth. has "declined". This means the words of the old men were not simply ignored by Rehoboam, but that he outrightly rejected them and proceeded to consult with his own peers.

"and consulted with the young men that were grown up with him" - *Young men* (*yeladim*) - lads or young men is perhaps used derogatorily here because they were in fact about 40 years of age as Rehoboam's contemporaries. *Grown up* is the word *gadal* a primary root signifying to twist, i.e. to be large; hence to grow up. These were his peers and friends. Men of a similar background to Rehoboam who had grown up with him through childhood in luxury and ease, and were seemingly endowed with less wisdom than Rehoboam himself!

"which stood before him" - This would seem to suggest that the counsellors of Solomon were not the official advisers of Rehoboam. He had chosen his contemporaries as his counsellors to 'stand before him'.

V.10 - **"My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins"** - This graphic hyperbole, used for emphasis, is a clear demonstration of how far they were out of touch with the circumstances of the ordinary Israelite. Their counsel was not simply to avoid appeasement and concessions, but for Rehoboam to be much tougher than Solomon! Only fools blinded by greed and the ambition to rule oppressively could offer such astoundingly stupid counsel in these circumstances.

V.11 - **"I will chastise you with scorpions"** - This was a sadistic elaboration of the lash. The lashes were loaded with leather bags stuffed with sand and having metal spikes mounted,

thus inflicting terrible lacerations on the victim. Acknowledging that Solomon had harshly treated his people, they threatened much harsher treatment to enforce compliance.

REHOBAM'S FOOLISH REPLY TO THE PEOPLE – 1 Kings 12:12-15

V.12 - “**Jeroboam and all the people came...the third day**” - Jeroboam appears at the forefront of the people as their spokesman. He had shown himself to be a natural leader of men (1 Kings 11:28) and now grasps the opportunity to represent the people.

V.13 - “**the king answered the people roughly**” - The word *roughly* is *qasheh* meaning severely. The same word is translated “grievous” in verse 4.

V.15 - “**for the cause was from the LORD**” - Roth. - “for there had come about a turn from Yahweh”. Here *cause* is *cibbah* - a (providential) turn (of affairs). In the companion record of 2 Chron. 10:15 *cause* is *necibbah* - an environment, i.e. circumstance or turn of affairs. This is a classic example of the way in which God is able to use the folly of men to accomplish His purpose.

THE REVOLT OF THE TEN TRIBES –1 Kings 12:16-19

V.16 - “**what portion have we in David**” - In verse 11 Rehoboam’s reply was couched in poetic language with a rhyme. Now the people reply in a similar manner. Israel’s words are substantially those of Sheba when he revolted against David (2 Sam. 20:1). This suggests a longstanding undercurrent of opposition not completely removed during the reigns of David and Solomon. Division in a nation (or an ecclesia) rarely occurs overnight; it requires time to develop under the surface first. Rehoboam and his peers foolishly encouraged this deep-seated resentment of some in the northern tribes so that it became a universal sentiment enshrined in the words of an anthem.

V.18 - “**Rehoboam sent Adoram who was over the tribute**” - Adoram (also called Adoniram) signifies “Lord of height”, from *adon* - lord or ruler; and *ruwm* - to be high, to rise or raise. He had been over the tribute in the latter part of David’s reign, through all of Solomon’s, and now Rehoboam’s (see 2 Sam. 20:24; 1 Kings 4:6; 5:14). He was old, extremely powerful and had undoubtedly possessed tremendous influence under Solomon. For these reasons Rehoboam considered him to be the right ambassador of peace. The word *tribute* (*mic*) means a burden, i.e. a tax in the form of labour (cp. 1 Kings 5:13-14). Adoram was therefore the Minister for Labour and also Commissioner for Taxation in Rehoboam’s government. Sending out this man to appease the people must rank as the greatest act of folly in Rehoboam’s life and provides a remarkable insight into his warped thinking. Adoram was of course the very man Israel held responsible for the severity of their burdens under Solomon! There was an incredible insensitivity in this choice. And it was tragically a death sentence for Adoram himself.

“**Rehoboam made speed**”- The word *speed* is *amats* - to be alert. Rehoboam quickly rallied himself to appreciate the gravity of the situation for himself personally after the untimely death of Adoram which he had occasioned by his folly. He fled with his entourage to Jerusalem leaving the field wide open for Jeroboam to seize control (1 Kings 12:20).

V.19 - “**Israel rebelled against the house of David**”- The word *rebelled* is *pasha* meaning to break away. So the division prophesied by Ahijah had come to pass, seemingly by natural political forces (1 Kings 11:29-39). This has so often been the way God has achieved His

stated purpose among men, but only the ‘eye’ of faith can perceive it. Sadly, neither Rehoboam or Jeroboam recognised the hand of God in their affairs. Had they done so the following events would not have occurred.

REHOBAM RESTRAINED FROM WAR – 1 Kings 12:21-24

V.21 - **“He assembled all the house of Judah”** - Rehoboam immediately prepared for war against Jeroboam and the rebellious tribes to regain the kingdom and assembled out of Judah and Benjamin an army of 180,000 men.

V.22 - **“Shemaiah, the man of God”** - *Shemaiah* means “Yah has heard”. Though described as a ‘man of God’, Shemaiah is not “the man of God from Judah” who meets such a sad end in 1 Kings 13. His reappearance at a later date to upbraid Rehoboam for idolatry (2 Chron. 12:5) is proof of this fact. It is encouraging to consider that in times of indifference, decline, and ecclesial disintegration God was always able to find “men of God” through whom He could work among His people.

V.24 - **“They hearkened therefore to the word of the LORD”** - Shemaiah’s prophecy was accepted by Rehoboam and his court (note the record says “they”) and the army was dispersed. Despite this Divine embargo a continual state of war existed between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all their days (1 Kings 14:30; 2 Chron. 12:15).

JUDAH FORTIFIED - MANY LEVITES MIGRATE – 2 Chron. 11:5-17

Vv.5-12 - Following the dispersal of his army, Rehoboam set about fortifying his kingdom with fenced cities containing strong armouries. His motivation is inferred in verse 12 in the words “having Judah and Benjamin on his side”. He set about to consolidate the remnants of his kingdom by fortifying his territory against Jeroboam. He was to discover that no fortifications are of any value in the absence of Divine help. God was to punish Rehoboam for his waywardness by sending, and helping Shishak king of Egypt against him. Rehoboam’s narrow focus has often been repeated. Ecclesial leaders seeking to ‘fortify’ their ecclesia or group against perceived opposition sometimes erect ‘political’ barriers to hold at bay corrupting influences, only to find that their worst enemy is corruption from within. Where the motivation for so acting is not perfectly pure, and is more for reasons of self-preservation than defence of right, it is invariably tested in this way.

Rehoboam’s best defence against Jeroboam and Egypt was to turn to Yahweh with all his heart and rid the land of the idolatry which still lingered from the reign of Solomon his father. This would have guaranteed Divine help in time of need. The proof that this policy would have worked lies in the fact that despite all its failings Judah was still attractive to many in the northern tribes (particularly the Levites) who could not tolerate the apostasy of Jeroboam. They came in droves out of the north to bolster the kingdom of Judah, especially in the first three years following the division, and before Rehoboam’s own apostasy took deep root. A much more determined and consistent approach to uphold the truth in Judah would have seen this migration turn into a flood, and so in time completely evaporate Jeroboam’s threat to Rehoboam’s kingdom.

V.13 - **“the priests and Levites that were in all Israel resorted to him”** - *Resorted* is *yatsab* signifying to place anything (so as to stay). Roth. translates: “took their stand with him”. This was due principally to the apostasy of Jeroboam and his choice of priests from outside the tribe of Levi; i.e. the family Aaron (1 Kings 12:31). The rejection of the Levites as

priests and ministers in the worship of Israel is given as the reason for their defection to Judah in verse 14.

Vv.16-17 - The defection of the Levites and many outraged Israelites who were scandalised by Jeroboam's idolatry swelled the ranks of Judah, especially at feast times, and greatly strengthened Rehoboam's kingdom. Judah maintained a degree of integrity before God for 3 years until the poverty of Rehoboam's leadership brought about the inevitable lapse.

REHOBAM'S FAMILY – 2 Chron. 11:18-23

V.18 - Rehoboam had a policy of keeping the throne within the family of David. Of the three wives listed here out of eighteen that he took each was from the family of David, his own kin.

"Mahalath" - Heb. "sickness". She was the daughter of Jerimoth ("elevations"), and granddaughter of David.

"Abihail" - Heb. "Father of might". The daughter of Eliab David's brother whose name means, "God (El) is his father".

V.19 - **"which bare him children"** - Abihail's children were named; "Jeush" - Heb. "to whom God hastens"; "Shamariah" - Heb. "whom Yahweh guards"; and "Zaham" - Heb. "loathing".

V.20 - **"after her he took Maachah"** - Heb. "depression". She was the daughter of Absalom ("Father of peace"). Her children were Abijah ("His father is Yah"), Attai ("opportune"), Ziza ("abundance"), and Shelimoth ("peacefulness").

V.21 - **"Rehoboam loved Maachah"** - Absalom's daughter was preferred by Rehoboam above all his wives. Like Solomon his father he amassed numerous wives in defiance of the commandment of Deut. 17:17. He had 18 wives and 60 concubines. The three wives named are all connected with the family of David. It is not without significance that Maachah later turned to an abominable idolatry and was evicted from her prominent position by king Asa her grandson (1 Kings 15:13). Her influence may have been crucial in turning Rehoboam's heart away from Yahweh (2 Chron. 12:1).

V.22 - **"Rehoboam made Abijah the son of Maachah the chief, to be ruler"** - *Chief* is *rosh* - the head and *ruler* is *nagid* - a commander. Abijah was being prepared for the throne by being trained as a military commander. Aggressiveness was to characterise Abijah's brief reign, showing how important the direction given to children can be in shaping their future.

V.23 - **"he dealt wisely"** - *biyn* - to separate mentally, i.e. to understand. Rehoboam was not a complete fool. When it came to preservation of his own interests he was quite adept and shrewd. The purpose sought was to disseminate his presence throughout the land.

"he desired many wives" - He did this in defiance of Deut. 17:17 and in despite of his father's example of failure in this regard. In fact he himself was the son of an Ammonitess, one of the many strange women taken by Solomon.

REHOBAM'S APOSTASY – 2 Chron. 12:1-12; 1 Kings 14:22-24

2 Chron. 12:1 - “and had strengthened himself” - Rehoboam’s kingdom grew strong in the first three years of his rule but produced in him self-confidence so that he forsook Yahweh by ignoring and rejecting His law. The record then says curiously, “and all Israel with him”. This is an obvious reference to the fact that Rehoboam’s kingdom had been greatly strengthened by many from Israel in the north (2 Chron. 11:16-17) who now found themselves involved in another dreadful apostasy, perhaps a little more subtle than Jeroboam’s.

1 Kings 14:22-24

V.22 - “**Judah did evil in the sight of the LORD**”- This is a very common statement in Kings and Chronicles. It reveals however that God was vitally concerned with His people and watched them and His land at all times (Prov. 15:5; Deut. 11:12). The message of the first three chapters of the Apocalypse is that Christ is equally concerned with the ecclesia today.

“**they provoked him to jealousy**”- The word for *jealousy* is *qana* - to be zealous. The word also relates to the jealousy of a husband for his wife and is used in the law of jealousy (Num. 5). The idolatry described here shows that Judah had broken the first two commandments (Exod. 20:3-5).

V.23 - “**they also built them high places**”- The Hebrew for *high* signifies elevated, powerful, arrogant; from a primary root to soar, to be lofty. The high places had their origin in Canaanitish and Moabitish idolatry. High ground was selected to give prominence to whichever god was being worshipped. High places were often the home of fertility cults and were nearly always associated with Asherim and Asheroth (male and female fertility gods). The grossly immoral symbols of the cults were deified by the use of pillars, poles and other graphic means. Officiating at these places were “priests” (*Kedeshim* - male prostitutes, and *Kedeshoth* - female prostitutes) who offered themselves in the worship of their deities (cp. Hos. 4:12-14). Israel were commanded to destroy the high places (Num. 33:52; Deut. 33:29). Solomon was responsible for reintroducing the high places (1 Kings 11:4-8).

“**images and groves**”- *Images* is *matstsebah* - a column or stone pillar, with grossly immoral connotations, as were the *groves* (*asherah*, from a root; to be straight).

V.24 - “**Sodomites**”- *qadesh* - a sacred person; a male devotee by prostitution to licentious idolatry. Judah was now little different to the Canaanites they had displaced from the land in the days of Joshua.

SHISHAK'S INVASION – 1 Kings 14:25-28; 2 Chron. 12:2-12

Shishak the reigning king of Egypt was brought against Judah in Rehoboam’s fifth year because of his apostasy (2 Chron. 12:2). God sent him to humble and punish Rehoboam in the hope that he might reform himself and the nation. Shishak took all the gold in Jerusalem, including the 300 famous golden shields which Solomon had placed in the house of the forest of Lebanon. Rehoboam replaced them with shields of brass. Sadly, this was emblematic that tried and precious faith (gold - 1 Pet. 1:7), which was Judah’s greatest defence, had disappeared, and that now the flesh (brass) was in control. Significantly,

Rehoboam committed the shields of brass into the hands of his own personal guard, thus signifying that his trust was in the flesh and not in Yahweh.

SHEMAIAH'S PROPHECY – 2 Chron. 12:5-8

V.6 - **“humbled themselves”**- The word *humbled* is *kana* meaning to bend the knee, humiliate. The king and his princes were humbled and declared Yahweh's righteousness in bringing Shishak against them, and consequently in verses 7 & 8 the intended punishment is mitigated. Rehoboam would be a vassal of Shishak and would not be destroyed. This was in accordance with the Divine principles relating to mercy and forgiveness (cp. 1 Kings 21:29).

2 Chron.12:10-12

V.10 - **“guard”**- *rasim* - Lit. runners, i.e. professional soldiers of the king's bodyguard.

V.11 - **“when the king entered into the house of the LORD”** - The shields were evidently used for ceremonial purposes and were transported to and from the king's palace when he went to the Temple. It is significant that “brass” (flesh) always accompanied Rehoboam to worship. Shield's were figurative of God's protection (Gen. 15:1; Deut. 33:29), and of salvation (2 Sam. 22:36; Psa. 18:35), but neither of these applied to Rehoboam. There is no indication that he did anything to reform the nation from the idolatry into which he had encouraged it. Humility is one thing, but to secure God's protection and salvation requires faithful service. Rehoboam publicly worshipped Yahweh but allowed idolatry to continue in the land.

V.12 - **“and also in Judah things went well”** - Roth. translates: “Moreover also in Judah there were some good things.” While there was some consolation for God's faithful servants in Judah in this, enabling them to choose the good and refuse the evil, the same could not be said of Israel in the north which was firmly in the grip of Jeroboam's apostasy.

FINAL SUMMARY AND OBITUARY – 2 Chron. 12:13-16 (1 Kings 14:29-31)

V.13 - **“his mother's name was Naamah an Ammonitess”**- The repetition of this fact reveals that it was an important contributor to Rehoboam's failure. He had learnt his indifference to the pure and singular worship of Yahweh from his mother, who amongst others influenced Solomon to build shrines in acknowledgment of their gods (1 Kings 11:4-5).

V.14 - **“he prepared not his heart to seek the LORD”**- Roth. - “But he did evil in that he did not fix his heart to seek Yahweh”. The word *prepared* is *kuwn* a primary root signifying to be erect; hence to set up, establish or fix. See the same word used in relation to Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. 19:3), Jotham (27:6), and Ezra (Ezra 7:10).

V.15 - **“there were wars between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all their days”** - An implacable hatred existed between these rival kings. The wounds of division were never healed and a state of war existed throughout their reigns. Almost everything that either of them did was overshadowed by this hatred and conflict. We shall see later what a profound effect this had on Rehoboam's family.

JEROBOAM -

The Ambitious Manipulator

(ISRAEL)

HEBREW - Yarobam - “The people will contend.” From a prim. root *ruwb*; to toss, i.e. grapple; fig. to wrangle or hold a controversy, and *am* - a people (as a congregated unit).

FIRST MENTION - 1 Kings 11:26 **LAST MENTION** - 2 Chron. 13:20

LENGTH OF REIGN - 22 years (1 Kings 14:20). From 931-910 BC

ORIGINS - 1 Kings 11:26

FATHER - Nebat - “Regard”, from root to scan, i.e. look intently at; by imp. to regard with pleasure. The phrase “Jeroboam, the son of Nebat” occurs 21 times.

MOTHER - Zeruah - “Leprous” from prim. root, to be stricken with leprosy.

PLACE OF BIRTH - Zereda - “to pierce or puncture”.

TRIBE - An Ephrathite, i.e. an Ephraimite as Zereda is in Mt. Ephraim (see 1 Kings 11:28).

CONTEMPORARY KINGS - Rehoboam (931-914 BC), Abijah (913-911 BC), Asa (911-871 BC).

SUMMARY OF CHARACTER

The first king of the northern kingdom of Israel left an indelible mark on the history of God’s Ecclesia. He became known as “Jeroboam, the son of Nebat who made Israel to sin” (this Divine epitaph is found 13 times in the record of Kings and Chronicles). Few men have been given the opportunities presented to Jeroboam, and few men have so blatantly abused them as he did. He was chosen by God as a man with the potential to lead Israel away from the idolatry of Solomon and back to the faithfulness of David’s reign (1 Kings 11:31-39). He must have possessed great potential to develop after David’s pattern, for God promised him “a sure house” long before he became king (1 Kings 11:38). No other king could claim such promises as were made to Jeroboam before his accession. However, the promises were conditional upon faith and obedience, and these qualities were soon to be put to the test. Sadly for Israel, Jeroboam was found dreadfully wanting even before he came to power.

The first indication of the ambition that was to destroy Jeroboam appears in 1 Kings 11:40; “Solomon sought therefore to kill Jeroboam.” Why? Who told Solomon that Jeroboam was to be his successor? We know from 1 Kings 11:29 that only Ahijah and Jeroboam knew God’s intentions (“they two were alone”). The record is explicit on this point however. 1 Kings 11:26 says Jeroboam pre-empted the Divine timetable for the transition of power by “lifting up his hand against the king.” He did not take God at His word and failed to wait for the death of Solomon which he was clearly told would be the point at which he would accede to the throne (1 Kings 11:34-35).

Ambition proved stronger than faith and soon blinded him altogether. Indiscretion quickly followed as Jeroboam fled into Egypt to escape Solomon, and became familiar with the

gods of that country, and in particular with Apis (the young bull). It seems almost certain that the apostasy of Jeroboam in introducing the worship of the golden calves into Israel can be traced to his experiences in Egypt. Upon the death of Solomon he quickly returned to Israel, anticipating the fulfilment of Ahijah's prophecy. Jeroboam was an industrious and capable man, endowed with the ability to lead men (1 Kings 11:26-28). Despite his long absence he immediately assumed the role of negotiator for the discontented amongst the ten tribes, and from this position as leader of an influential minority he rapidly advanced to become the champion of the people and their popular choice as king.

This rapid progress speaks volumes concerning Jeroboam's character. He was obviously a persuasive individual; a natural leader with an irresistible personality that easily captivated the hearts of a work-worn and sorely burdened people searching for a spokesman to espouse their cause and argue it with force before the king-elect. He was in every sense "the peoples man", a social-democrat who contended for the people (see the meaning of his name), but who also had an eye for the achievement of strong personal ambitions.

The apostasy of Jeroboam demonstrates a complete absence of faith and is directly attributable to his ambition to retain power over his subjects. His blatant idolatry, tampering with Divine appointments, and the unconcealed attempt to bribe the man of God from Judah, all resulted from this singular motivation. He has gone down in history as the man who initiated a religious system in Israel that finally destroyed it (2 Kings 17:21-23).

There are some remarkable comparisons between the lives of Saul and Jeroboam. Both had humble beginnings and great potential; were Divinely appointed but lacked faith; turned to disobedience and became idolaters, and then stubbornly resisted any attempts to turn them from their evil ways. The problem in the lives of both men was identical; pride and ambition to hold on to power at all costs.

HARMONY OF THE RECORDS OF JEROBOAM'S REIGN	1 Kings	2 Chron.
Emerges as champion of Israel	11:26-28	
Ahijah's prophecy and instructions	11:29-39	
Flees from Solomon into Egypt	11:40	
Leads delegation to Rehoboam	12:2-5	10:2-5
The people appoint him as king	12:20	
Jeroboam's apostasy - the golden calves	12:25-33	
Rebuked by the man of God from Judah	13:1-32	
His persistence in idolatry	13:33-34	
Abijah his son falls ill	14:1-4	
Ahijah condemns Jeroboam's house	14:5-16	
The death of Abijah	14:17-18	
The death of Jeroboam	14:19-20	

VERSE BY VERSE NOTES

THE EMERGENT JEROBOAM – 1 Kings 11:26-28

V.26 - "**Solomon's servant**" - *ebed*; primarily a servant, but he appears to have had the status of a special officer of the crown specifically appointed as a supervisor of works.

“Zeruah, a widow woman” - The fact that his mother was a widow may account for the notable industriousness of Jeroboam. Perhaps he had learnt to accept responsibility and to work very hard at an early age out of sheer necessity to support his mother.

“he lifted up his hand against the king” - *Lifted up* is *ruwm* - to raise high. It would seem that following Ahijah’s prophecy Jeroboam pre-empted its fulfilment and came out in open opposition to Solomon well before the latter’s death.

V.27 - **“Solomon built Millo”** - Heb. “a rampart, i.e. the citadel”. Millo was a fortification on the north side of the city of David consisting of a rampart (two walls with earth fill between). This dates Ahijah’s prophecy to Jeroboam some time after Solomon’s 20th year (see 1 Kings 9:10,15,24). Jeroboam was doubtless among the officers of 1 Kings 9:23 and had probably become Solomon’s servant as a result of a levy raised earlier by Adoram (1 Kings 5:13-16).

V.28 - **“Jeroboam was a mighty man of valour”** - *Mighty* is *gibbor* - powerful (warrior). *Valour* is *chayil* - a force; valour or strength. This does not necessarily mean he was a soldier, but as Rotherham translates: “an able man.”

“he was industrious” - The words are *ose melakah* - “to do” and “deputyship”. Roth. - “one to execute a work.” As a foreman or overseer Jeroboam was extremely capable and his ability was obvious to all. He was a natural leader of men and so Solomon took full advantage of his skills.

“made him ruler over all the charge of Joseph” - *Ruler* is *paqad* - to oversee, muster, charge. *Charge* is *cebel* - a load. His competence was rewarded by a promotion to be overseer of Ephraim’s and Manasseh’s contingent of “public servants”. This confirms almost certainly his origins in Ephraim (he is called an Ephrathite).

AHIJAH’S PROPHECY – 1 Kings 11:29-39

Solomon was not the only one to recognise Jeroboam’s potential as a leader in Israel. Yahweh had also observed his ability and potential, and had chosen him for a special purpose. It is clear from what follows that God saw in Jeroboam one with the potential to rule His people like David. Seven times (the covenant number) David’s name occurs in Ahijah’s prophecy. The promise made to Jeroboam is quite remarkable and is unique in the record of the kings. It was full of promise should the faithfulness of David be duplicated by Jeroboam.

V.29 - **“Ahijah the Shilonite”** - “Brother (with the idea of a worshipper) of Yah.” The prophet was from Shiloh signifying “tranquil”. Shiloh was the place where the land was originally divided by lot among the tribes (Josh. 18:1,8-10). Now through the prophet of God from that very place the land was to be divided again (see V.31). Shiloh occupied an important place in Israel’s history (see Judges 18:3; 21:19; Psa. 78:60; Jer. 7:12-14). Significantly, Shiloh was on the route between Bethel (later to become the centre of Jeroboam’s apostasy) and Shechem. It was the place where Yahweh had first set His name (Jer. 7:12). This was to be therefore a “new beginning” associated with a new ‘division’ of the land.

“And Ahijah caught the new garment that was on him” - The word *garment* is *salmah* indicating a dress or mantle. It was Ahijah who was wearing the new garment which

symbolised the nation of Israel. By suddenly grasping and tearing his garment in front of Jeroboam he was graphically portraying that God would make a new start in Israel. The tribes were to be divided (by lot) again, significantly by a prophet from Shiloh (cp. 1 Sam. 15:27-28).

“they two were alone” - This fact indicates that the knowledge of the prophecy became general later through disclosure by either one. It is clear from verse 40 that it was through Jeroboam’s premature anticipation of acquiring the monarchy that the prophecy became public.

V.31 - **“Take thee ten pieces”** - Ahijah’s new mantle representing the 12 tribes as one nation was divided into twelve. Jeroboam was invited to take ten pieces (i.e. he drew lots, as the tribes had done at Shiloh before Joshua).

“I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon” - Solomon had been warned of this in verses 11 to 13. He knew one of his servants would be appointed king after his death. Which one, he did not know, until Jeroboam later “lifted up his hand” against him. The division of the nation into 2 and 10 tribes was based upon an existing natural division (2 Sam. 19:43).

V.32 - **“But he shall have one tribe”** - While two pieces remained it seems that the royal tribe Judah was the only complete tribe to remain with the house of David. The other was made up of the remnant of Simeon and part but not all of Benjamin (1 Kings 12:21-23).

“for my servant David’s sake” - This oft-repeated statement is testimony to the stature of David in Yahweh’s eyes and of His faithfulness to the covenant made to Israel’s greatest king (cp. 2 Sam. 7). David stood as the prodigious exemplar of all that God sought in the kings.

“and for Jerusalem’s sake” - Yahweh had set His name in Jerusalem. It was to be the centre of Israel’s worship after the pattern of the Tabernacle in the wilderness (Deut. 12:5-14). This fact was to be Jeroboam’s greatest stumbling-block. Note the similarity of this verse with Deut. 12:14.

V.33 - **“forsaken”** - *azab* - to loosen; relinquish. They had turned their backs on Yahweh.

“Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Zidonians” - *Ashtoreth* means “increase” and refers to a fertility goddess of Canaan (Attarat), also called in Greece Astarte, and in Babylon Ishtar. The worship of this deity entailed fertility rites in association with male and female priests (prostitutes). Because there is no feminine term for goddess in Hebrew a masculine word is used. Solomon married some Zidonian women who introduced this god into the nation (1 Kings 11:5). Jezebel, the most infamous of all women brought into Israel was a Zidonian (1 Kings 16:31).

“Chemosh, the god of the Moabites” - Chemosh was an astral deity also associated with abominable practices (Num.25:1-2).

“Milcom, the god...of Ammon” - *Milcom* means “a king”. It is the same as Molech, an astral deity related to the star Venus. Chemosh and Molech are thought to be local names for the same god worshipped by human sacrifice (2 Kings 23:10; Lev.18:21; Jer. 32:35). This worship was later established in the valley of the son of Hinnom (“moaning”) where the moans and cries of the infant victims and their parents could be heard in the city!

V.34 - **“for David my servants sake”** - Again, the standing and example of David is introduced as the basis of God’s actions. His wonderful example stood as a constant reminder to all who came after him as to what God expected in leaders of His people. Tragically, David’s example was more often than not a standing rebuke to his successors. Here Ahijah makes the point that despite Solomon’s apostasy the covenant made with David would stand.

“whom I chose” - This is at once a declaration of the source of David’s success and a warning to Jeroboam. He too was specially “chosen” because of his potential, whereas Solomon and Rehoboam reigned by natural succession to the throne of their father.

V.35 - **“I will take the kingdom out of his son’s hand”** - This promise confirmed God’s intention stated in the earlier prophecy condemning Solomon’s apostasy (verse 12). It also qualified verse 31 inasmuch as it indicated that the division would not be during Solomon’s lifetime.

V.36 - **“light”**- *nir* - “to glisten”; a lamp or light. This serves as a symbol for a living representative of the family.

V.37 - Herein was a guarantee of Divine help in securing his kingdom. There was no need for him to devise his own methods of retaining his subjects.

“thy soul desireth” - The word *desireth* is *taavah* - a longing, by imp. a delight. Roth. - “Thou shalt reign over all that thy soul could desire.” This was both a wonderful promise and a severe test of faith. Would Jeroboam have sufficient faith to wait for Yahweh to establish his kingdom? He proved unequal to the task.

V.38 - **“if thou wilt hearken”** - This was the challenge for Jeroboam. Would he be any different than Solomon to whom Yahweh had appeared twice? His house would be established on the same basis as David’s.

“and build thee a sure house” - The reward was great, then, and in the future. This promise (though conditional upon obedience) was virtually the same made to David. Such words were never spoken to any other king, and yet Jeroboam was not yet a king, nor proven by trial. This was truly a unique situation presenting him with enormous opportunities.

V.39 - **“And I will for this afflict the seed of David”** - Here was another assurance that God would establish his kingdom without Jeroboam’s own intervention. In fact, because of Jeroboam’s contrivances the exact opposite occurred (2 Chron. 11:13-16).

JEROBOAM’S FLIGHT INTO EGYPT – 1 Kings 11:40

V.40 - **“Solomon sought therefore to kill Jeroboam”** - This shows that Jeroboam must have disclosed the prophecy to others who in turn passed it on to Solomon, for the record states plainly that only Ahijah and Jeroboam were present (V.29). Solomon doubtless was ready for the appearance of the ‘usurper’ who he knew would eventually take his throne (verse 11). Jeroboam’s pre-empting of God’s promise and its timing revealed a sad lack of faith in Jeroboam which was to culminate soon after his accession in an awful apostasy. Driven by ambition he had failed long before he even secured the throne.

“and fled into Egypt” - The first commandment for the kings of Israel forbade a return to Egypt (Deut. 17:16). This had been Solomon’s first great mistake (1 Kings 3:1). Jeroboam’s flight into Egypt seems to have sowed the seeds of his idolatry.

“unto Shishak” - He was the Libyan founder of the 22nd Dynasty - 935 to 914 BC. This was the same king who invaded Judah in Rehoboam’s 5th year (1 Kings 14:25-28). On this basis it appears reasonable to date Jeroboam’s escape into Egypt about 4 years before Solomon’s death in 931 BC.

JEROBOAM’S RETURN – 1 Kings 12:2-3,20

V.2 - **“heard of it”** - The Vulgate has: “heard that Solomon was dead.”

“Jeroboam dwelt in Egypt” - The record is at pains to underline this fact due to the subsequent apostasy of Jeroboam which had strong links with Egyptian deities.

V.20 - **“all Israel heard”** - The *all* in this verse is in contrast to “they” of V.3. The latter obviously refers to the smaller active group of Israel who were pressing for concessions from Rehoboam while the “all” here refers to the whole of the ten tribes present.

JEROBOAM’S APOSTASY – 1 Kings 12:25-33

V.25 - **“Then Jeroboam built Shechem”** - i.e. Jeroboam fortified and strengthened Shechem as a fortress. It was his first capital and the place of his accession as king. It also possessed special significance as the place of Rehoboam’s rejection. Shechem was ever the place in Israel’s history where choices were made to accept responsibilities before God (refer to the notes on 1 Kings 12:1 in the chapter on Rehoboam). It was here that Jeroboam made some decisions that were to determine his own destiny and shape the future of Israel for a long time to come.

“and went out from thence and built Peniel” - Jeroboam may have gone to Peniel to secure the remnants of the tribes in Gilead. It was about 13 km (8 miles) east of the River Jordan on the River Jabbok. The name means “the face of El”. Like Shechem this place had a history associated with the life of Jacob (Gen. 32:30-31). Peniel was the place where Jacob was taught that success would not come through his own contriving and he learnt to cast himself entirely upon Yahweh in his hour of need (Hos. 12:3-4). Jeroboam did the exact opposite. It was seemingly here that he conceived the breathtaking apostasy of the golden calves as a means of securing his kingdom.

V.26 - **“Jeroboam said in his heart”** - Political considerations became uppermost in his mind. He had a Divine guarantee that his kingdom would be secured (1 Kings 11:38), providing he was obedient to the Divine commandments. Jeroboam did not understand the lesson of Jacob’s life and set about securing his own interests and endeavouring to “fulfil prophecy” by his own methods. Unlike Jacob who wrestled with himself and finally saw the face of El, Jeroboam wrestled in his heart and decided to turn his face away from God.

V.27 - **“if this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD”** - He could not see from a human standpoint how his kingdom could be secured while Jerusalem remained the centre of Israel’s worship (Deut. 12:5-14). If the people continued to go up to Jerusalem for the feasts, would they not eventually develop a desire to return to the house of David? And furthermore, was not Jeroboam himself required to go up three times in year to Jerusalem? This was an immediate and very real test of faith which came upon him quite

soon after his accession. The choices were stark. Either he had to completely trust in Yahweh or rely entirely on his own political resources. A little reflection shows how difficult this decision was for Jeroboam.

“unto their Lord” - This statement of the heart is illuminating and is a significant revelation of Jeroboam’s mind. He calls Rehoboam their *adon* or ruler. He was Israel’s Adon. Yahweh had said so (1 Kings 11:35-37). Yet in his heart he unconsciously recognised Rehoboam’s sovereignty. This reveals a complete absence of faith in God’s promise.

V.28 - **“the king took counsel”** - Jeroboam’s counsel was with himself. The word is *yaats* signifying to deliberate or resolve.

“and made two calves of gold” - Jeroboam followed the example of Aaron whose words were identical to Jeroboam’s (Ex. 32:4). It would appear that both attempted to represent Yahweh by a visible object (Psa. 106:19-20). Perhaps Jeroboam sought to introduce something akin to the Ark of the Covenant in which the glory of God dwelt; his aim being to distract the attention of his people from the Temple in Jerusalem. While Jeroboam, like Aaron, may have thought the first commandment was not broken ‘technically’, in fact it was; and the second was blatantly violated by his action (Ex. 20:4-5). The calf was obviously chosen through Egyptian influence as in the wilderness (1 Kings 12:2), although there was also a trace of nationalism in his choice of imagery as well. Apis, the young bull, represented Osiris a deity of the Egyptians who was the equivalent of Nimrod. But the ox was also the symbol of the tribe of Ephraim, Jeroboam’s own tribe and the principal tribe of the northern kingdom. He knew how to subtly appeal to the strong nationalist tendencies previously manifested in Ephraim.

“It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem” - Every Israelite was commanded to appear before his God three times in a year at Jerusalem (Deut. 16:16). Jeroboam’s policy was a deliberate “writing down” of that law (cp. Luke 16:1-9). In order to turn his people away from worship in Jerusalem he had first to diminish the requirements of the Law, while at the same time provide a substitute for what was being lost. The essential first step was to argue that the requirement to journey to Jerusalem thrice in a year was an unreasonable demand. The proposal to station places of worship in Bethel and Dan and require attendance only once a year would surely be attractive to the majority of his people. Diminishing the requirement to be present regularly before God has never been without supporters throughout ecclesial history! It is native to the flesh to feel that Divine requirements are “too much”.

V.29 - **“And he set the one in Bethel”** - The name means “The house of God”. It was situated on the southern boundary of Jeroboam’s kingdom 18 km (11 miles) north of Jerusalem in the territory of Benjamin. It lay in the path of Israelites travelling to Jerusalem along the ridge of the central highlands. This place has a highly significant history in connection with Abraham and Jacob. It was at Bethel that Abraham built an altar and “called upon the name of Yahweh” (Gen. 12:8), and that Jacob set up a pillar representing the ecclesia in all ages after God had appeared to him in the dream of the staircase (Gen. 28:11-19; cp. 1 Tim. 3:15). Jeroboam’s apostasy was the antithesis of all that Bethel stood for.

“and the other put he in Dan” - This name means “Judgement”. When the name was first coined by Rachel in Gen. 30:6 it was used in the context of choice or selection, and hence

judgement. As events were to prove it was aptly named. Dan was in the extreme north of Israel on the border with the Zidonians. The history of its establishment as an Israelitish town is provided in Judges 18:1-7. It was in the extreme north of the land 124 km (75 miles) from Shechem over rough and difficult terrain.

V.30 - **“this thing became a sin for the people went to worship....even unto Dan”** - Roth.- “And the people went before the one, as far as Dan.” Dan was 124 km (75 miles) from Shechem while Bethel was 32 km (20 miles) away; Jerusalem being another 18 km (11 miles) over much easier terrain. This is a truly amazing outcome. Not only did the people ignore Jerusalem, they also preferred to go over three times the distance of Bethel by journeying to worship before the golden calf in Dan. In a parable they chose “judgement” (Dan) rather than “the house of God” (Bethel, which was at least in the direction of Jerusalem). The perversity of flesh when given licence is boundless. Jeroboam’s appeal had been: “it is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem”; instead they went over three times as far in the opposite direction! Flesh will go to any lengths and make almost any sacrifice in order to satisfy its own desires, but is remarkably reluctant when confronted with the responsibilities of the Truth.

There was a familiar ring about this kind of perversity in the history of Dan. In the times of the Judges the tribe of Dan being unable to secure their inheritance in the south sought to establish it outside their prescribed lot. Six hundred Danites chose Laish in the north, and capturing it, renamed it Dan. In doing this they also established an apostate worship with a graven image stolen from an Ephraimite who had rejected the Aaronic priesthood and hired the grandson of Moses as his priest (Jud.17 and 18). The effort required in all this was far greater than if they had applied themselves in faith to take the inheritance God had originally appointed them.

V.31 - **“And he made an house of high places”** - Pagan deities were often worshipped in local shrines built on prominent hills. This shrine was built by Jeroboam out of a desire to simplify Israel’s worship and divert the attention of the people from the Temple in Jerusalem. In view of Solomon’s actions which had led to Jeroboam’s accession to the throne (1 Kings 11:7,33) this was a foolish policy indeed. It demonstrated his complete lack of faith in God’s promise, and his total obsession with retaining his power and kingdom at any cost.

“and made priests of the lowest of the people” - *Lowest* is *qatsah* - an extremity; from the fringes. The word is used in a sense that indicates his choice was from the whole range of his subjects. No special qualifications were necessary. Priests were supposed to be Israel’s educators (Mal.2:7), and they were mediators between God and His people. Jeroboam dispensed with the sons of Aaron and the Levites altogether and appointed whoever was disposed to take on the role. This policy had immediate and disastrous consequences for his kingdom as the Levites left for the south in droves (2 Chron. 11:13-16).

V.32 - **“Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month”** - Jeroboam knew he needed a substitute for the feasts of Yahweh to divert the attention of his people from the calendar with which they were so familiar. It would seem that the feast of tabernacles which commenced on the 15th day of the 7th month was the next major event in that calendar. “Tabernacles” or “ingathering” brought to a climax the agricultural and the religious year.

It was a time of thanksgiving, joyous fellowship and rededication. Dwelling in booths brought home to the Israelite his utter dependence upon Yahweh. It vividly brought to mind the wilderness wanderings of his fathers and the fact that he was but a tenant of God's land and dependent upon His continued goodness. Choosing to tamper with this feast is surely another testimony to Jeroboam's infidelity and cunning perversity.

"and he offered upon the altar" - This statement that Jeroboam presided over the sacrifices is repeated several times and shows that he was the high-priest of this new system of worship. In fact the pronoun "he" is employed 9 times in verses 32 & 33 to emphasise this point.

"sacrificing unto the calves" - Jeroboam like Aaron may have intended to represent Yahweh by the calves, but this statement reveals the real truth. The sacrifice was made to idol gods, not to Yahweh. The phrase is also important because it shows that at this inaugural ceremony on the 15th day of the 8th month both of the calves he had made were present at Bethel.

"and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places" - Bethel became the centre of the new cult and the home of its priests. It was strategically placed right in the path of Israelites travelling south to Jerusalem.

V.33 - **"which he had devised of his own heart"** - *Devised* is *bada* sig. to invent. Roth. - "devised out of his own heart." It should be observed that this verse virtually repeats verse 32. That is because it is a vital connecting link with 1 Kings 13:1 and heightens the drama of the sudden appearance of the man of God from Judah to condemn Jeroboam's system at the very moment that the king acting as 'high-priest' went up to offer upon his new altar.

THE APPEARANCE OF THE MAN OF GOD FROM JUDAH – 1 Kings 13:1-10

V.1 - **"And, behold"** - These words provide the important connecting link. At the very instant that Jeroboam went up to offer incense upon his altar the man of God appeared. This was the all-important inaugural ceremony of Jeroboam's own festival, and of his altar at Bethel. Connected with it was his confirmation in the eyes of Israel as their king and spiritual leader. It was vitally important that all things go well at this inauguration of his own system of worship. Fittingly, at the crucial moment God intervened to condemn his system of religion.

"by the word of the LORD" - The nameless "man of God" with a special mission came "out of Judah", not from Israel. His instructions were to return immediately by "another way" and therefore, by an enactment, demonstrate that Yahweh was out of fellowship with Israel. Jeroboam was offering incense (prayer - Psa. 141:2) at the precise moment of his arrival. He is immediately answered, but the message is a declaration of his utter rejection by God.

"stood by the altar to burn incense" - The timing was perfect. As he stood beside his altar, and before he could actually offer his form of "prayer", God intervened with His edict against Jeroboam's system of religion.

V.2 - **"he cried against the altar"** - It is noteworthy that the prophecy is against the altar, not Jeroboam personally. The denunciation was of the system of worship established by him demonstrating that it was utterly abhorrent to Yahweh.

“Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David” - Because of Jeroboam’s apostasy the situation was now completely reversed from that of 1 Kings 11:39.

“Josiah by name” - Heb. “Founded of Yah”. This name was a rebuke in itself. Jeroboam’s religion was not founded of God. The prophecy delivered by a ‘nameless’ prophet was fulfilled by a king of Judah named some 308 years previously.

“upon thee shall he offer the priests” - The non-Levitical priesthood was one of the most abhorrent features of Jeroboam’s system. God’s choice of the Levites as the priestly tribe had been overridden and ignored (Num. 3:9-10). This would be savagely avenged in due time. The word *offer* is *zabach* - to slaughter; and this is what Josiah eventually did to Jeroboam’s priesthood.

“that burn incense upon thee” - Particularly repugnant to God was the thought that their prayers could be accepted without the mediators of God’s choosing (Prov. 15:8; 28:9).

“men’s bones shall be burnt” - Both living “priests” and dead would be wiped out completely and the whole system of Jeroboam would be completely abolished by Josiah’s work.

V.3 - **“and he gave a sign”** - *mopheth* - conspicuousness; a miracle.

“the ashes....shall be poured out” - *Ashes* is *deshen* - the fat. This was the residue of the sacrifices consisting of ashes mingled with the fat. Under the Law it was holy and was removed from the altar and deposited in a clean place (Lev. 1:16; 4:12; 6:10). “Poured out” - *shaphak* has the idea of spilling forth. This not only ceremonially defiled the altar but also negated the sacrifice. God was thus demonstrating that the fat of the sacrifice which was exclusively His as a symbol of the total surrender of the human will and feelings, had been totally rejected in this case.

V.4 - **“put forth his hand....lay hold on him”** - Jeroboam had already meddled with the word of God by endeavouring to fulfil God’s promises to him by his own methods. Now he had the temerity to put forth his hand to bind one who came by “the word of Yahweh” (verse 1). Thus he went one step further and was now attempting to suppress the edict of God against him. There is no limit of the ends to which ambition will go in defence of its aims.

“dried up” - *yabesh* - to wither; a paralysis as a result of withering. The hand is a symbol of power and the power of his system was to wither. The record says that the hand was “put forth” from off the altar. Presumably therefore it was Jeroboam’s right hand that withered up. There is a loud echo of this context in the words of the psalm: “If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning” (Psa. 137:5).

“he could not pull it in again to him” - This was the hand that was about to offer incense, now rendered useless for priestly ministration. Under the Law physical deformity disqualified from priesthood (Lev. 21:17-21) It was also symbolic of Jeroboam’s powerlessness against the word of God which he so blatantly opposed.

V.5 - **“The altar was rent”** - While Jeroboam’s ‘power’ is paralysed the word of God is fulfilled before him, defiling his system and rejecting his offering. There could hardly have been a more dramatic and public repudiation of his religious system than this.

V.6 - **“Intreat now the face of the LORD thy God”** - *Intreat* is *chalah*; to intreat or placate. Roth. has: “appease”. The reference to the face of God is a reminder of Peniel the place from whence all this had commenced (1 Kings 12:25-26). The details of his apostasy had been carefully planned in Peniel (“the face of God”).

“thy God” - Jeroboam did not dare say “my God” after the events of this day. His words are unwittingly an admission of his worthlessness as an intercessor or the mediator he presumed to be.

V.7 - **“Come home with me”** - Yng. - “Come in with me to the house”, i.e. into the sanctuary at Bethel (verse 8). This was a blatant attempt to compromise the man of God by inviting him to enter Jeroboam’s newly constructed temple.

“I will give thee a reward” - Yng. - “a gift.” Roth. - “a present.” This was un-adulterated bribery. Jeroboam desperately sought to buy the fellowship of the man of God so as to cancel the effects of his denunciation. His desperation in this situation can scarcely be imagined. He stood to lose everything if he could not denigrate the message or the messenger in some way. God had foreseen this, and so had strictly charged the man of God to refuse all offers of hospitality.

V.9 - **“charged”** - *tsavah* - to enjoin. God’s command to His messenger was very clear.

“eat no bread or drink water” - Under no circumstances was he to enjoy any fellowship.

“nor turn again by the same way thou camest” - The man of God was not to give the impression to any of Jeroboam’s subjects that he was coming out of the land of Judah to attend Jeroboam’s inaugural ceremonies as a worshipper. Those who saw him go in did not see him come out. Those who saw him leave would have thought him to be an Israelite leaving his nation. He was not to give the impression that it was acceptable to go backwards and forwards from Judah to Israel. He had to go **out** “another way”!

V.10 - **“So he went another way”** - The man of God had thus far fulfilled his commission. He had condemned Jeroboam and his system, but he himself was under an obligation to obey implicitly God’s commandments. Not to do so would be hypocrisy that must considerably weaken God’s edict against Jeroboam’s system.

THE TRAGIC END OF THE MAN OF GOD – 1 Kings 13:11-32

V.11 - **“there dwelt an old prophet in Bethel”** - Samuel who was instrumental in establishing the school of the prophets travelled yearly the circuit route through Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpeh (1 Sam. 7:16). He had a school in Bethel, one of the remnants of which may have been this aged prophet.

THE MAN OF GOD FROM JUDAH

The story of the man of God from Judah is perhaps the most poignant in the entire Scriptures. He is one of the most tragic figures to emerge from the pages of God's word, but one with whom a fellow-feeling is readily attained. The lesson of his life and death is transparently clear to all who are conscious that "in many things we offend all" (James 3:1-2). Simply stated, the sin of the man of God from Judah was hypocrisy that resulted in the severe diminution of God's word. He was like those who "say and do not", and as a consequence bring ridicule upon the name which they bear.

The man of God from Judah bursts on to the scene at Bethel during the great inaugural ceremonies marking the establishment of Jeroboam's new religious system. Nowhere in the record is he called a prophet though he delivered a prophecy concerning the destiny of Jeroboam's system and heralded the appearance of its destroyer Josiah. The reason for this is that he was specifically sent from Judah to represent Yahweh in a special way. He was to enact God's position in relation to Jeroboam's religious system, and declare its doom. He was the Divine messenger sent to Jeroboam to reveal that Yahweh had disfellowshipped him for his apostasy. He was not to fellowship Jeroboam by eating and drinking with him, nor was he to give the impression that he often journeyed into Israel, being specifically commanded to "return by another way." In the presence of the idolatrous king, the man of God performed his task well, for he had no sympathy for Jeroboam or his ways, and was able to resist the attempt made by the king to compromise his stand and detract from his prophecies.

When confronted however, by one of his own kind; a man who shared his antipathy for Jeroboam's idolatry, and who was so desperate to converse with someone of a similar attitude to himself that he could lie concerning an angelic visitation, the man of God forgot his original commission and turned back to eat and drink with the old prophet. As they were dining and doubtless avidly discussing matters of mutual interest the Spirit moved the host to condemn his valued guest for disobeying "the mouth of Yahweh". The man of God was the Divine representative and should have known that the word of God changeth not but standeth sure. The deception practised by the old prophet was in essence no different than the attempted bribery by Jeroboam. Certainly its effect on the outcome of his mission was the same, for the man of God died by the hand of Yahweh and was publicly buried in Bethel, an event that would not have gone unnoticed by Jeroboam, and probably accounts for the final words of 1 Kings 13; "**After this thing** Jeroboam returned not from his evil way..." In other words, after the widely publicised death of the man of God, Jeroboam (being the faithless man he was) could feel free to continue his apostasy. As far as he was concerned the prophecies against his system had been negated, or at least severely diminished by the compromise and ignominious death of their deliverer.

"his sons came and told him" - Evidently his sons were present at Jeroboam's festival and witnessed all the proceedings. The old prophet, though able to travel as we soon learn, was pointedly absent from the inaugural ceremonies of Jeroboam's calf worship.

V.12 - **“What way went he?”** - The old prophet was motivated by a desire to meet someone of his own religious persuasion and occupation. He was evidently very supportive of the man of God’s message of condemnation for Jeroboam’s system (verses 29-32).

V.14 - **“oak”** - *elah*; an oak. Oaks were solitary trees; a symbol for strength and longevity (cp. Gen. 35:8 where the word is *allown* for an oak near Bethel). The man of God travelling on foot, was tired, hungry and thirsty. He had decided to sit down and rest. His ‘guard’ was down and he was vulnerable although he did not recognise the fact. It is never wise to sit down before a vital work of the truth is complete.

V.18 - **“I am a prophet also as thou art”** - The old prophet of Bethel claimed the same spiritual status as the man of God. He told a blatant lie of an angel appearing to him and reversing the commandment given to the man of God. The story hardly seems plausible but it was sufficient for the man of God to forget his adamant contention to Jeroboam that he was not permitted to tarry. Amazingly, the man of God accepted the invitation and returned to Bethel on the strength of the word of a man he had never met. There are two glaring faults here:-

1. Hypocrisy which severely undermined the effect of the edict against Jeroboam, and
2. Failure to appreciate the irrevocableness of Divine commands. The man of God was proficient in speaking the word and delivering Divine edicts, but failed to perform the demands made upon him personally. He was also too ready to believe something which would counter what were perhaps fairly harsh conditions imposed upon him in the execution of his commission.

V.21 - **“disobeyed the mouth of the LORD”** - *Disobeyed* is *mara*; to rebel, hence to defy authority. Disregard for the word of God, especially direct and personal revelation such as the man of God had been given is the most serious rebellion. He had heard the *mouth of Yahweh* speak but like Saul, Solomon, and Jeroboam he ignored it when under pressure from other directions.

V.22 - **“in the place”** - The emphasis here is “in the **very** place” - i.e. Bethel where his work had been so publicly performed against Jeroboam. Effectively he had completely reversed his earlier declarations which could now be undermined.

“thy carcase shall not come unto the sepulchre of thy fathers” - He would meet a violent death and an undistinguished disposal somewhere distant from his own inheritance. To be condemned in this way by the old prophet under inspiration was sadly poetic for a man who had just performed a similar work against Jeroboam.

V.24 - **“a lion met him”** - See a similar case in 1 Kings 20:36 where another prophet met a similar end for disobedience to the word of God. In his tragic death the man of God from Judah became an apt representation of Jeroboam. Like Jeroboam he set out riding the ass (a symbol of Israel), but because of failure under trial, Yahweh would be in the way like a lion to destroy him, though not Israel (Hos. 5:14).

V.28 - **“nor torn the ass”** - This provided clear testimony of the Divine hand in his death, and a prophecy that God would similarly destroy the disobedient Jeroboam while temporarily preserving Israel (the ass).

V.29 - **“to mourn”** - *misped* signifies to beat the breast. The grief of the old prophet over the death of his new found friend was palpable for he had occasioned it by his lie.

V.30 - **“he laid his carcase in his own grave”** - Sharing his grave was evidence of his sincerity. He was openly declaring that he was not an accomplice of Jeroboam in seeking the demise of God’s messenger. On the contrary he sought identification with the man of God in life and death (verse 31).

V.32 - **“shall surely come to pass”** - The old prophet expressed his absolute conviction that the prophecy of the man of God would come to pass. By identifying himself with the man of God and his message in this way he severed any connection with Jeroboam and his ways.

JEROBOAM’S STUBBORN RELIGIOUS POLICY – 1 Kings 13:33-34

V.33 - **“After this thing”** - The death of the man of God from Judah , widely attested (verse 25), was immediately grasped by Jeroboam as grounds for ignoring the edict of condemnation and restoring his religious system. This is implied by the words: “after this thing”. Jeroboam had become incorrigible; fixated on retention of power, and driven blindly by the fear of losing his influence and popularity.

“but made again of the lowest of the people” - Roth. has, “but again made from the whole compass of the people.” To ‘make again’ implies that he had abandoned his priesthood in the wake of the events of the 15th day of the 8th month. We can imagine that as the man of God departed on that day that he left behind him a humiliated Jeroboam who probably then dismissed his priests and closed the ceremonies prematurely to avoid further embarrassment. When he heard of the man of God’s death he immediately saw justification to resume his former policy (12:31).

“whosoever would” - Literally the phrase is “any who would”. He accepted any volunteers for the priesthood without regard for spiritual qualifications or Divine credentials.

“he consecrated him” - Lit. in Heb. - “he filled his hand.” The phrase is used of consecration to priestly office (Judges 17:12; Ex. 29:22).

V.34 - **“this thing became a sin”** - Roth. - “the sin.” The word for “sin” is *chata*; to miss the mark or fail of one’s object. Of all his sins, it was the dismissal of the Levites that most hastened his demise.

“to cut it off and destroy it” - Within a few months of his accession Jeroboam’s promised “sure house” was doomed. His eternal destruction was assured because of a complete lack of faith in God to achieve for him what was humanly impossible, and a stubborn resistance to all attempts to turn him from his evil way.

AHIJAH’S DENUNCIATION OF JEROBOAM’S HOUSE – 1 Kings 14:1-18

V.1 - **“Abijah the son of Jeroboam fell sick”** - Abijah means “Yahweh his father” and in a faint sense this was true because God saw in him “some good thing toward” Himself that was absent in Jeroboam (V.13). His premature death was really an act of mercy by God!

V.2 - **“disguise thyself”** - Roth. has, “feign thyself another.” Jeroboam acted furtively by sending his wife disguised to Ahijah the prophet in the hope of ascertaining whether his

son would live. This provides a fascinating insight into Jeroboam's character. If he felt confident that God's prophet could foretell the future of his son, why then did he feel that Ahijah would not see through the subterfuge? It was a classic example of limiting the Almighty. This had been one of Jeroboam's greatest failings. It is possible for men to place confidence in Divine prophecy but not to be able to make God a reality, and bring Him fully into their consciousness.

"there is Ahijah the prophet" - Jeroboam's confidence was based on Ahijah's fulfilled prophecy that he would be king over Israel (1 Kings 11:29-31), but that is far as it went. He does not seek help from God; rather he turns to a man who had made an accurate prediction.

V.3 - **"take with thee ten loaves..."** - Jeroboam's wife carried a humble present even though she was the wife of a king. This was part of the subterfuge to deceive Ahijah as to her true identity.

V.4 - **"his eyes were set"** - Roth. has, "his eyes were fixed." The same phrase is used of Eli in 1 Sam. 4:15. A man with normal sight, leave alone a blind man, unaided by God would not have perceived Jeroboam's subterfuge, but Yahweh is not blind. He had seen all Jeroboam's idolatry and wickedness and was about to reveal this fact in a very dramatic way.

V.5 - **"Behold the wife of Jeroboam cometh"** - Ahijah being forewarned by God was ready for Jeroboam's wife when she arrived. It was fitting that the aged prophet should announce Yahweh's judgement against Jeroboam's house having been chosen to announce Jeroboam's selection (cp. 1 Kings 11:29). There was something of a parable in these events. Jeroboam's method of using deceit to achieve his ends, seen here in the attempt to deceive the prophet, had been practised on a wider scale with his people. He had systematically encouraged his people towards disobedience and hypocrisy and produced a 'family' of false priests whose offspring would become sick and die like his eldest son. God is not mocked!

V.6 - **"for I am sent to thee"** - The old prophet's words rang out even as Jeroboam's wife approached the threshold: "Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam". The impact of such a welcome followed by the statement that he had actually been *sent* to her must have had a stunning impact on a woman already filled with anxiety and foreboding. It demonstrated in unmistakable fashion God's power to unmask hypocrisy and deceit. All she could do was stand in awed silence and listen with pounding heart to the Divine condemnation of her husband's house and the dreaded news that her son would die.

V.8 - **"thou hast not been as my servant David"** - Tragically, Jeroboam's life had followed Saul's pattern, not David's. So much stress had been laid upon David's example in the words of Ahijah (1 Kings 11:31-39) where David's name was invoked 7 times.

V.9 - **"thou hast done evil above all that were before thee"** - Jeroboam exceeded Solomon for whose apostasy he was made king. Solomon had been slowly drawn away by his wives. He had no predilection for false gods, nor did he set out with a deliberate policy to corrupt Israel's worship as Jeroboam had done purely for reasons of political ambition.

"molten images" - *massekot* - cast images. A reference to his golden calves.

“and hast cast me behind thy back” - This same language is used in Ezek. 23:35. See also Psa. 106:19-21 which comments on the golden calf in the wilderness.

V.10 - **“him that pisseth against the wall”** - This translation is euphemistic. The words in Hebrew are *mastin beqir* and simply signify lit. “all males”. RSV - “every male.”

“shut up and left in Israel” - This saying occurs several times in Divine condemnations as a means of embracing all who are amenable to God’s judgement. None would escape. There are those who suggest the words *asur* and *azub* signify “helpless or hindered”, and “abandoned or destitute” respectively.

“dung” - *galal*; a word that refers to the dung of animals in the lower level of houses. As a man cleaned his house of animal refuse so God would remove Jeroboam’s house from Israel.

V.11 - **“Him that dieth of Jeroboam...shall the dogs eat”** - There is a similarity here to Ahab’s denunciation (1 Kings 21:21-24). Jeroboam’s house and his principles were the embryo of Ahab’s apostate house. See also the condemnation of Baasha (1 Kings 16:4).

V.13 - **“in him there is found some good thing”** - Jeroboam’s wife left Ahijah’s house knowing that the moment she entered her own house her son would die. The reason given, that Abijah was the only one in Jeroboam’s house who was worthy of mercy must have powerfully exercised her mind. He died prematurely in order that he might not suffer the punishment brought upon his father’s house. Nadab his brother, Jeroboam’s successor, died in the conflict of civil war.

V.14 - **“shall raise him up a king...who shall cut off the house of Jeroboam”** - Divine foreknowledge foresaw the emergence of Baasha to utterly eradicate the house of Jeroboam (1 Kings 15:25-27). So began a vicious cycle that was to characterise the frequent change of dynasties throughout Israel’s entire history.

V.15 - **“as a reed is shaken in water”** - This is a graphic simile of the instability of Israel as it stumbled from one dynasty to another until the Assyrian captivity alluded to in this verse. See a similar figure for instability in the N.T. (Matt.11:7).

“made their groves” - The *groves* (*asherim*) were not trees but vile images of fertility gods.

V.16 - **“Jeroboam who did sin and who made Israel to sin”** - This statement in various forms occurs some 19 times in Kings. The unenviable epithet; “Jeroboam the son of Nebat who made Israel to sin” occurs exactly 13 times, memorialising Jeroboam’s rebellion (13 being the number of rebellion). Personal rebellion is a serious thing but Jeroboam had set out to involve the entire nation in his rebellion. He was successful in establishing an apostasy that Israel never threw off until the Assyrian captivity. Solomon had been guilty of dividing the nation; Jeroboam was guilty of destroying it. The gravity of his sin is shown by the Lord’s words concerning the laying of stumbling blocks (Luke 17:1-2).

V.17 - **“Tirzah”** - Heb. “delightsomeness”, from root; to be pleased with; to satisfy a debt. Jeroboam had apparently established his home in Tirzah which was later to become the capital under Baasha (1 Kings 15:33).

V.18 - “**Israel mourned for him**” - The death of Abijah saw a great mourning in Israel. Though young he was popular among the people as the prospective successor of Jeroboam having already manifested spiritual tendencies different to his father.

THE DEATH OF JEROBOAM – 1 Kings 14:19-20

V.19 - “**the acts of Jeroboam**” - His *acts* determined his eternal destiny. God’s assessment had been given in verse 16. Jeroboam’s acts were largely driven by personal ambition to the ultimate destruction of the ecclesia. It was a disastrous end for a man originally full of potential for greater things.

“**how he warred**” - Jeroboam warred against Rehoboam for 17 years, and Abijah for 3 years.

V.20 - “**he slept with his fathers**” - Mgn. “lay down”. This is the end of all men. All that counts then is the Divine memory and record of the life. For Jeroboam it was the legacy - “he made Israel to sin”!

THE CHRONOLOGICAL DATA OF THE KINGS OF JUDAH				
KING	SYNCHRONISM	REIGN	REFERENCE	2 Chron.
Rehoboam		17 years	1 Kings 14:21	12:13
Abijah	18th of Jeroboam	3 years	15:1-2	13:1
Asa	20th of Jeroboam	41 years	15:9-10	16:13
Jehoshaphat	4th of Ahab	25 years	22:41-42	20:31
Jehoram	5th of Jehoram	8 years	2 Kings 8:16-17	21:5
Ahaziah	12th of Jehoram	6 years	11:3-4	22:12
Joash	7th of Jehu	40 years	12:1	24:1
Amaziah	2nd of Jehoash	29 years	14:1-2	
25:1				
Uzziah	27th of Jeroboam	52 years	15:1-2	26:3
Jotham	2nd of Pekah	16 years	15:32-33	27:1
Ahaz	17th of Pekah	16 years	16:1-2	28:1
Hezekiah	3rd of Hoshea	29 years	18:1-2	29:1
Manasseh		55 years	21:1	33:1
Amon		2 years	21:19	33:21
Josiah		31 years	22:1	34:1
Jehoahaz		3 months	23:31	36:2
Jehoiakim		11 years	23:36	36:5
Jehoiachin		3 months 10 days	24:8	36:9
Zedekiah		11 years	24:18	36:11

ABIJAH –

The Belligerent

(JUDAH)

He is called Abijah in Chronicles and Abijam in Kings.

HEBREW - Abijah - “Yah his father” Abijam - “Father is (of) the sea”

FIRST MENTION - 1 Kings 14:31

LAST MENTION - 2 Chron. 14:1

LENGTH OF REIGN - 3 years from 913-911 BC

MOTHER - Maachah - 1 Kings 15:2; 2 Chron. 11:22. Called Michaiah - 2 Chron. 13:2.

Said to be daughter of Absalom and daughter of Uriel of Gibeah. Absalom only had one daughter - Tamar (2 Sam. 14:27). Josephus says Maachah was Absalom’s grand-daughter; Uriel being Tamar’s husband.

HEBREW - Maachah - “Depression”. Michaiah - “Who is like Yah”. Absalom - “Father of peace”. Uriel - “Flame of El”.

CONTEMPORARY KINGS - Jeroboam 931-910 BC.

SUMMARY OF CHARACTER

The reign of the son of Rehoboam lasted only 3 years and was marked by constant warfare combined with rapid progress in the building up of Judah’s armed forces. Abijah was above all else a man of war. He was a belligerent character who scorned the “cold war” approach of his father against Israel by taking the war boldly to Jeroboam in an attempt to recover the 10 tribes to Judah, even though his army was outnumbered 2 to 1.

The scriptural record concentrates attention on only this one aspect of Abijah’s life - his perpetual war against Jeroboam. Aggressiveness and belligerence characterise his short reign, and in seeking a reason for this fact attention must focus on the extraordinary words of 1 Kings 15:6. The context is the reign of Abijah and the record curiously states: “there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam **all the days of his life,**” and then significantly concludes in verse 7 with the statement: “and there was war between Abijam and Jeroboam.” Warfare was the heritage left to Abijah by Rehoboam his father. From the days of his early childhood and right through his development into manhood and up to the time of his accession to the throne, he had known nothing else but the bitterness and hatred of Rehoboam, who from the division of the kingdom until his death (17 years later) had maintained a continual state of war with Jeroboam.

Abijah was a product of his home life; a young man who perpetuated the hatred of his father for the house of Jeroboam. There is an important lesson in this. Where a home is filled with bitterness, resentment, vindictiveness and revengefulness as was the house of Rehoboam, the inevitable result will be the development of the same characteristics in the children who are brought up in that environment. The principle holds true; “train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Prov. 22:6). These words were originally spoken to Rehoboam by his father Solomon and therefore were well known to him. His son Abijah was a perfect example, in a negative way, of that principle.

A close examination of Abijah's oration to Jeroboam and his army on Mt. Zemaraim as recorded in 2 Chron. 13:4-12 reveals that he was an intelligent man with an understanding of the requirements of the Law of Moses and its relationship to Israel's national life. Note for example his reference to "a covenant of salt" (verse 5), a phrase which only occurs in Num.18:19 in respect to the priesthood of Aaron and his family. However, in this speech it is obvious that his mind had been occupied solely with Israel's failure to keep the Law, to the total exclusion of his own nation's glaring weaknesses. He seemed to be blind to Judah's idolatry, and the apathy and laxity which had carried over from Rehoboam's reign which he had done nothing to eradicate. It is a common failing of self-righteous people to be hyper-critical of others while blind to their own faults (Matt.7:1-5). Sadly, aggressive indignation towards others in ecclesial life is sometimes a cloak for private corruption, acting it seems as a kind of salve for the conscience.

What counts in the end is God's view of things. And in the final analysis Yahweh judged Abijah as a wicked king who had followed in the sins of his father. Like many others after him he failed to follow the example of David his forefather whose heart was "perfect", or as the word implies a safe repository, for Divine things; and for whose sake alone Yahweh preserved David's seed on Judah's throne (1 Kings 15:3-5).

A HARMONY OF THE RECORDS OF ABIJAH'S REIGN	1 Kings	2 Chron.
Began to reign in Jerusalem	14:31	12:16
Prepares for war with Jeroboam		13:1-3
His oration to Israel on Mt. Zemaraim		13:4-12
Jeroboam's ambush and Judah's victory		13:13-20
Abijah's prosperity and might		13:21-22
Final summary and Divine estimation	15:1-8	
His death and burial in Jerusalem	15:8	14:1

VERSE BY VERSE NOTES

THE DIVINE ESTIMATION OF ABIJAH – 1 Kings 15:1-8

V.1 - **"Now in the eighteenth year of king Jeroboam"** - Jeroboam reigned 22 years which means that Abijah's 3 year reign ended before Jeroboam's death. Reading the companion record in 2 Chron. 13:20 in isolation suggests that Jeroboam died before Abijah, but in fact Abijah died in Jeroboam's 20th year (1 Kings 15:9).

V.2 - **"Three years reigned he in Jerusalem"** - Abijah's reign would seem to have been less than 3 full years. They were however very active years as the record in Chronicles testifies.

V.3 - **"And he walked in all the sins of his father"** - The meaning of Abijah's name, "Yah his father" is a misnomer. He was very much a product of Rehoboam and followed the policies of his father without deviation.

"his heart was not perfect" – *Perfect* is *shalem* signifying complete; from a root word meaning "to be safe". Abijah is compared unfavourably with David because his heart was divided between Yahweh and other false gods, whereas David's heart was always "safe" or reserved solely for Yahweh. That this is the meaning of this word becomes evident by considering its use in connection with Solomon (1 Kings 11:4), and Asa (2 Chron. 15:17).

In the latter case, Asa actually lost his faith in Yahweh, but never turned to other gods. Only in that respect could it be said his heart was “safe” all his days.

V.4 - “**for David’s sake**” - David’s posterity were in most cases preserved on the throne as a dynasty because of his faithfulness which resulted in God’s everlasting covenant with him (Jer.33:17). Had their continuance depended on their own standing, the history of Judah would have mirrored the frequent and brutal changes of dynasty experienced in Israel.

“**a lamp**” - Heb. to glisten; a lamp. David’s use of this term in 2 Sam. 22:29 and Psa. 132:17 shows that his royal line depended on God and His covenant.

V.6 - “**there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all his days**”- Abijah grew up knowing nothing but conflict and hatred between his father and Jeroboam. As a young man he was made the captain of Rehoboam’s armed forces so as to prepare him for the throne and the responsibilities of leadership (2 Chron. 11:22). But this shaped him as a man of war and a lover of conflict. Judah and its people would have been better served if the primary focus of his earlier life had been on the things of God and ‘the warfare of faith’, but Rehoboam had left those things behind himself and was involved in a bitter struggle to recover the 10 tribes.

V.7 - “**there was war between Abijah and Jeroboam**” - Abijah took up where his father left off in the struggle to regain the kingdom, but was more active and courageous than Rehoboam. His whole life was consumed by this conflict. His success against Jeroboam in the one battle recorded was only through Divine intervention to save Judah from impending disaster.

WAR WITH JEROBOAM – 2 Chron. 13:2-20

V.3 - “**Abijah set the battle in array**” - Roth. has, “Abijah began the war.” The word *set* is *acar* meaning to yoke or hitch. Abijah initiated the conflict, and though outnumbered 2 to 1 was confident God would be on his side (V.12).

“**valiant men of war**” - Roth.- “heroes of war”. *Valiant* is *gibbor* - powerful.

“**Jeroboam also set the battle in array**” - Jeroboam responded by marshalling his forces against Abijah and raised twice the number of men. The opposing armies are similarly described in the record. This situation twenty years after the division was soon to change as the effect of Jeroboam’s apostasy took hold of Israel, as the following table graphically shows.

COMPARISON OF THE ARMIES OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH					
ISRAEL			JUDAH		
			Rehoboam	930 BC	180,000
Jeroboam	912 BC	800,000	Abijah	912 BC	400,000
			Asa	905 BC	580,000
Ahab	865 BC	7,232	Jehoshaphat	875 BC	1,160,000

V.4 - “**And Abijah stood up on Mt. Zemaraim**” - *Zemaraim* means “double fleece”. It was situated about 8 km (5 miles) across the border in the territory of Israel known as Mt. Ephraim. Interestingly it was only a little over 3 km (2 miles) from Ophrah where the sign of the dew and the *fleece* was given to Gideon and repeated *twice* (Judges 6:36-40).

Abijah's advance into Israel is the first record of an invasion of the other kingdom by either Israel or Judah.

V.5 - **"ought ye not to know"** - In his oration to Israel on Mt. Zemaraim Abijah lays claim to the rulership of the entire land and proceeds to justify his warlike activity on that basis. His speech is laced with vitriolic sarcasm and is based upon the assumption that Judah alone had a right to Divine approbation.

"by a covenant of salt" - The only other occurrence of this phrase is in Num.18:19. That context deals with the Divine selection as priests in Israel of the family of Aaron whom Jeroboam had discarded. Salt stood for that which preserves from decay and gives savour, and accompanied all the altar offerings (Lev. 2:13). It was a symbol of faithfulness. See the significant use of salt as a symbol by Christ - Matt. 5:13; Luke 14:34.

V.7 - **"vain men, children of Belial"** - The word "vain" has the idea of empty and comes from a root signifying "to pour out." Similarly the term "Belial" means without profit, worthlessness. Roth. - translates; "sons of the abandoned one." Abijah's reference is to the leaders of the revolt against his father.

"and have strengthened themselves against Rehoboam" - Roth. - "emboldened." Chief of these was Jeroboam himself who had led the revolt. Abijah is quite blunt!

"young and tender-hearted" - Rehoboam was in fact 41 at the time of the revolt. He was undoubtedly inexperienced having lived a perfectly sheltered life in ease and peace.

"and could not withstand them" - Roth. - "Had not strengthened himself to meet them." He was indeed ill-prepared to face the campaign hardened Jeroboam because he was completely out of touch with the mood of the people and their hardships. This was his folly. Abijah's assessment of his father was understandably very generous.

V.8 - **"now ye think to withstand"** - In actual fact Abijah was the belligerent one in this conflict, but he speaks as though Jeroboam and Israel are the aggressors.

"there are with you golden calves" - Abijah now aims straight for the jugular and plays upon Jeroboam's overt apostasy. His own apostasy was not so publicly visible, but was just as real. He was right however in pointing out that in this contest it was Yahweh versus the golden calves.

V.9 - **"Have ye not cast out the priests of the LORD"** - This was true, but there were "Sodomites" in Judah's high places as well (1 Kings 15:12). Abijah did not have a particularly good record himself.

"whosoever cometh to consecrate himself" - Roth. - "install himself." Abijah took up the complaint of the Levitical immigrants who had fled to Judah, whom Jeroboam had rejected in favour of priests of his own choosing from the whole range of the people.

"that are no gods" - In this he was right and it is the most obvious difference between Israel and Judah. For this reason alone God fought on Abijah's side (Vv.16-18).

V.10 - **"we have not forsaken him"** - This was Abijah's view, but in fact they had. To be sure, they had not done so like Jeroboam by a rejection of Yahweh and His priests, but by disobedience to his Law (2 Chron. 12:2). There is a lesson in this for those who "think they stand", and look with contempt upon those who obviously do not. Hypocrisy is the

deadliest enemy of the religious man (Luke 12:1). We amass judgement to ourselves by condemning others from a position of hypocrisy (Matt. 7:1-5).

V.11 - **“for we keep the charge of the LORD”** - Judah had indeed retained all that Jeroboam had rejected and replaced. This was commendable, but not enough. Judah’s worship was complacent and adulterated by recognition of false gods. Their ceremonial punctiliousness according to law was not matched by individual response and application to the principles of the Law.

V.12 - **“God himself is with us....and his priests”** - To the uninformed observer Abijah’s contentions appeared unassailable. The presence of Aaronic priests guaranteed the presence of God in his estimation. His final appeal is for Israel to refrain from fighting against God. His sudden fall from this lofty citadel of confidence was a salutary reminder that his claims were exaggerated.

V.13 - **“Jeroboam caused an ambushment to come about behind them”** - This dilemma illustrates Judah’s ‘blindness’. They were complacent and not alert to reality. Abijah was an excellent orator, but a poor General. How was it possible for a substantial portion of Jeroboam’s army to depart and circle around behind Judah’s army which occupied the high ground of Mt. Zemaraim without someone noticing? The fact that Abijah seemingly placed no watchmen to observe the rear illustrates how supremely confident he was in the veracity of his assertions that God was on his side. “Pride cometh before a fall” (Prov. 16:18; 29:23), particularly if such pride is baseless.

V.14 - **“Judah looked back...the battle was before and behind”** - The 400,000 men in Judah’s army looked before and behind and realised the hopeless tactical position they were now in through Jeroboam’s encirclement. The only way to look now was up to God and this response to their problem proved to be their salvation. Abijah’s boasting of what Judah had done was now seen in its correct context. The Davidic line continued because of God’s promise to David, not because of Abijah’s or Judah’s alleged righteousness (see 1 Kings 15:4).

“the priests sounded with the trumpets” - There is irony in this use of the trumpets which were employed to sound an alarm in the day of battle (Num. 10:9). The alarm drew God’s attention to His people that they might be “remembered” before Him. With Abijah’s confidence that God was with them sorely shaken by the turn of events, there was a real desperation in this sounding by the priests.

V.15 - **“the men of Judah shouted”** - This was a shout for Divine help. In their extremity Judah at least turned to Yahweh who could now be honoured in assisting them against Israel. This He did by delivering Israel up to a massive slaughter. It often is the case that God saves His people and judges their enemies not for their righteousness but because of the wickedness of the enemy (Gen. 15:14,16; Deut. 9:4-6).

V.17 - **“fell down slain of Israel five hundred thousand men”** - This was 100,000 more than in all of Judah’s army and left only 300,000. The loss to Israel as a nation of this many men is almost incalculable. It is also possible that the rapidly increasing army of Judah came about because some of the survivors saw the light after their defeat and emigrated to Judah. Just 6 or 7 years later Asa gathered together an army of 580,000 in Judah.

V.19 - **“took Bethel with the towns thereof”** - Bethel - “the house of God”. There was a fitness in Jeroboam being dispossessed of the headquarters of his idolatry before his death. Though symbolic of the failure of his religion, it was tragic that the loss of Bethel did not see the end of his cult. It was to blight Israel until 722 BC.

“Jeshanah” - Heb. old; from a root meaning to be slack or languid, i.e. by sleep; hence to grow old or stale. This town was about 8 km (5 miles) north of Bethel and strategically placed to defend any attempt to recover Bethel.

“Ephrain” - This name is the same as Ephron and Ophrah meaning “fawn-like”. It was about 7 or 8 km (4 miles) east-north-east of Bethel and not far from Mt. Zemaraim.

V.20 - **“neither did Jeroboam recover strength again in the days of Abijah”** - This statement provides a testimony to Judah’s growing strength and Israel’s waning power. “Recover” is *atsar* - to maintain, rule, assemble. Jeroboam’s forces were in complete disarray so that even after 2 years no real consolidation had been achieved.

“and the LORD struck him, and he died” - The word *struck* is *nagaph* meaning to inflict a wound. The word is used in relation to Bathsheba’s first son to David (2 Sam. 12:15). In actual fact Jeroboam outlived Abijah by at least a year but appears to have died by a Divinely inflicted illness.

THE FINAL ACTS OF ABIJAH – 2 Chron. 13:21-22

V.21 - **“Abijah waxed mighty”** - *Waxed mighty* is the one word *chazaq* signifying to fasten upon, hence to seize, be strong, restrain, conquer. Abijah went from strength to strength militarily but did nothing to reform Judah of its idolatry and complacency. The work of reformation was left to his son Asa.

V.22 - **“the acts...his ways....story”** - This verse is a solemn reminder that all God’s children have their “ways” revealed by their “acts” which are the subject of Divine scrutiny, assessment and record.

ASA –

Judah's First Reformer

(JUDAH)

HEBREW - Aca - "Physician."

FIRST MENTION - 1 Kings 15:8

LAST MENTION - 2 Chron. 21:12

LENGTH OF REIGN - 41 years from 911-871 BC

FATHER - Abijah the oldest son of Rehoboam (2 Chron. 14:1).

MOTHER - Said to be Maachah (1 Kings 15:10; 2 Chron. 15:16), but these passages should be read as "grand-mother" as noted in the margin of the AV. Maachah was the mother of Abijah and the wife of Rehoboam. The obscurity of Asa's mother may be due to the prominent position occupied by Maachah as "Queen"; i.e. principal lady.

SIGNIFICANT REFERENCES - 2 Chron. 21:12

CONTEMPORARY KINGS - Jeroboam 931-910 BC; Nadab 910-909 BC; Baasha 909-886 BC; Elah 886-885 BC; Omri 885-874 BC; Ahab 874-855 BC.

SUMMARY OF CHARACTER

The third king of Judah in David's lineage was a remarkable man and the complete antithesis of his father Abijah and grandfather Rehoboam. Though a very resourceful man who diligently built up Judah's defences, he was not an aggressive and warlike man like his father. On the contrary, he was a lover of righteousness and stability, for which God gave him peace. The contrast between father and son is beautifully portrayed in the words of 2 Chron. 14:1 which speaks of the death of Abijah and the accession of Asa to the throne, and then significantly adds: "In **his** days the land was quiet ten years."

By far the most outstanding feature of Asa's character was his zeal and courage in commencing a sweeping reformation that sought not only to remove idolatry from Judah and restore respect for the Mosaic system, but had as its final objective the revival of the things of God in the hearts and minds of all the people of Judah. The complete success of this national revival is a unique memorial to Asa's strength of character and singular zeal.

Complementing this reforming zeal and determination were his faith and complete trust in Yahweh during times of war in the early part of his reign. The war against the massive invading forces of Zerah the Ethiopian is a magnificent and rare example of faith and trust in God, reminiscent of David's faith before the menace of Goliath the Philistine.

The preparation of Judah's defences in a time of peace provides another fine example from the life of this outstanding ruler. He did not allow peace and prosperity to blind him to the need for building up strong defences and a highly prepared army. He did not seek conflict but he prepared for it, and when the Truth's enemies attacked the ecclesia of God he was ready to resist them. However, when war did come he did not rely solely on his own preparations and strength but threw himself upon Yahweh. It is an immutable principle that Divine providence can only work in the lives of men who are prepared to *act* on their best

judgement and allow Divine guidance to manipulate their affairs to accomplish the desired purpose. God cannot work through inactive, lethargic, and apathetic men to accomplish His purposes. Understanding this, Asa worked in cooperation with God to defend the ecclesia. The great victory of faith by Asa over the Ethiopians produced one of the most encouraging exhortations delivered by a prophet of God to his people; “Yahweh is with you while ye be with Him...” (2 Chron. 15:1-7). Out of this developed the greatest spiritual revival in Judah’s entire history - a reformation so deep, and so comprehensive that it was never equalled again. The result was a period of 20 years of Divinely granted peace and quietness in Judah.

Tragically, the life of Asa ended disastrously. Twenty years of unbroken peace dulled the lively faith of his earlier years so that when the belligerent Baasha of Israel attacked Judah he immediately sought the help of Ben-hadad king of Syria instead of turning to Yahweh. This was the antithesis of his reaction to the attack by Zerah the Ethiopian many years before. In a merciful attempt to correct him and turn his heart God rebuked Asa through the prophet Hanani. But the faith and humility of his earlier years were gone, and Asa took Hanani and placed him in stocks while at the same time oppressing those who sympathised with the prophet. For this act of pride God eventually smote Asa with a disease in his feet to avenge poetically the binding of the prophet’s feet.

In his distress, king Asa (whose name means “physician”) who had done so much to heal Judah’s spiritual “sickness” by the power of God, sought out human physicians to cure his own ills. This was a manifestation of the spirit of self-reliance and pride that clouded his final years and brought him to the grave a disappointing and tragic figure in view of the greatness of his early years.

The Divine assessment of Asa is given in 1 Kings 15:11: “He did that which was right in the eyes of Yahweh.” To this is added the statement of 1 Kings 15:14 and 2 Chron. 15:17: “The heart of Asa was perfect all his days.” This latter statement is testimony to the fact that though Asa destroyed himself by pride at the end of his life he never turned to other gods as many others were to do before and after him. The “very great burning” his people made for him when he died bespeaks the enormous respect they held for him. In spite of his personal failure, from which he appears not to have recovered, the people of Judah were very conscious of the great debt they owed to this man for the spiritual state of the nation.

HARMONY OF THE RECORDS OF ASA’S REIGN

	1 Kings2	Chron.
Began to reign in Jerusalem	15:8	14:1
Summary of reign - Divine estimation	15:9-11	14:2
His purge of idolatry	15:12-14	14:3-5
The eviction of Maachah for idolatry	15:13	15:16-17
Dedication of vessels in the Temple	15:15	15:18-19
Establishes strong defences in Judah		14:6-8
War with Zerah king of Ethiopia		14:9-15
Azariah’s prophecy of encouragement		15:1-7
Asa introduces a national reformation		15:8-15
Threat from Baasha - league with Assyria	15:16-22	16:1-6
Hanani condemns Asa’s league		16:7-10

Asa smitten with diseased feet	15:23	16:11-12
Death and burial	15:24	16:13-14

VERSE BY VERSE NOTES

ASA'S ACCESSION AND DIVINE ESTIMATION – 2 Chron. 14:1-2

V.1 - “**In his days the land was quiet ten years**” - There is a deliberate contrast drawn between Asa and his father Abijah. They were very different. Abijah was a belligerent man, while Asa was a man of peace. God gave him peace as a reward for his uprightness and predisposition towards building up the ecclesia (V.6).

V.2 - “**Asa did right in the eyes of the LORD his God**” - This was true for the greater part of his life. Sadly, Asa had to be reminded later that all our actions are observed by the eyes of our God (2 Chron. 16:9).

THE PURGE OF IDOLATRY – 2 Chron. 14:3-5

V.3 - “**he took away the altars of the strange gods**” - Roth. - “ he took away the foreign altars.”

“**and the high places**” - 1 Kings 15:14 says that the high places were not removed out of the land and this is repeated in 2 Chron. 15:17. It seems that Asa removed the high places out of the cities of Judah (see V.5) but only curtailed activity at those in the rest of the land. It was left to Hezekiah to destroy them much later (2 Kings 18:4).

“**break down the images and cut down the groves**” - *Images* is *matstsebah* - a column; an idol, and “groves” is *asherim* - standing idols, a fertility god represented by a carved image. The worship of fertility cults was particularly gross in the use of carnal imagery.

V.4 - “**and commanded Judah to seek the LORD**” - Having destroyed the idols out of the land Asa proceeded to substitute good for the evil. This is the positive way to defeat idolatry. He knew the danger of leaving a vacuum (Luke 11:24-26). At this early stage though it was necessary to *command* Judah to “seek” (*darash* - to tread, frequent, follow) their God.

V.5 - “**and the kingdom was quiet before him**” - *Quiet* is the word *shaqat* - to repose. This is a reference to the 10 years peace of verse 1. Peace was granted by God as a reward for Asa’s righteousness in cleansing the land of idolatry (verse 6).

1 Kings 15:12-14

V.12 - “**he took away the sodomites**” - These were the ritual prostitutes introduced in the days of Rehoboam to serve as priests in the high places (1 Kings 14:24).

V.13 - “**Maachah his mother**” - She was actually his “grand-mother”, the favourite wife of Rehoboam (2 Chron. 11:21).

“**even her he removed from being Queen**” – *Queen* is *haggebira* - principal lady; mistress. Maachah was still active in government for Rehoboam had only been dead for about 3 years at the time of Asa’s accession. She was clearly a very prominent lady, and to remove her was an act of great courage by Asa.

“**because she had made an idol in a grove**” - *Grove* is *asherah* (see note 2 Chron. 14:3 above). The word *idol* is *miphletseth* - a cause of terror. It is used in verb form in Job 9:6 signifying an earthquake. Roth. translates, “she had made a monstrous thing to the sacred stem.” Asa **destroyed** (*karath* - to cut off, consume) and burnt it by the “Kidron” the rubbish dump of Jerusalem (i.e. the area near the Valley of the son of Hinnom - see 2 Kings 23:6).

V.14 - “**Asa’s heart was perfect...all his days**” - *Perfect* is *shalem* - complete; from a root, to be safe. See note on 1 Kings 15:3 (Abijah). In this context it is obvious this refers to the fact that Asa never turned away to false gods as other members of his family had done.

STRONG DEFENCES ESTABLISHED – 2 Chron. 14:6-8

V.6 - “**he built fenced cities...for the land had rest**” - A time of peace given by God was not seen as opportunity for rest by Asa but rather as a time for diligent preparation. Asa used foresight and wisdom and capitalised on this Divinely provided opportunity to prepare the defences of Judah.

V.7 - “**we have sought the LORD our God**” - This statement is repeated twice by Asa in his address and is obviously said with great emotion and intensity. The king’s appeal for Judah to rise up and build is couched in terms that demonstrate his deep concern for the spiritual well-being of his people. His reformation had sought to accomplish this result.

“**he hath given us rest**” - Asa was not complacent or slothful, recognising that the time of peace was a reward for seeking Yahweh and should be used to the fullest advantage to prepare the ecclesia for more difficult times.

“**So they built and prospered**” – *Prospered* is *tsaleach* - to push forward. Asa and Judah were using the only formula for ‘success’ in life - active cooperation with God in building the ecclesia.

V.8 - “**Asa had an army**” - To balance his defensive measures Asa built up Judah’s armed forces to their greatest strength since the division. His army numbered 580,000 “mighty men of valour”. This is the answer to all enemies of the Truth; a strong ecclesia prepared for the warfare of faith because all of its individual members are strong and united (Phil. 1:27).

“**that bare targets**” - i.e. shields. The shield of faith is a vital part of the defence of the spiritual warrior (Eph.6:16).

WAR WITH ETHIOPIA – 2 Chron. 14:9-15

V.9 - “**Zerah**” - Heb. “a rising of light”. This is a misnomer for Zerah stands as a type of the world - the enemy of the ecclesia. The Ethiopian does not change his skin (Jer. 13:23), and the enemies of the truth are often clothed in light (2 Cor. 11:13-15). His army numbered 1,000,000 with 500 chariots. It was an overwhelming force. In the modern world the greatest enemy of the Truth is humanism which comes dressed in the robes of ‘light’. Its subtle appeal to ‘human rights’, equality, and to non-discrimination is a cloak for justifying the vilest evils. Like Zerah’s forces the adherents of humanistic principles today are overwhelming in number.

“**Mareshah**” - Heb. “summit, chief place”. Mareshah was 20 miles s.w. of Jerusalem.

V.10 - **“in the valley of Zephathah”** - Heb. “watch-tower”. Asa took his station at the “watch-tower” where he could observe the movements of the approaching enemy. It is always wise to understand the nature of the enemy and to carefully watch for his approach.

V.11 - **“Asa cried unto the LORD”** - Prayer before entering into any ‘battle’ for the truth is vitally important. Asa here states his absolute confidence in the power of God to save with many or few. There was no confidence in his own strength, though perhaps he had reason to be confident in it. He knew all his preparations would be useless without Divine help at this crisis.

“for we rest on thee” - The word *rest* is an important word in Asa’s life. It is *shaan* and signifies to support oneself; hence to lean upon. Roth. - translates: “on thee do we lean.” Here is a lesson in how to wage successful ‘warfare’ in the Truth even against great odds. Asa’s example was to prepare diligently by using every opportunity provided, but in the crisis committed himself absolutely into the hands of Yahweh, not trusting in the arm of flesh.

“in thy name we go against this multitude” - There are echoes here of David going forth against Goliath (1 Sam. 17:45). This is another revelation of Asa’s humility and faith. Such an appeal from a faithful man, God will not turn away.

“let not man prevail against thee” - The word for “man” here is *enosh* - mortal, from the root, to be frail. Roth. translates: “weak man”. Faced with a very visible army of one million men this is a remarkable confession of faith in an unseen God.

V.12 - **“so the LORD smote the Ethiopians”** - The Divine response came immediately in the overthrow of the Ethiopians. Yahweh is bountiful and consistent as He often proved Himself to be in the days of the kings. “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16). So it proved to be for king Asa and his people.

“before Asa and before Judah” - Significantly Asa is specifically mentioned here. The king was the real force behind Judah’s spiritual revival and it was his faith that shone forth on this day.

V.13 - **“pursued them unto Gerar”** - Heb. “rolling (country)”. Gerar was 72 km (45 miles) s.w. of Jerusalem on the border with Egypt. Asa stopped short of pursuing the enemy into foreign territory. He was satisfied with driving the ‘world’ out of the ecclesia.

“for they were destroyed before the LORD” - *Destroyed* is *shabar* - to burst. Above all the victory depended on the involvement of God to “burst” the ranks of the enemy.

V.14 - **“for the fear of the LORD came upon them”** - Asa consolidated his victory by taking the border towns around Gerar while the fear of God held them in awe. The whole victory was due to Divine help working in cooperation with human faithfulness and activity.

V.15 - **“and carried away sheep and camels in abundance”** - These two animals are singled out for special mention. As the prophet Azariah came out to meet Asa and Judah returning with the spoils of war he was confronted with two pre-eminent animals that aptly portrayed the two phases of Asa’s life. The submissiveness and meekness of the sheep was plainly seen in Asa’s first 15 years. Sadly, the complacency and self-reliance of the camel was finally to be manifested in him. The camel was unclean under the Law because of its feet. Asa was to die with diseased feet as a mark of his self-reliance and stubbornness (16:12).

A GREAT NATIONAL REVIVAL IN JUDAH – 2 Chron. 15:1-16

V.1 - **“the spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded”** - This particular phrase is only used elsewhere in the history of the kings in 2 Chron. 24:20. It points to a special occasion of Divine communication. God saw the need for a warning and exhortation at this juncture as Judah returned victorious from battle. Perhaps the purge and reformation of Asa 15 years earlier had not been deep enough for it to be sustained. True and sustainable repentance cannot be “commanded” as Asa had done (14:4). Idolatry, immorality, complacency and indifference are not easily removed. The initial reformation needed to be followed by a positive campaign to consolidate its gains. To sound this warning God chose a prophet named Azariah (“Yahweh has helped”) the son of Oded (“reiteration”; from the root to duplicate) which names aptly describe his work.

V.2 - **“the LORD is with you while ye be with Him”** - Asa had just proven this to be true. He needed now to carry this conviction through the trial of another period of extended peace and tranquillity. It was a marvellous encouragement, but also a solemn warning. Continuing Divine help is dependent upon our steadfastness before God (cp. James 4:8; Lev.10:3). This statute is fundamental to the operation of God with men in all ages. It is a timeless principle.

V.3-6 - Azariah proceeds with a general summary of the nation’s recent history in which he makes some significant points. They had been without a “teaching priest” for a long time. Unstated was the fact that Jehoiada, who was to play such an important role during the reign of Joash, was now 30 years of age and had begun his career as one of Judah’s greatest priests. The simple point being emphasised by the prophet is that adversity had been Divinely sent to punish sin in order to turn His people back to Him again. Judah now enjoyed a state of affairs much different to the past through the faithful work of king Asa. It was time to consolidate!

V.7 - **“be ye strong therefore”** - *Strong* is *chazaq* - to be strong, courageous. The same word is used in Josh.1:7,9 for God’s encouragement of Joshua in his work.

“let not your hands be weak” - *Weak* is *rapha* - to slacken. It is interesting to reflect that Asa died diseased in his feet! His hands did slacken in the work as peace continued for 20 years and this led to the failure of his walk. Steadfast and consistent labour is a key to survival in the Truth (1 Cor.15:58), especially in times of peace and prosperity.

“for your work shall be rewarded” - Roth. translates: “there is a reward for your work.” This will be shown to be true in the day of account (Heb. 6:10; 1 Cor. 3:8). Azariah’s words were a beautifully balanced blend of exhortation, warning, and encouragement.

V.8 - **“the prophecy of Oded”** - Some texts have “the prophecy of Azariah the son of Oded”, as in verse 1. It is unlikely there was a second prophet involved.

“he took courage” - The word “courage” is *chazaq* as in verse 7. There is an immediate response from Asa to the exhortation as he seizes upon the opportunity to renew his reformation. It proved to be the greatest in Judah’s history.

“and put away the abominable idols” - The word *abominable* is *shiqqs* sig. disgusting, filthy. Asa promptly renewed a purge of all remaining idolatry throughout Judah and Benjamin, and into the captured territory of Ephraim. This became the basis upon which a

new spiritual revival was built. The approach of first cleansing, then rededicating is the correct order for reform.

“renewed the altar of the LORD” - The altar needed to be *renewed* (*chadash* - to be new; to rebuild; the idea is to repair). The altar of burnt offering now became the centre of national attention as sacrifices of rededication were made on the repaired altar.

V.9 - **“all the strangers...out of Ephraim and Manasseh”** - Roth. translates “strangers” as “sojourners”. One result of Asa’s faithfulness which had culminated in God’s help against the Ethiopians was a dramatic increase in migration from the north. All who were sympathetic to Divine things saw in Asa a leader who could be followed and relied upon. He was the first good king in ‘Israel’ for 40 years and it was obvious God was with him. Great numbers flocked to him out of the north seeking a return to the “old paths” established by David.

V.10 - **“in the third month”** - The feast of weeks (Pentecost) was held in this month. It was the time of the offering of the firstfruits of harvest and free-will offerings in recognition that Israel’s blessings were all from God, and that He deserved the **first** and **best** of their labours.

V.12 - **“they entered into a covenant to seek the LORD...with all their heart”** - Here was a new thing in Judah. Not since the days of David had anything comparable been seen. The entire nation bound themselves to a covenant to individually implement the call of Deut. 6:4-5 to seek Yahweh with all their heart and soul. So serious were the people that they agreed unanimously that anyone who did not enter into the covenant with the wholehearted intention of fulfilling it should be put to death regardless of status (V.13). The entire assembled nation then entered the covenant with a loud voice and accompanying instruments (V.14). The purpose of this was to draw God’s attention to the sincerity of their covenant (Num. 10:10), and to emphasise their own determination to fulfil its terms.

V.15 - **“Judah rejoiced at the oath”** - People do not rejoice in an oath that is forced upon them. This was a genuine rededication born of sound leadership, and carried through by individual willingness to throw off every vestige of complacency and apostasy. It is extremely rare to achieve a reformation that is at the same time universal and genuine. The Divine commentary is clear: “they had sworn with all their heart, and sought Him with their whole desire.” *Desire* is *ratson* - delight (pleasure).

“and he was found of them” - The truth of Azariah’s exhortation in verse 2 is manifested in the statement that Judah “found” Yahweh. In contrast to the nation’s previous experience (vv.5-6) the Divine blessing of peace was granted to them because they had found Him (v.4). This reformation is unique in the history of the kings for its depth and universality. Never again, not even in the monumental reformation of Hezekiah, did the nation enjoy such a profound and universal return to their God.

THE INTERVAL – 20 YEARS PEACE – 2 Chron. 15:18-19

Very little is recorded of the twenty years of peace that God granted to Judah because of the sincerity of their return to Him. Asa seems to have continued his work of upgrading the Temple services and its accoutrements.

V.18 - **“he brought into the house of God...things...dedicated”** - This concentration by Asa upon promoting the Temple services is a logical course for him to have taken. He appreciated the importance of directing his people’s attention to the substantial and positive things of the house of God (see principle of Luke 11:24-26).

V.19 - **“there was no more war”** - 20 years of peace followed until the 35th year of Asa’s reign. Such a long interval of peace and tranquillity provided a real test of faith and when the test came he was not ready for it this time.

A FOOLISH LEAGUE WITH SYRIA – 2 Chron. 16:1-10

V.1 - **“six and thirtieth year”** - Noting that the Ethiopian War occurred in Asa’s 15th year (15:10) it is possible to establish that peace had lasted for over 20 years.

“Baasha” - Heb. to stink, offensiveness. He seems aptly named! Baasha had been on the throne of Israel since the 3rd year of Asa, and according to 1 Kings 15:33 reigned for 24 years, thus dying in Asa’s 27th year. There is an obvious discrepancy here with this passage which indicates he was still active in Asa’s 36th year. As other synchronisms agree with the record in Kings there are difficulties here for the student of chronology.

“built Ramah” - Heb. “a height.” Ramah was about 10 km (6 miles) north of Jerusalem on the road to Bethel and Shechem. It was a strategic town commanding a height (hence the name) overlooking the route to Jerusalem. Baasha selected an ideal position to prevent migration from the northern kingdom.

“that he might let none go out or come in to Asa” - The perturbing migration of many from Israel to Judah resulted in strong action by Baasha. He resolved to stop the erosion of his subjects by force and so moved the frontier south to a commanding and defensible position, thus effectively recapturing the territory lost to Abijah by Jeroboam. Almost as a footnote to history Jer.41:9 tells of Asa’s fear of Baasha at this time.

V.2 - **“Then Asa brought out silver and gold”** - Asa was apparently unprepared for this crisis and being hard-pressed decided to send to Syria for help. He used treasures from the Temple and the Palace. This was a turning point in Asa’s life which manifested that there had been a fundamental change of attitude during the years of peace. Under pressure previously he had turned to Yahweh, but now he seeks the help of a gentile king. Contrast his words in 2 Chron. 14:11.

“and sent to Benhadad, king of Syria” - The name means “Son of the god Hadad”. Hadad was the equivalent of the Canaanite Baal and means “thunderer”. Rezon was the founder of the Syrian kingdom based in Damascus (1 Kings 11:23-24) and a number of kings followed named Benhadad under whose leadership Syria became a powerful nation until finally overthrown by Assyria in 732 BC.

V.3 - **“There is a league between me and thee”** - *League* is *berith*; a covenant. Roth. translates: “Let there be a covenant between me and thee.” This is a complete turnabout from 2 Chron. 15:12 where a covenant was made with Yahweh following a wonderful victory through His help. He did not remember Azariah’s words (15:2).

“as there was between my father and thy father” - This covenant is not mentioned elsewhere, but is consistent with the character of Abijah. Asa now follows his father’s bad example.

“go break thy league with Baasha” - Asa ought to have realised that if Benhadad could break a league with Baasha he could, and probably would do so with Asa. Yahweh was the only one who would not forsake His part in a covenant.

V.4 - **“And Benhadad hearkened”** - Benhadad cooperated with the request doubtless for reasons of self interest and political expediency. He gave Asa temporary relief by attacking the north of Israel capturing in turn:

“ljon” - Heb. “ruin.”

“Dan” - Heb. “judgement.” This was the town of Jeroboam’s idolatrous calf worship. Abijah had captured Bethel (2 Chron. 13:19) and now Asa, through the agency of Benhadad, took Dan. Ironically, Israel was without its centres of idolatry but Asa was in the debt of the “Son of Hadad”!

“Abel-maim” - Heb. “Meadow of water”. It is called Abel-beth-maachah (1 Kings 15:13) meaning, “Meadow of the house of depression”.

“store cities” - Roth.- “storehouses of the cities.”

V.5 - **“he left off building of Ramah”** - Baasha was forced to abandon Ramah to concentrate on halting the Syrian progress in the north. 1 Kings 15:21 says he went to dwell in Tirzah.

V.6 - **“took all Judah”** - If Asa was able to muster all Judah (1 Kings 15:22), why did he not fight against Baasha? The answer lies in his fear (Jer. 41:9). His faith had been eroded.

“and he built therewith Geba and Mizpah” - Geba means “a hillock” and Mizpah “an observatory.” Asa fortified Geba which was about 3 km (2 miles) N.E. of Ramah and Mizpah which was situated some 5 km (3 miles) north of Ramah with materials from Baasha’s work at Ramah.

ASA REBUKED BY A PROPHET – 2 Chron. 16:7-10

V.7 - **“Hanani the seer”** - Heb. “gracious”. God was indeed being gracious to him by sending another prophet to turn his heart back to the responsiveness of his earlier years.

“because thou hast relied on the king of Syria” - The word *relied* is *shaan* - to support oneself. The same word is translated “rest” in 2 Chron. 14:11. It is used in verses 7 and 8 three times. Asa had changed supports. He now rested on flesh and not on his God. The choice of this word was designed to make Asa deeply reflect on the words of his prayer in the previous crisis (14:11).

“therefore is the host of Syria escaped out of thine hand” - But Asa was not fighting with Syria! This is a fascinating insight into the workings of our God. He apparently intended to overthrow Syria by Judah perhaps as one of the outcomes of this present crisis. Divine intentions had been frustrated and Judah was left vulnerable by Asa’s folly.

V.8 - **“Lubims”**- These were the primitive Libyans who had been allied with the Ethiopians.

V.9 - **“the eyes of the LORD run to and fro”** - Roth. translates: “For as touching Yahweh seeing that His eyes are ever running to and fro throughout all the earth.” This of course is a reiteration of the principle of 2 Chron. 15:2 which Asa had forgotten.

“of them whose heart is perfect toward him” - *Perfect* is *shalem* - to be complete, from the root to be safe. Asa was in danger of taking the next step and acknowledging the gods of Syria. See note on 1 Kings 15:14 above.

“herein thou hast done foolishly” - *Foolishly* is *akal* - to be silly, i.e. a foolish act. Asa was not a fool but in this matter had acted very foolishly. It was entirely out of character for him.

“thou shalt have wars” - This is the antithesis of Asa’s previous experience in which God had given him peace for faith and righteousness. He had trusted in the flesh in this matter, so his punishment was to be continual war (trouble from the flesh). By trying to save himself he succeeded only in bringing upon himself perpetual trouble.

V.10 - **“Asa was wrath with the seer”** - Sometimes great men do foolish things in the hour of crisis. The young Asa would have humbled himself and acknowledged his mistake, but the grounds of humility were gone. He now foolishly compounds his error by imprisoning Hanani the prophet. This was the reaction of wounded pride that prevented him from hearing rebuke (Prov. 9:8; 12:1; 29:1).

“prison house” - The term used, *mahpeketh* signifies a wrench, i.e. the stocks. Asa foolishly bound Hanani in the stocks. His binding of the feet of the prophet of God was poetically avenged when God struck him with a disease in his feet (V.12).

“in a rage” - *zaaph* - anger (to boil up). Many mistakes are made in anger fuelled by pride.

“oppressed some of the people” - The word for *oppressed* is quite strong. It is *ratsats* - to crack in pieces. This violent reaction against his own people who sympathised with Hanani is difficult to understand from a man who had devoted his life to their well-being. It is however very illuminating in regard to human nature and the danger posed by unmixed prosperity for spiritual life.

ASA DISEASED IN HIS FEET – 2 Chron. 16:11-12

V.12 - **“in the thirty and ninth year of his reign”** - This was 3 years after the events of verse 10. God gave Asa ample time to repent of his folly and to recover himself, but he did not turn from his way.

“diseased in his feet” - *Diseased* is *chalah* - weak, sick (from the root, to be rubbed or worn).

“exceeding great” - Roth. - “exceedingly severe.” The punishment fitted the crime (v.10). Scriptural history shows that Divine judgement is often poetic in its outworking.

“yet in his disease he sought not the LORD but the physicians” - The word for *physicians* is *rapha* - to mend (by stitching) i.e. cure. This is the root of the word used by God in Ex. 15:26 to describe Himself as Israel’s great healer. Refusal to seek God in his affliction is another indication that Asa’s faith had slipped disastrously. He stubbornly persisted in seeking a human cure for his ills. Human ‘physicians’ do not have the answer to a diseased ‘walk’. The tragic irony of this is that the name Asa means “physician”, and he had shown himself to be a spiritual physician for his people. Now when he needed a Divine physician the spirit of self reliance drove him to seek human help.

ASA'S DEATH AND BURIAL – 2 Chron. 16:13-14

V.14 - **“own sepulchres....made for himself”** - Roth. translates: “in his own stately sepulchre which he had hewn for himself.” He had evidently prepared well for his death. It was tragic that a man with such a record should die with the symbol of a corrupt walk (diseased feet).

“sweet odours” - In those times it was a common practice to embalm the body with sweet spices. In Asa's case the spices may have been used to offset the corruption of his feet which probably occasioned his death. However, nothing can arrest the progress of mortal corruption but the power of God and this he had refused.

“the apothecaries art” - The word *apothecaries* is *mirqachath* signifying an aromatic unguent. Roth. translates: “perfumers art.”

“they made a very great burning for him” - Asa was deeply mourned by his longsuffering people who loved him for the wonderful work he had performed among them for the bulk of his life. Some have suggested that the burning was actually a cremation to remove all traces of the corruption of his feet. This however cannot be correct. Comparison with the record of the death of Jehoram in 2 Chron. 21:19 shows that no burning was made in his case even though his bodily corruption was worse than Asa's. The clear meaning is that Jehoram was not mourned by his people whereas the mourning for Asa was deep and genuine. The legacy of his great reformation had survived his own personal failure.

NADAB

- *The Liberal*

(ISRAEL)

HEBREW - “Liberal”

FIRST MENTION - 1 Kings 14:20

LAST MENTION - 1 Kings 15:31

LENGTH OF REIGN - 2 years from 910-909 BC

CONTEMPORARY KING - Asa 911-871 BC

SUMMARY OF CHARACTER

Little is known of the second son of Jeroboam that would permit a firm character assessment. To the extent that the meaning of his name may complement the Divine assessment of his reign, it is perhaps not unreasonable to suggest that Nadab’s leading characteristic was a ‘liberal’ or loose attitude to the things of God. All that is known of him is that he was content to continue the idolatry of his father without modification despite the accumulating evidence that Yahweh had turned His face against the house of Jeroboam. Unlike Abijah his deceased brother, Nadab was an exact replica of his father and fully deserved the punishment which soon fell upon Jeroboam’s house according to the condemnation delivered by Ahijah the prophet.

SUMMARY OF THE REIGN OF NADAB

1 Kings

Accession and Divine summary

15:25-26

Assassination by Baasha

15:27-31

VERSE BY VERSE NOTES

NADAB’S ACCESSION AND CHARACTER – 1 Kings 15:25-26

V.25 - “**and reigned over Israel two years**” - Nadab acceded to the throne in the 2nd year of Asa but was deposed in his 3rd year (verse 28). So he did not reign a full two years.

V.26 - “**and walked in the way of his father**” - He was an exact replica of his father Jeroboam, totally unlike Abijah his deceased elder brother who had some inclination towards Yahweh. Nadab made no attempt to change anything in Israel. He was content to follow in Jeroboam’s footsteps and perpetuate his false system of worship.

NADAB’S DEATH – 1 Kings 15:27-31

V.27 - “**and Baasha smote him at Gibbethon**” - Nadab died at the hand of Baasha (probably one of his captains) while besieging Gibbethon (“a hilly spot”) a Philistine town 8 km (5 miles) north of Ekron.

V.31 - “**are they not written**” - This implies that another record existed with more complete details, but God did not see fit to preserve it in scripture. The book of Chronicles does not mention Nadab.

THE CHRONOLOGICAL DATA OF THE KINGS OF ISRAEL

The following table sets out the recorded synchronisms of the kings of Israel in relation to the kings of Judah as noted in the books of 1 and 2 Kings.

KING	SYNCHRONISM	LENGTH OF REIGN	1 Kings
Jeroboam		22 years	14:20
Nadab	2nd of Asa	2 years	15:25
Baasha	3rd of Asa	24 years	15:28,33
Elah	26th of Asa	2 years	16:8
Zimri	27th of Asa	7 days	16:10,15
Omri	31st of Asa	12 years	16:23
Ahab	38th of Asa	22 years	16:29
Ahaziah	17th of Jehoshaphat	2 years	22:51
Jehoram	18th of Jehoshaphat	12 years	2 Kings 3:1
Jehu		28 years	10:36
Jehoahaz	23rd of Joash	17 years	13:1
Jehoash	37th of Joash	16 years	13:10
Jeroboam	15th of Amaziah	41 years	14:23
Zachariah	38th of Uzziah	6 months	15:8
Shallum	39th of Uzziah	1 month	15:13
Menahem	39th of Uzziah	10 years	15:17
Pekahiah	50th of Uzziah	2 years	15:23
Pekah	52nd of Uzziah	20 years	15:27
Hoshea	12th of Ahaz	9 years	17:1

BAASHA -

The Unheeding Avenger

(ISRAEL)

HEBREW - Basha - “to stink, offensiveness”

FIRST MENTION - 1 Kings 15:16 **LAST MENTION** - 2 Chron. 16:6

LENGTH OF REIGN - 24 years (1 Kings 15:33) from 909-886 BC

FATHER - Ahijah - “Brother (i.e. worshipper) of Yah.”

TRIBE - Issachar (meaning “He will bring a reward”)

CAPITAL - Tirzah - “Delightsomeness”.

CONTEMPORARY KING - Asa 911-871 BC.

SUMMARY OF CHARACTER

Baasha was an ideal choice as Yahweh’s judge to remove Jeroboam’s house in accordance with Ahijah’s prophecy (1 Kings 14:10-11). It also seems fitting that he should be the son of another Ahijah (1 Kings 15:27). Ruthless ambition motivated this man to seek the throne of Israel and so he became an effective instrument of judgement in God’s hands.

Although Baasha reigned for 24 years, little is recorded of him except for the cruel and ruthless manner in which he disposed of Jeroboam’s posterity, and the warlike stance that he adopted towards Judah. He was obviously a cold, unfeeling man, driven only by considerations of personal status, power and profit.

Perhaps the most significant thing recorded of Baasha is the unheeding manner in which he continued the apostasy of Jeroboam despite the judgements that he had personally administered on Jeroboam’s house. Both the words of Jehu the prophet and the final summary of his reign recorded in 1 Kings 16:7 make it clear that Baasha was condemned because of his failure to reflect upon the reasons why God had destroyed Jeroboam’s house. If that house had been utterly destroyed because of idolatry and apostasy, then Baasha should have realised that he too would be destroyed if he perpetuated Jeroboam’s apostasy.

HARMONY OF THE RECORDS OF BAASHA’S REIGN	1 Kings	2 Chron.
Assassinates Nadab - destroys Jeroboam’s house	15:27-30	
Divine summary and estimation	15:32-34	
Attacks Asa but is forced to withdraw		16:1-6
Jehu’s prophecy against him	16:1-7	
Death and burial in Tirzah	16:6	

VERSE BY VERSE NOTES

THE RISE OF THE HOUSE OF BAASHA – 1 Kings 15:27-30

V.27 - “**And Baasha the son of Ahijah**” - It was ironical that the man to fulfil the words of Ahijah the prophet (1 Kings 14:14) should be the son of another Ahijah.

“**conspired against him**” – *Conspired* is *qashar* - to tie. Baasha firstly set about gaining support for a coup.

“**of the house of Issachar**” - This name means “he will bring a reward”. Baasha was God’s instrument to bring judgement on the house of Jeroboam as a **reward** for his apostasy.

“**Gibbethon**” - This town originally belonged to Dan (Josh.19:44) but was now in the hands of the Philistines.

V.29 - “**he smote all the house of Jeroboam**” - Baasha, acting upon the natural impulse of all tyrants, wiped out every vestige of Jeroboam’s house. He may have been ignorant of the prophecy of 1 Kings 14:10-11 but fulfilled it to the letter.

DIVINE SUMMARY AND ESTIMATION – 1 Kings 15:32-34

V.32 - “**there was war between Asa and Baasha all their days**” - Continual war with Baasha is implied but in fact Asa enjoyed many years of peace (2 Chron. 14:1; 15:19). This statement reflects a continual ‘state of war’ which only blossomed into armed conflict late in Asa’s reign when Baasha fortified Ramah with a view to preventing further migration from Israel to Judah (see notes on Asa).

V.34 - “**he did evil in the sight of the LORD**” - True to his name Baasha ‘stank offensively’ in God’s sight. The exercise of power was his only concern. Self-centred men, bent on domination of others for gain, do not make good and faithful servants of God.

“**and walked in the way of Jeroboam**” - Baasha was also shallow. A reflective, deep thinking mind would consider the reasons for Jeroboam’s demise and act to avoid a similar disaster. To continue in the way of Jeroboam was to ensure failure. Not one of the kings of Israel abandoned the apostasy of Jeroboam. It is almost as though they accepted without question that his system was Israel’s traditional religion and quite acceptable to God.

JEHU’S PROPHECY AGAINST BAASHA – 1 Kings 16:1-7

V.1 - “**Jehu**” - “Yahweh is he”. This is a fitting name for a Divine representative.

“**son of Hanani**” - Heb. “gracious”. Perhaps this is the Hanani who rebuked king Asa of Judah (2 Chron. 16:7). This same Jehu also recorded a history of Jehoshaphat king of Judah some 40 years later which suggests the prophet was quite young at this time (2 Chron. 20:34). He was also selected to rebuke Jehoshaphat for his alliance with Ahab (2 Chron. 19:2).

V.2 - “**I exalted thee out of the dust**” - This probably came as a revelation to Baasha who doubtless considered that his position was due to his own initiative and power. In fact God through His providence had used Baasha’s ambition to fulfil Ahijah’s prophecy.

“**prince**” - *nagid* - a commander (as occupying the front). The root *nagad* signifies to front or stand boldly out opposite. The same word is used of Jeroboam (1 Kings 14:7).

“hast made my people Israel to sin” - By simply continuing Jeroboam’s policies and religious system.

V.3 - **“and will make thy house like the house of Jeroboam”** - He committed the same sins; he would have the same destiny. There is no respect of persons with God. The judge was to be judged and the avenger, avenged.

V.4 - **“him that dieth of Baasha”** - Compare the identical words to Jeroboam (14:11).

V.5 - **“his might”** - *gebuwrah* - force; valour. He was a man of power but God did not desire to include details of Baasha’s acts in the Scriptures. He was not worthy of it.

V.6 - **“Tirzah”** - This town was now the established capital of Israel.

V.7 - **“the work of his hands”** - There is no record of the way in which Baasha provoked Yahweh with the work of his hands, but he was clearly not apathetic in pursuing Jeroboam’s ways for his own personal aggrandisement and pleasure.

“and because he killed him” - The record reads as though Baasha killed Jeroboam. In fact he killed Nadab his son. Roth. translates this passage: “in becoming like the house of Jeroboam - notwithstanding that he smote him.” The sense is that though Baasha was the Divine instrument for the punishment of Jeroboam’s house he perpetuated the same sins which had precipitated Divine judgement. He simply ignored the warning implicit in this and suffered the same fate.

ELAH -

The Apathetic Drunkard

(ISRAEL)

HEBREW - *Elah* - An oak or other strong tree.

FIRST MENTION - 1 Kings 16:6

LAST MENTION - 1 Kings 16:14

LENGTH OF REIGN - 2 years from 886-885 BC

FATHER - Baasha

TRIBE - Issachar

CAPITAL - Tirzah

CONTEMPORARY KING - Asa 911-871 BC.

SUMMARY OF CHARACTER

Only one incident in the life of Elah has found its way into the inspired record of the kings of Israel and Judah and that event was his assassination by Zimri, captain of his chariots. While the army of Israel was besieging Gibbethon, Elah was drinking himself drunk in the house of Arza his palace steward. He is revealed as a man who was apathetic to the national interests of Israel because of his love for the titillating pleasures of strong drink. His complacency brought about his demise because it allowed men like Zimri, Omri and Tibni to conspire against him among the army of Israel in his absence.

SUMMARY OF THE REIGN OF ELAH

1 Kings

Accession and assassination by Zimri

16:8-10

ELAH'S ACCESSION AND ASSASSINATION – 1 Kings 16:8-10

V.9 - “**And his servant Zimri**” - Zimri means “musical”, from a root, to strike with the fingers; touch the strings.

“**captain of half his chariots**” - The word *captain* is *sar* - a head person. Evidently Elah had divided his armed forces into two groups. While the rest of Israel besieged Gibbethon, Zimri was elsewhere plotting a coup (1 Kings 16:15-16).

“**Tirzah**” - “Delightsomeness”. The capital of Israel at this time.

“**drinking himself drunk**” - Elah was giving vent to unrestrained drunkenness and was in no position to lead Israel or even defend himself.

“**Arza, steward of his house**” - Arza fittingly means “earthiness”. Roth. translates: “who was over the household in Tirzah.” He was the palace chamberlain.

V.10 - “**Zimri went in and smote him**” - The assassination of Elah while he was drunk was a fitting end for Baasha’s line, given as it was to blind ambition and power.

V.14 - “**Now the rest of the acts of Elah...are they not written**” - No more is recorded of Elah than this. He was not worthy of any more space than the record of his ignominious death.

ZIMRI -

The Reckless Assassin

(ISRAEL)

HEBREW - “Musical”; root, to strike strings with the fingers.

FIRST MENTION - 1 Kings 16:9 **LAST MENTION** - 2 Kings 9:31

LENGTH OF REIGN - 7 days during 885 BC

CAPITAL - Tirzah

CONTEMPORARY KING - Asa 911-871 BC.

SUMMARY OF CHARACTER

Zimri is distinguished among the 39 kings of Israel and Judah as the man with the shortest reign of only 7 days. He had another distinction also as the man remembered by Jezebel for treason against his master (2 Kings 9:31). Apart from that dubious place in history Zimri was a tragic aberration. He was an ambitious shooting star who left nothing but destruction in his wake.

Once again God was able to effectively employ the reckless and cruel ambition of Zimri to accomplish the destruction of Baasha’s house, even as He had raised up Baasha to destroy Jeroboam’s house. Zimri was a reckless opportunist who eagerly sought the monarchy but made the fatal mistake of not first gaining adequate support from Israel’s armed forces. His coup was premature and proved abortive because the bulk of the army, who were besieging Gibbethon at the time, when hearing of Elah’s death and Zimri’s accession promptly installed Omri as king and marched on Tirzah to overthrow the usurper.

The glory of the monarchy so murderously craved by Zimri proved disconcertingly ephemeral. Within 7 days he was dead by his own hand! The nature of his death also illustrates his shallow character. He committed suicide in the manner of a spoilt child deprived of a toy, ensuring that if he could not sit on the throne and occupy the palace of the king at Tirzah, then neither would Omri. So he burnt the palace over himself and perished in the inferno.

The brief glimpse we get of Zimri justifies a harsh assessment. He was a reckless, petty and bloodthirsty fool with an ambition that far outweighed his intelligence to accomplish its aims.

SUMMARY OF THE REIGN OF ZIMRI

1 Kings

His treason - massacres Baasha’s house
Zimri’s short reign and suicide

16:9-14
16:15-20

VERSE BY VERSE NOTES

ZIMRI'S TREASON AND ACCESSION – 1 Kings 16:9-14

V.9 - “**captain of half his chariots**” - Zimri's only claim to fame was his evident expertise in chariot warfare which led to him being given control of half the cavalry. He had risen to be an important figure in the nation but was unable to handle his promotion out of obscurity.

V.11 - “**he slew all the house of Baasha**” - Following the pattern established by Baasha his first task was to destroy all of Elah's relatives and friends. This perfectly natural tendency for a tyrant succeeding to the throne by treason was again used by God to fulfil the prophecy of Jehu (1 Kings 16:1-7).

V.13 - “**their vanities**” - *hebel* - emptiness. A reference to their idolatrous practises.

ZIMRI'S REIGN AND SUICIDE – 1 Kings 16:15-20

V.15 - “**Gibbethon**” - A town in Philistine territory S.S.W. of Tirzah which was under siege by Israel at the time of Zimri's coup.

V.16 - “**the people...heard say**” - The news would take a couple of days to reach the army.

“**Israel made Omri, captain of the host, king**” - Omri was seemingly commander in chief of Israel's armed forces and naturally considered himself to be the rightful successor to Elah whose house was now extinct. Israel's forces at Gibbethon agreed with him and made him king. They immediately went to besiege Tirzah and overthrow Zimri (V.17).

V.18 - “**and burnt the king's house over him**” - Zimri committed suicide rather than suffer a humiliating death at Omri's hands, but this was no ordinary suicide. By burning the palace over himself, presumably while he sat on the throne, he departed in grand style in one final act of churlishness. If he was to be denied the throne and the palace, so would Omri!

V.19 - “**for his sins**” - Zimri reigned only one week. This assessment clearly spans a life time. All his ways were known to God who judged him to be cast in the same mould as Jeroboam and walking in his perverse way.

V.20 - “**and his treason that he wrought**” - *Treason* is *qesher* - an alliance. Zimri was notable only for his treason, even being remembered by Jezebel 50 years later (2 Kings 9:31). Doubtless he had sympathisers and accomplices but he did not have the sense to consolidate his support before wildly grasping at the throne. The ambition of men often blinds them to reality.

OMRI -

The Statute-maker

(ISRAEL)

HEBREW - Omriy - “Heaping”

FIRST MENTION - 1 Kings 15:15

LAST MENTION - 2 Chron. 22:2

LENGTH OF REIGN - 12 years from 885-874 BC

CAPITAL - Tirzah (5 years); Samaria (6 years).

CONTEMPORARY KING - Asa 911-871 BC

SIGNIFICANT REFERENCES - Micah 6:16; 2 Chron. 22:2; 2 Kings 8:26.

SUMMARY OF CHARACTER

Despite his obscure beginnings and seemingly limited achievements Omri ultimately became the most powerful influence on the kingdom of Israel since Jeroboam its first king. He established a dynasty which lasted nearly 50 years and had a profound influence on the destiny of the nation. It was Omri who built the city of Samaria which became the permanent capital of Israel until the Assyrian captivity. And it was Omri who brought up and educated Israel's worst ever king, Ahab. Omri doubtless played a part in forging the political alliance with Ethbaal king of the Zidonians which led to Ahab taking in marriage Jezebel his daughter. This arrangement was to have immeasurable consequences for both Israel and Judah.

Omri is presented in the record as a politically successful man because of his self-motivation and determination. He possessed a self-interested initiative and was clearly a man capable of immense influence in the lives of other people. This is the distinct impression gained from the brief record of his life, and is the obvious import of one important reference to him in Micah 6:16. Micah records: “For the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab.” This is a Divine commentary on the effect of Omri's teachings on Israel. He was a man full of ideas and schemes, albeit evil schemes. From these ideas he formulated principles and statutes which were readily grasped and acted upon by Ahab his son. The power and influence of Omri's statute-making is revealed in a curious description of Athaliah his grand-daughter in 2 Chron. 22:2-3. She is there spoken of as the **daughter** of Omri, not as the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. The reason becomes apparent when in verse 3 it is recorded that Ahaziah “also walked in the **ways** (or works - Mic. 6:16) of the house of Ahab: for his mother was his **counsellor** to do wickedly.” Athaliah was her son's ‘statute-maker’, hence she is styled the daughter of Omri.

Omri left an indelible mark on the history of his nation. His reign was a turning point in that history and commenced an even greater period of apostasy than that which had existed from the days of Jeroboam. Tragically, the statutes of Omri also found their way into Judah and ushered in one of Judah's darkest periods in the years following the reign of king Jehoshaphat.

SUMMARY OF THE REIGN OF OMRI**1 Kings**

His rise during political turmoil	16:16-18
Victorious in the civil war against Tibni	16:21-22
Establishes Samaria as capital of Israel	16:23-24
The unprecedented evil of his reign	16:25-28

*VERSE BY VERSE NOTES***POLITICAL TURMOIL AND RIVALRY IN ISRAEL – 1 Kings 16:16-22**

V.16 - **“all Israel made Omri the captain of the host, king”** - Omri was the head of the armed forces of Israel. As Zimri had slain all the royal family no successors in Baasha’s line remained. Omri was the natural choice as king, and so the army besieging Gibbethon crowned him on receiving news of Zimri’s coup.

V.17 - **“and Omri went up...and besieged Tirzah”** - Gibbethon was left unconquered for there were more important issues at stake now that Zimri had seized the kingdom. That “all Israel” followed Omri is testimony that he was a powerful and influential man. He asserted this power against Zimri who capriciously committed suicide after an inglorious reign of 7 days. Omri was then confronted by another pretender to the throne which was to sorely test his leadership.

V.21 - **“the people of Israel divided into two parts”** - It was a time of turmoil as the strong vied for positions of power while the opportunities existed. Where apostasy prevails human pride and personal rivalries inevitably surface when positions of authority are vacated. In the process there is always much suffering for ordinary people who find themselves in the midst of civil war. The record is brief but the suffering and loss of life would have been great.

“half of the people followed Tibni the son of Ginath” - He was the challenger for the throne who initially succeeded in gaining the support of half the people. Tibni means “straw” (chaff), while Ginath means “garden”. The names of the rivals present an interesting story on the basis of the Divine query: “What is the chaff to the wheat?” (Jer. 23:28). Tibni proved to be a “man of straw” in the conflict with Omri (“heaping”) who was harvesting the spoils of the kingdom for himself.

V.22 - **“Omri prevailed”** - The civil war seems to have lasted for 3 years by comparison of the synchronisms provided. Zimri’s reign had commenced in Asa’s 28th year (verse 8), and Omri began his reign in Asa’s 31st year (verse 23). Finally the greater determination and ruthlessness of Omri prevailed. Imagination baulks at the images of suffering inflicted on the whole fabric of Israel’s social structure during this bitter civil war.

OMRI BUILDS A NEW CAPITAL IN SAMARIA – 1 Kings 16:23-24

V.23 - **“began Omri to reign over Israel twelve years: six years reigned he in Tirzah”** - The palace at Tirzah having been destroyed by Zimri was probably rebuilt, but Omri resolved to build a new capital more in keeping with the grandiose ambitions he planned for his dynasty. This is indicative of the initiative and strength of Omri. He is revealed as a dynamic and self-motivated man with firm direction in the achievement of his objectives.

V.24 - **“And he bought the hill Samaria of Shemer”** - Samaria (Heb. *Shomerown*) means “watch-station”, from a root sig. to guard. “Shemer” means something preserved, i.e. the settlings. Both words are from the same root *shamar* - to hedge about, i.e. to guard, protect. *Shemer* is translated “dregs” (Psa. 75:8), and “(wine on the) lees” (Isa. 25:6; Jer. 48:11; Zeph. 1:12). It is not difficult to see from these meanings the ideas that flow through Isaiah’s woe against the “drunkards of Ephraim” who sat in Samaria “the crown of pride” (Isa. 28:1-8).

The hill of Samaria was about 100 metres (300 feet) high in a basin formed by a valley which runs from Shechem west to the Mediterranean coast. It was situated on the north side of the valley where an incoming glen joined the valley. Surrounded by mountains on three sides and with a view to the west it was in a very commanding position. A broad vale sweeps westward visible for 13 km (8 miles) to a range of low hills and beyond them the sea lies another 37 km (23 miles) away. Omri’s choice of a site for his capital has often been extolled by commentators. Both its position and eventual grandeur which was brought to its zenith in the reign of Ahab his son are renowned.

OMRI'S EVIL REIGN – 1 Kings 16:25-28

V.25 - **“Omri wrought evil”** - Roth. translates: “and Omri did the thing that was wicked.” Everything that he did was self-centred in its motivation. He was governed only by ambition and self-interest. Not surprisingly, the Divine estimation is that he did only wickedness.

“and did worse than all that were before him” - Roth.: “did more wickedly.” Omri exceeded all his predecessors in Israel in wickedness. He led the way as the nation moved further away from its God and grew increasingly ignorant of His ways.

V.26 - **“he walked in all the way of Jeroboam”** - This he certainly did, but Omri had some new ideas of his own which were to have catastrophic results for Israel and Judah (Mic. 6:16).

“provoke...to anger with their vanities” - *Anger* is *kaac* - to trouble. *Vanities* is *hebel* - emptiness, and is a reference to the abominable idolatries of Israel under Jeroboam.

V.27 - **“the rest of the acts of Omri....are they not written”** - They were written but not preserved in the annals of scripture. Omri is mentioned only incidentally in Chronicles. His acts have sealed his eternal destiny amongst the numerous corruptors of God’s people during this tragic period of their history.

V.28 - **“Omri slept with his fathers....and Ahab his son reigned”** - Omri the theoretician who had made many statutes in his brief career passed from the scene and handed power to Ahab the artful practitioner who proceeded to implement his father’s principles with alacrity (Mic. 6:16).

AHAB -

Israel's Worst King

(ISRAEL)

HEBREW - Ahab - “Brother (i.e. friend) of his father.” “Resembling the father” (Noth).

FIRST MENTION - 1 Kings 16:28 **LAST MENTION** - 2 Chron. 22:8

LENGTH OF REIGN - 22 years from 874-853 BC

FATHER - Omri (“heaping”)

WIFE - Jezebel - “chaste” (cp. Rev. 2:20). The daughter of Ethbaal (“with or near Baal”) king of the Zidonians (“to catch fish”) - see Judges 18:7; 2 Kings 23:13.

CONTEMPORARY KINGS - Asa 911-871 BC; Jehoshaphat 871-847 BC.

SIGNIFICANT REFERENCES - Micah 6:16

SUMMARY OF CHARACTER

Ahab has the unenviable distinction of being known as the worst king to ever sit upon the throne of Israel. He owed much of that distinction to the influence of his wife Jezebel who stirred him up to do evil (1 Kings 21:25-26). Nevertheless it would be wrong to suggest that Jezebel was responsible for all of Ahab's evils. The record clearly reveals Ahab as a strong and determined individual who lacked neither courage or enterprise. This coupled with the education and guidance he received from his father Omri “the statute-maker” (Mic.6:16), would have made him a champion of evil even without the influence of Jezebel. But she undoubtedly had the effect of inciting him to far greater evils than he might have committed without her. Most significantly, Jezebel's influence was prominent in the introduction of a new and destructive religion that made Israel a stronghold of paganism!

The inspired historian almost appears incredulous as he penned the words of 1 Kings 16:31: “And it came to pass as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal and worshipped him.” Baal worship had been eradicated from the land by Israel under Joshua, and though it had reappeared for brief periods during the times of the Judges it had virtually become extinct during Israel's history as a monarchy. Now under Ahab and Jezebel the god of the Amorites and Canaanites was once again firmly entrenched in the land. It is for this reason that a prophecy delivered by Joshua at the fall of Jericho received its fulfilment during Ahab's reign (1 Kings 16:34). Jericho was the first city to fall to Israel in the land and as such it represented the ultimate capture of the entire land by Israel. With its fall the doom of Baal and his devotees was signalled and guaranteed. It was highly significant that Jericho was rebuilt during the reign of Ahab, and that reference to the fact should be placed immediately after the condemnation of Ahab's vile Baal worship and evil idolatries. The Spirit is showing in a curious way that, viewed from the Divine perspective, the Amorites and Canaanites were once again in control of the land of Canaan. They were there in the form of Ahab and his house and the Baal worshippers of Israel (1 Kings 21:25-26).

Considerable space is devoted to the reign of Ahab in the record of the Kings largely because of his association with Elijah the prophet and Jehoshaphat king of Judah. In all those accounts he emerges as a man fixed in the ways of idolatry and wickedness, and yet occasionally and briefly moved to the recognition of Yahweh as Israel's God. There was in him something to which God could appeal. Yet despite the many opportunities given to Ahab to reform, and the miracles performed to convince him of Yahweh's existence, he stubbornly continued in his evil ways. Only the condemnation of his house delivered by Elijah in Naboth's vineyard produced any sign of remorse in Ahab, but even this did not result in any meaningful reformation of his life.

Ahab died by the Divine hand fully deserving the reputation he had acquired as Israel's worst king. His painfully slow death from loss of blood, and the subsequent washing of his chariot in the pool of the harlots was a fitting and poetic end for such a man. He had given himself over to Jezebel the harlot of Zidon, and in the end his life blood was washed into the cesspool that harboured the filth of the very priestesses they had installed to conduct the immoral worship of Baal in Samaria.

HARMONY OF THE RECORDS OF AHAB'S REIGN	1 Kings	2 Chron.
Accession in Asa's 38th year	16:29	
His great evil and idolatry	16:30-33	
Jericho rebuilt in his reign	16:34	
Elijah appears suddenly and announces a drought	17:1-7	
Elijah dwells with the widow of Zarephath	17:8-24	
Elijah meets Obadiah and Ahab	18:1-16	
The contest on Mt. Carmel	18:17-40	
Elijah declares the approach of rain	18:41-46	
Elijah flees from Jezebel to Horeb	19:1-18	
Elijah calls Elisha to follow him	19:19-21	
Ahab attacked by Benhadad of Syria	20:1-12	
Syria defeated with Divine help	20:13-21	
Divine warning that Syria would return	20:22-27	
An assurance of God's help	20:28-30	
Ahab spares Benhadad and honours him	20:31-34	
Ahab is sorely rebuked by a prophet	20:35-43	
Ahab seeks to possess Naboth's vineyard	21:1-4	
Jezebel intervenes and arranges Naboth's death	21:5-14	
Ahab takes possession of Naboth's vineyard	21:15-16	
Elijah condemns Ahab's house	21:17-24	
Ahab humbles himself - Yahweh's mercy revealed	21:25-29	
Jehoshaphat makes an alliance with Ahab	22:1-4	18:1-3
Cracks appear in the alliance	22:5-14	18:4-11
The prophet Micaiah called	22:13-14	18:12-13
The prophecy of Micaiah	22:15-28	18:14-27
Micaiah thrown into prison	22:26-28	18:25-27
The battle at Ramoth-Gilead	22:29-33	18:28-32
Ahab wounded by an arrow, dies	22:34-36	18:33-34
His burial in Samaria	22:37	

The dogs lick his blood in Samaria
Final summary

22:38
22:39-40

VERSE BY VERSE NOTES

AHAB'S ACCESSION AND IDOLATRY DESCRIBED – 1 Kings 16:29-33

V.30 - “**did evil...above all that were before him**” - Roth.: “did more wickedly than all that were before him.” Omri had attained this distinction in V.25 but Ahab outstripped his father in wickedness and was never to be exceeded in Israel’s subsequent history.

V.31 - “**as if it had been a light thing**” – *Light* is *qalal* - to be light (easy, trifling). Roth.: “as though it had been too light a thing.” Ahab treated Jeroboam’s apostasy with virtual contempt. He sought a religion with much more earthiness and variety. And so:

“**he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal**” - Jezebel’s name means “chaste”; perhaps the greatest misnomer of all time. Her father’s name means “with or near Baal”, and this was true of her all her days. She never wavered in her service to Baal and to the fleshly principles of his worship. Not even the events on Mt. Carmel shook her confidence in her god. She was the most determined, fanatical, fearless, dauntless, ruthless, and incorrigible woman to ever come within the orbit of God’s ecclesia. She was an inveterate seducer of God’s servants to commit fornication, and was selected by Christ to represent that apostasy in the First Century ecclesia which was to produce the Roman Catholic harlot system of later times (Rev. 2:20; 18:4,24).

“**went and served Baal**” - *Served* is *abad* - to work, to serve (enslave). Baal means lord. In particular the Zidonians worshipped the Baal Ashtoreth (2 Kings 23:13) the god of sensual desire. Ahab made a deliberate choice to serve this god in choosing his wife from among the Zidonians.

BAAL

Baal means “master, lord” and referred to a male deity the son of El, the father of gods, according to Pagan myths. He was associated with agriculture and was said to give increase to family and field, flocks and herds. Baal was also identified with Hadad the storm god whose voice was heard in the thunder that brought the rain so essential to crops. The worship of this cult included animal sacrifice, ritualistic meals and licentious dances. Near a rock altar was a sacred pillar and the symbol of Asherah to symbolise human fertility. High places were attended by male and female prostitutes who offered themselves in the ritual worship. Baal worship had a subtle attraction for Israelites bound by a strict moral and religious code. In many ways its rituals were similar to the Law of Moses and all that was required was to lower moral standards and introduce ‘minor adjustments’ so that the people could adopt Baal worship. Israel had been well prepared for Ahab’s new worship after 62 years of apostate rulers who pursued Jeroboam’s corrupt religion which had almost completely demoralised the people. The new and rising generation had known nothing else but Jeroboam’s calf worship.

V.32 - “**in the house of Baal**” - Ahab immediately made a home for Baal in Samaria by firstly building a place of worship for him, and then establishing an altar. The fact that the chronicler places Ahab’s idolatry at the very beginning of the record of his reign suggests

that there is absolute amazement that such breathtaking infidelity could be produced so early in his reign.

V.33 - “**And Ahab made a grove**” – *Grove* is *Asherah* meaning to be straight or erect; hence to be happy. Based on the common pagan worship of the generative organs, Asherah was symbolised by a tree or pole set beside the Massebah (symbol of Baal). Asherah specialised in sexual love and war, and its temples were centres of ‘legalised’ vice. At Byblos (north of Sidon) recent excavation has revealed that Asherah revelled in bloodshed and immoral lust. This type of blood-letting manifested itself among Jezebel’s prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 18:26-28).

“**provoke...anger**” - This is one word in Hebrew (*kaac*) sig. trouble, by implication to grieve, rage, be indignant. By introducing the most perverse of fertility cults into Israel Ahab excelled all before him in stirring up the anger of Yahweh.

JERICO REBUILT IN THE DAYS OF AHAB – 1 Kings 16:34

V.34 - “**In his days did Hiel...build Jericho**” - *Hiel* means “living of God”; from a root signifying to revive. This man had the temerity to rebuild Jericho in defiance of the Divine edict against the city that it was to be devoted to destruction (Josh. 6:17). His audacity was to cost him very dearly, even the lives of all his sons, in fulfilment of the curse inherent in the prophecy of Joshua (Josh. 6:26).

“**the Beth-elite**” - *Bethel* means “the house of God”, but it was instead the centre of Jeroboam’s apostasy. It is significant that a man from Bethel should be responsible for rebuilding Jericho in view of what it represented. Jeroboam’s apostasy had now matured into full blown Baal worship that testified to the return of the Canaanites to the land. Refer to ‘Summary of Character’ and to box below.

JERICO REBUILT

The fulfilment of the prophecy of Josh. 6:26 marked the restoration of the Canaanites and Amorites to the land. They had returned in the form of Ahab and his house. The fall of Jericho symbolised Israel’s triumph over the inhabitants of Canaan and the destruction of their false worship. The rebuilding of Jericho in Ahab’s day coincided with the introduction into Israel of Baal worship in its worst form. Fittingly, Jericho was “revived” by a Beth-elite for it was at Bethel that Jeroboam had instituted the apostasy now fully developed by Ahab. The idolatry of Canaan removed by Israel, commencing with Jericho, had now been restored (1 Chron. 5:25; 1 Kings 21:25-26). The lofty but frustrated ambitions of Hiel to establish a family dynasty in Jericho served only to illustrate another fact. Ahab’s apostasy would lead Israel to a similar loss of all its ‘sons’.

“**he laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his firstborn**” - *Abiram* means “Father of height (lofty)”. Hiel’s firstborn died during the laying of Jericho’s foundations.

“**and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub**” - *Segub* means “aloft”; from the root to be lofty, especially inaccessible. Hiel’s youngest son died during the setting up of

the gates; the last work to be completed in the rebuilding of Jericho. This implies that he may have lost other sons during its construction.

THE SUDDEN APPEARANCE OF ELIJAH IN AHAB'S COURT– 1 Kings 17:1-7

V.1 - “**Elijah the Tishbite**” - Elijah’s name means “Yahweh is El (power)”. He was a Tishbite, thought to be the upper Galilean town Thisbe in Naphtali. The record leaves no doubt however that he lived at this time in Gilead.

Elijah bursts suddenly onto the scene out of obscurity to make one of the profoundest impacts on ecclesial history of any of God’s prophets. His history covers 9 chapters in Kings (1 Kings 17 to 2 Kings 3). His name is mentioned 69 times in the Old Testament and 30 times in the New Testament. Elijah’s rough and dishevelled appearance was legendary (see 2 Kings 1:7-8), and wherever he went he instilled awe in those he encountered. Consistent with the ways of God he was the right man for the times; prepared in the solitude and harshness of Gilead for the work he was called upon to perform.

“**of the inhabitants of Gilead**” - The word *inhabitants* (*toshab*) signifies a dweller, resident alien, sojourner. Gilead means “a heap of testimony”, from a root sig. “something rolled”. Many notable characters arose out of Gilead. Among them were Jair (Judges 10:3); Jephthah (Judges 11:1); Barzillai (2 Sam. 17:27); and the sons of Machir (Judges 5:14). The family history as it is revealed commenced in Josh.17:1 with Gilead securing the region because he was a man of war. Gilead was an area about 100 km (60 miles) long and 32 km (20 miles) wide, extending from the Sea of Galilee to the upper end of the Dead Sea. It was a land of rolling hills, very fertile, and crowned with forests (Gen. 37:25; Num. 32:1); an area that was particularly suitable for grazing of flocks and herds (Deut. 3:12-17). The occupants were hardy and tough fighting men and even today the Arab name Jala’ad meaning “to be rough” describes the terrain. It was here that the flinty prophet was fashioned for his work.

“**As the LORD God of Israel liveth**” - The word *as* in italics can be omitted. Elijah sets forth Yahweh as the “living” God in contradistinction to Baal. The enormity of Ahab’s sin was that while his predecessors had maintained a facade of worship that ostensibly had some connection with Yahweh, Ahab had abandoned Him altogether and returned to the gods of the Canaanites.

“**before whom I stand**” - The phrase is used 4 times by Elijah and Elisha. It clearly underlines the contrast between Ahab and Elijah. They stood in the presence of different gods.

“**there shall not be dew nor rain**” - Heavy dew in hot summer months was as good as a light drizzle in higher areas. Normally the rains fell from October/November through to March. The Canaanites attributed rain to Baal the god of agriculture and fertility. Yahweh through Elijah (“Yah is power”) was going to demonstrate to Ahab how powerless Baal was in a land that relied heavily upon regular rain (Deut. 11:11). This drought was to be typical of the drought of the word of God in Israel at a later time (Amos 8:11).

“**these years**” - This proved to be 3 years (1 Kings 18:1; Luke 4:25).

V.2 - **“And the word of the LORD came unto him”** - Ten times Elijah received a command from the word of Yahweh. Careful reading of the record reveals just how prominent the word of God was in directing his life.

V.3 - **“hide thyself by the brook Cherith”** - Cherith means “a cut” or “cutting” (Gray), in the sense of; to separate, divide. It was a deep wadi running into the river Jordan from Gilead opposite Bethshean, not far from Elijah’s home territory.

“before Jordan” - Roth.: “faceth Jordan”. The river Jordan, noted for its serpentine course and periodic flooding, was associated with the “flesh” as living waters passed from Galilee to the sterile Dead Sea through Adam (Josh. 3:15-16). Elijah faced Jordan as he spent the next 12 months at Cherith peering across towards a land rapidly withering under drought.

V.4 - **“ravens”** - *oreb* - a raven (from its dusky colour). Ravens were unclean under the Law (Lev. 11:13-15; Deut. 14:14). They were scavengers fed by God (Luke 12:24; Psa. 147:9), and often had difficulty feeding their young (Job 38:41). Elijah was taught that God could provide for him even through the weak and despised. These most unusual circumstances prepared Elijah for his sojourn with the widow of Zarephath who was typified by the ravens.

ELIJAH AND THE WIDOW OF ZAREPHATH – 1 Kings 17:8-24

V.9 - **“Arise”** - Elijah moves again at the direction of the word of Yahweh (cp. V.2; 18:1).

“get thee to Zarephath” - The name means “refinement; to refine metal”, or “place of the smelting furnace.” It may have acquired this name as a centre for the manufacture of molten images for Baal worship. If it was the home of Jezebel’s idols it was an ideal place for Elijah to hide. Who would think of searching for him next door to Jezebel’s home town? However, it was a long way from Cherith; a distance of some 160 km (100 miles) through a land decimated by intense drought.

“to Zidon” - “catching fish” - the hometown of Jezebel (1 Kings 16:31).

“I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee” - This is the same language used of the ravens in verse 4. The widow was poor, bereft of helpers, without identity and means of sustenance just like the ravens. An ‘unclean’ Gentile, she was a symbol of the class amongst whom Elijah’s greatest work was to be done, right under the nose of Jezebel’s family.

V.10 - **“behold the widow woman was there”** - She was recognisable by her clothing, and so was Elijah. She had heard of him and his words which had inexorably come to pass. Christ’s comment on this widow woman in Luke 4:25-26 appears in the context of the power of conviction based on hearing a report, and not on witnessing of miracles. The widow had come to believe in the power of Israel’s God even though she was suffering because of it.

V.11 - **“and he called to her....Bring me, I pray thee a morsel of bread”** - The request to provide water from the town well met immediate response. That was relatively easy to fulfil because water was still available, but now the test is severe. It was tantamount to the test applied to another woman from this area by the Lord in Mark 7:24-30. The principle that had to be acknowledged was; “Let the children first be filled”. The widow’s faith was equal to this.

V.12 - **“As the LORD thy God liveth”** - This statement provides the key to the source of her faith. She had heard and believed a report about the gaunt and rugged prophet of Gilead in the palace of Ahab. The fulfilment of his edict produced conviction in Yahweh the living God (V.1), the God of Elijah who now amazingly stood before her.

“but an handful of meal...and a little oil” - These were the essential ingredients of a meal offering under the Law (Lev. 2:1-2), a handful of which was offered on the altar to represent the whole offering. The meal offering spoke of a man’s labours produced by the motivating power of the Spirit Word (oil). It was always offered in conjunction with a burnt offering (total dedication) and signified an understanding that profession must be matched by performance. It served also as a reminder that God possesses and provides all and therefore deserves the best of it. The decision confronting the woman was to either deny Elijah (“Yah is power”) and live on the strength of the flour a little longer and then die a cruel and slow death, or make a “burnt offering” of herself and offer the “handful” of flour in acknowledgment that all belonged to Yahweh. Her fledgling faith in Israel’s God was equal to the challenge and as a result she and her son were sustained with Elijah throughout the drought (V.13-16). There was no famine of ‘the Word’ in her house as there was in Ahab’s domain (Amos 8:11-14).

THE RESURRECTION OF THE WIDOW’S SON – 1 Kings 17:17-24

V.18 - **“What have I to do with thee”** - Roth. - “What have I in common with thee, O man of God”. The widow who is described as the “mistress (*baalah*) of the house” in verse 17 interpreted the death of her son as punishment for her past sins which may have been associated with Baal worship. In Elijah’s presence those past failures were magnified by his single-minded uprightness and dedication to the things of God. This is not then the language of recrimination, but of guilt stricken despair.

V.19 - **“loft”** - a second story room (on the roof). This was the place of prayer (Acts 10:9).

“laid him upon his own bed” - Elijah had said “Give me thy son” and had taken him from his mother’s bosom. He now identifies himself with the child in the act of earnest prayer. There is a parable here of the redemptive work of God in Christ.

V.21 - **“stretched himself upon the child three times”** - 3 is the first complete number and is associated with resurrection (Matt. 12:40). Being also the number of fruit which springs from the seed (Gen. 1:11-13) it is particularly appropriate here.

V.22 - **“revived”** - *chayah* - to live.

V.24 - **“Now by this I know that thou art a man of God”** - This miracle was a final testimony of Elijah’s authority as Yahweh’s representative. The widow’s faith was now mature in the conviction that her past sins had been forgiven. The resurrection was proof of it! In this Elijah was a forerunner of Christ who made the appeal; “believe me for the works sake” (John 14:11). The experience of Elijah at Zarephath was an example of the great work that could be done amongst the humble and insignificant people of the nation in the ‘backyard’ of Jezebel and in the heat of the ‘smelting furnace’. Elijah now had a mission to perform a similar work with 7000 in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal.

ELIJAH MEETS OBADIAH AND CONFRONTS AHAB – 1 Kings 18:1-16

V.1 - “**after many days...in the third year**” - We know from scripture that the duration of the drought was $3\frac{1}{2}$ years (Luke 4:25). The third year here refers to Elijah’s stay with the widow which seems to have been about $2\frac{1}{2}$ years.

“**Go shew thyself unto Ahab**” - Elijah’s personal presence was crucial to breaking the drought.

“**I will send rain**” - Roth. - “that I may...” Rain was conditional upon God’s word through Elijah (17:1). Rain is a symbol of the word of God (Deut. 32:1-2; Isa. 55:10-11; Psa. 72:6). Ahab had been shown in a literal way what happens to a nation (ecclesia) spiritually when there is a famine of the Word (Amos 8:11).

V.2 - “**Samaria**” - This is a new name for Israel. Ahab’s regime had changed Israel’s character so much that the nation is now called by the name of his city of idolatry.

V.3 - “**Obadiah**” - Heb. - “the servant of Yahweh”. He was one of the 7000 faithful in Israel.

“**the governor of his house**” - *Governor* is *al* - above, over, upon. He was the royal chamberlain (Gray). In modern parlance he would be called the chief minister.

“**feared the LORD greatly**” - *Feared* is *yare* - to revere. *Greatly* is *meod* sig. vehemently; by implication wholly. Obadiah was a dedicated servant of Yahweh, but secretly because of Jezebel. God had not left himself without resources in the court of Ahab.

V.4 - “**when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the LORD**” - This indicates a brutal purge by Jezebel of any opposition in Israel to Baal worship. She had replaced Yahweh’s prophets with her own (verse 19).

“**by fifty in a cave**” - Roth. & Yng. both translate as “caves” (plural). This probably means that he hid prophets fifty at a time in each cave. Perhaps the caves were temporary hiding places on the route to safety. There are many large caves on the southern flank of the Carmel range in quite rugged country which would make ideal refuges.

“**fed them with bread and water**” - Just as the ravens and the widow had done for Elijah.

V.5 - “**Ahab said unto Obadiah**” - Obadiah went forth with equal authority to Ahab to secure fodder. This gives some indication of his status and influence in Israel. However, there is a spiritual flavour to verse 6 which suggests the truth of Obadiah’s relationship with Ahab: they were going in different directions, for Obadiah “went another way by himself.”

V.7 - “**knew**” - *nakar* - to scrutinise, i.e. look intently at (with recognition implied). Perhaps Obadiah had seen Elijah in the palace $3\frac{1}{2}$ years previously (1 Kings 17:1). In any case his appearance was unmistakable (2 Kings 1:8).

V.8 - “**I am, go tell thy lord**” - To Obadiah’s question, “Is it thy very self my Lord Elijah” (LXX), Elijah replies with characteristic abruptness, “I, go say to thy lord, here is Elijah” (Roth.). Elijah failed to discriminate between Ahab and his ambassador who was vastly different to his master. This was one of Elijah’s problems (see 2 Kings 1).

V.9 - **“that thou wouldest deliver thy servant”** - Obadiah’s fear of Ahab is a reflection on the tyranny now current in Israel. Life and death rested on the caprice of the king ruled as he was by his vicious wife Jezebel (cp. V.4).

V.10 - **“As the LORD thy God liveth”** - This confession of his faith was the signal to Elijah that he was dealing with one of his friends (cp. 17:12). But he did not read it!

“there is no nation...whither my Lord hath not sent to seek thee” - Ahab’s utter desperation as the drought dragged on had been demonstrated by a frantic search for Elijah in adjoining countries; a desperation underlined by his securing of an oath from other monarchs that they were not harbouring Elijah.

V.12 - **“it shall come to pass....the spirit of the LORD shall carry thee”** - Obadiah thus expressed his profound belief in Yahweh’s power operative in Elijah.

“fear the LORD from my youth” - This was remarkable because he had grown up during the reigns of Baasha and Omri. There were many others like him in fact who would have supported Elijah in the work of reforming Israel, but sadly Elijah did not recognise their existence (1 Kings 19:10).

V.15 - **“As the LORD of hosts liveth”** - A different title is used here compared to 1 Kings 17:1. This is the militant title of Deity signifying “He who will be manifested in hosts.” A war was now pending between Yahweh and Baal and between Yahweh’s representative and Baal’s prophets.

THE CONTEST ON MT. CARMEL – 1 Kings 18:17-40

V.17 - **“Art thou he that troubleth Israel”** - Yng.: “Art thou he - the troubler of Israel”. *Troubleth* is *akar* - to make water turbid, to stir, or disturb (used Josh. 7:25; 1 Chron. 2:7).

V.18 - **“but thou and thy father’s house”** - See notes on Omri. Mic. 6:16 shows Omri developed the statutes which underpinned Ahab’s works.

“thou hast followed Baalim” - The word *followed* is *yalak achar* meaning to walk behind. Ahab had chosen to line up behind a multitude of lords (Baalim is plural).

V.19 - **“gather to me all Israel unto Mt. Carmel”** - Carmel means a planted field, or garden; by implication productive, fruitful. It was noted for luxuriant vegetation due to the receipt of abundant and heavy rains. As a prominent range it was a natural site for Baal worship, for Baal was attributed with bringing rain. Phoenician seafarers associated Baal with prominent headlands such as Mt. Carmel. It was a well chosen site for the contest between gods.

“the prophets of the groves” - *Groves* is *Asherah* (see note chp. 16:33). The 400 prophets of Asherah were Jezebel’s personal priests who indulged with her the immoral rites associated with Baal worship (by a euphemism they “ate at her table”). These did not come to the contest on Carmel. The people might have “halted between two opinions” but Jezebel was not uncertain about her gods. She kept **her** prophets home!

V.21 - **“How long halt ye between two opinions”** - The word *opinion* is *ca-iph* - divided (in mind). Roth.: “How long are ye limping on the two divided opinions” (margin - “as on unequal legs”). Gray translates: “hobble on two crutches”.

“And the people answered him not a word” - The people’s silence was proof that they did halt between two opinions. Among them perhaps were some who sympathised with Elijah, but in the presence of Ahab and the prophets of Baal they remained silent.

V.22 - **“I, even I only remain a prophet of the LORD”** - Roth. - “I am left”. Gray: “Myself alone...” Elijah was to make this claim again (19:10). It was not true. What about the 100 prophets of V.13? This is an insight into the state of Elijah’s mind at this time. In the events that were to come God sets out to reveal to Elijah that there were others beside himself who were faithful.

V.23 - **“give us two bullocks”** - The national sin offering was a bullock (Lev. 4:13-15). Bullocks were used for sin and burnt offerings under the Law. As these were cut in pieces and placed upon the altar to be burnt whole they were to be offered as burnt offerings (Lev. 1:6,9).

V.24 - **“the God that answereth by fire”** - Fire from heaven was a familiar sign of acceptance of altar offerings by Yahweh (Lev. 9:24; 1 Chron. 21:26; 2 Chron. 7:1). Baal the sun god was said to be the god of light and fire. It was a fair contest, and the people agreed saying, “The word is good” (Green).

V.26 - **“from morning even until noon”** - Given first opportunity the prophets of Baal laboured for 3 to 4 hours to invoke their god in the sweltering morning sun.

“O Baal hear us” - *Hear* is *anah* - to eye, to heed; i.e. to pay attention. Roth. - “O Baal answer us.” The same word is translated “answered” in the next sentence.

“And they leaped upon the altar” - *Leaped* is *pacah* - to hop, i.e. to skip over. The word can mean to limp. So the RSV translates: “And they limped about the altar.”

V.27 - **“And it came to pass at noon”** - The burning sun reached its zenith and the heat was intense. Now was the most propitious time for Baal to answer his distressed prophets.

“Elijah mocked” - *Mocked* is *hathal* - to deride. Yng. - “play”. Elijah heaped scorn on the prophets of Baal so as to increase the impact on the people of God’s answer to his simple prayer which was soon to be seen in such contrast to their frantic gyrations.

“Cry aloud” - *qara* - to call (to accost a person). The idea of the word is to ‘butt in’.

“talking” - *siyach* - a contemplating; by implication, utterance. Roth. has, “he hath a meditation.”

“pursuing” - *siyg* - to withdraw into a private place. Roth. has, “an occasion to retire.” Elijah derides Baal by lowering him to the human level, even needing time for toilet!

V.28 - **“cut themselves after their manner”** - Roth. has, “after their custom”. Baal was worshipped with blood flowing freely. The vital essence of life was part of their ritual to invoke Baal to hear and grant their petitions. For them it only heralded impending death!

V.29 - **“they prophesied”** - RSV translates: “they raved on.”

“offering of the evening sacrifice” - The word *offering* is *alah* - to ascend, and refers to the burnt offering. Elijah’s sacrifice was made at about 3 pm when in Jerusalem the daily burnt offering for the nation was being made. This way of marking the time of day intimates that the account was written by prophets of God at some later time.

“neither voice....answer....regarded” - *Regarded* is *qesheb* - hearkening; from a root sig. to prick up the ears. RSV translates: “but there was no voice, no one answered, no one heeded.” The sense of this passage is gained by its accumulative force. Paraphrased it could read: “There was no voice because no one answered and no one answered because no one was listening.”

V.30 - **“Come near unto me”** - Elijah calls the people near. Probably many had tired of Baal’s prophets after 6 or 7 hours and had withdrawn and dispersed a little from the site of the contest. Elijah wanted all Israel to observe the contrast between him and the prophets of Baal.

“repaired the altar....broken down” - Elijah *repaired* (*rapha* - to mend, to cure) the altar which had been deliberately *broken down* (*harac* - to pull down, destroy). The RSV has, “thrown down.”

V.31 - **“Elijah took twelve stones....Israel shall be thy name”** - Elijah’s aim was to reunite the 12 tribes of Israel into one family worshipping Yahweh in truth according to His purpose with Israel.

V.33 - **“barrels”** - *kad* - a pail or earthenware jar. The water may have been taken from a local spring (so says Josephus). Three times the journey was made to emphasise that only Divine fire could consume this sacrifice.

V.36 - **“LORD God of Abraham...Isaac...Israel”** - Elijah invoked the covenant God in the hope that His answer would impel Israel to give total allegiance to Him as their fathers had done (Ex. 3:15). Elijah’s mission is yet to restore the children to the faith of their fathers (Mal. 4:5-6).

V.37 - **“that thou hast turned their heart back again”** - Roth. translates, “so shalt thou thyself have turned their heart back again.”

V.39 - **“the LORD he is God”** - The awe-inspiring consumption of the altar and sacrifice elicited from the stunned people a cry which is virtually the name of the prophet himself: “Elijah, Elijah” (“Yah is El”).

V.40 - **“Take the prophets.....And they took them”** - “Take” and “took” are the same word *taphas* - to manipulate, i.e. to seize. The first necessity was the elimination of the false prophets. Elijah completed the process commenced by the prophets themselves (verse 28) and shed all their blood!

THE PROMISE OF RAIN REALISED – 1 Kings 18:41-46

V.41 - **“Get thee up, eat and drink”** - It was a time for rejoicing and confident anticipation. Elijah’s invitation to eat and drink was perhaps a fellowship meal in association with the sacrifice he had made. Yahweh had been vindicated; Baal was disgraced in the minds of the people and his prophets were dead, and now there was to be further evidence of Yahweh’s power in the arrival of an abundance of rain after 3½ years of drought.

“there is a sound of abundance of rain” - RSV - “there is a sound of the rushing of rain.” Roth. - “a sound of a downpour of rain.” But Elijah alone could hear the sound of rain at this point. There was no visible evidence of its onset (V.43).

V.42 - “**Elijah went up to the top of Carmel**” - Normally the most densely forested and a place for hiding (Amos 9:3), the top of Carmel was now withered and dry; undeniable proof of the fulfilment of the power of Elijah’s prayer to withdraw the rain (James 5:17).

“**and he cast himself down upon the earth**” - *Cast himself* is one word *gahar* signifying to prostrate oneself (with the forehead touching the ground). See its use 2 Kings 4:34-35. The prayer of Elijah was as intense in seeking the return of the rain as it had been to withdraw it (James 5:16-18).

V.43 - “**his servant**” - Jewish tradition holds that Elijah’s servant here was the son of the widow of Zarephath. Certainly Elijah had journeyed to Zarephath alone, and now had a servant.

“**Go again seven times**” - God was to fulfil the covenant (seven) of 1 Kings 18:1 and send rain upon His people.

V.44 - “**a little cloud...like a man’s hand**” - The word for *hand* is *kaph* - the hollow of the hand. Yng. - “Lo, a little thickness as the palm of a man is coming up out of the sea.” *Cloud* is the word *ab* - darkness (density). The young man saw a small dark cloud rising out of the western horizon which to him appeared to be about the size of a man’s hand. Elijah knew it was the sign of an oncoming rainstorm. As the hollow of the hand could be seen it indicated that the Divine hand was not only open, but facing the earth so as to release blessings upon His people.

“**prepare**” - *acar* - to yoke or hitch, to fasten. Ahab would have been absolutely stunned by the events of the day. Now he was challenged with believing that there would be so much rain that his chariot would be bogged on the way home!

V.45 - “**the heaven was black with clouds and wind**” - Roth. has, “the heavens had enshrouded themselves with clouds and wind”. The Hebrew for “mean while” indicates very rapidly. So it was not long before the sun was obliterated and a violent wind swept in from the sea.

“**a great rain**” - This was a time for a new start in Israel (Hos. 10:12).

“**Jezreel**” - The name means “God will sow”. Baal the god of agriculture had been Ahab’s god, but had failed to provide. Yahweh the God of Israel would now “sow” in the land, for He only could provide rain and bring forth the harvest. There was a parable here of great things to come for Israel (Hos. 1:10-11; 2:22-23).

V.46 - “**and he girded up his loins and ran before Ahab**” - To run before kings was to honour them (1 Sam. 8:11; 2 Sam. 15:1). Elijah, empowered by the spirit, ran before Ahab to Jezreel in full confidence that the king would take the necessary action to reform the nation.

ELIJAH’S FLIGHT TO HOREB – 1 Kings 19:1-18

V.1 - “**Ahab told Jezebel**” - The picture painted is of Ahab arriving home to be confronted by his domineering and recalcitrant wife. Though deeply impressed by the events on Carmel he seems to have fully disclosed all to Jezebel without manifesting his real feelings. Any reformation in Israel depended on Ahab removing Jezebel from a position of

influence. He was not strong enough to do this and obviously his resolve melted in her presence.

V.2 - **“Jezebel sent a messenger”** - This was only a threat to frighten Elijah, for it is unusual to warn an enemy of his impending demise. Such was to be expected from Jezebel for she would never waver from service to her gods declaring; “So let the gods do to me....”

V.3 - **“he arose and went for his life”** - The problem of Elijah’s sense of isolation now becomes apparent. Once Ahab’s resolve had withered Elijah felt that a reformation was hopeless. He did not appreciate that even without the king there was substantial support in the nation for change (V.18). All the people needed was strong leadership. But Elijah fled!

“Beersheba” - “Well of an oath”. Situated 160 km (100 miles) south of Jezreel in the southern extremity of Judah (1 Sam. 3:20). Elijah avoided Judah because of Ahab’s alliance with Jehoshaphat king of Judah through a marriage of Jehoshaphat’s son Jehoram to Athaliah the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel (2 Chron. 18:1). Here he left his servant and headed for Horeb alone. He thought he was alone, and he wanted to be alone.

V.4 - **“and sat down under a juniper tree”** – *Juniper* is the word *rothem* - the Spanish broom tree. A tree, with a delicate white flower having a maroon centre, which grows to about 3 metres (8 to 9 feet) high. Its roots provided food for the poor (Job 30:3-4), and were useful as reusable coals when burnt (Psa. 120:4). Elijah did not recognise it, but the juniper tree was a fitting symbol for the humble in Israel who could have sustained him in the hour of need, and been fanned into flame by his zeal to reform the nation.

“It is enough, now” - Roth. has, “enough now”. These are the words of a passionate man deeply depressed by the apparent failure of his mission to the point that he wished himself dead. He felt this way because he saw himself as the only one left serving Yahweh faithfully.

“for I am not better than my fathers” - Elijah has in mind the prophets who had preceded him and likewise failed to convert the nation from apostasy.

V.5 - **“an angel touched him”** - Lit. “an angel touching him”. There is drama here. Elijah is wakened by an angel and invited to eat and drink, which he does. But then he falls asleep again and has to be wakened and instructed to eat some more. It does not appear to occur to him that he had been alone, so depressed was he! The point of this incident was to impress Elijah with the fact that even he needed to be confronted twice by the miraculous to respond, but he had given Israel only one chance and then forsook them. He needed to be more patient and persistent like the angel who had to approach him “the second time” (V.7).

V.6 - **“a cake baken....a cruse of water”** - This was reminiscent of 1 Kings 17:10-13. God had fed him before and was feeding him again. Why was not Elijah feeding Israel?

V.8 - **“forty days and forty nights”** - Compare Moses experiences on the mount of God (Deut. 9:8-9,18). There can be little doubt Elijah’s motivation for travelling such an enormous distance [320 km (200 miles) from Beersheba] was related to the giving of the Law in Horeb.

“Horeb” - “Desolate; to kill by thirst”. Horeb was the foremost peak on the northern approach to Mt. Sinai. It was the mountain of Divine judgement and the scene of the same awe-inspiring power that had been revealed on Carmel.

“the mount of God” - Horeb’s history provides the reason for Elijah’s long journey. Here in solitude where Yahweh had revealed himself to Moses and given the Law, he could plead against the nation that had forsaken its foundations laid in this place. Elijah regarded himself as the sole custodian of truth in Israel and was really implying that the rest of the nation deserved Divine judgement (Rom. 11:2-3).

V.9 - **“a cave”** - It is conjectural whether this was the same cave in which Moses was secreted when the angel of the presence ‘passed by’ (Ex. 33:22), but there is no doubt the events that follow are based upon that incident.

“the word of the LORD” - This journey to Horeb was the first time Elijah had done anything in the record without the direction of the Spirit and Divine command (see 1 Kings 17:1-2, 8-9; 18:1,12,46).

“What doest thou here, Elijah” - There were two objects to this question. Elijah was being asked to consider why he had chosen Horeb, and secondly, what was it about the way God works that brought him to this place. The clear tenor of the question was; “You are in the wrong place, Elijah”.

V.10 - **“I have been very jealous”** - *Jealous* is *qana* - zealous. This was certainly true. However, Elijah’s soliloquy is filled with indications that his zeal had blinded him to the real situation.

“for the LORD God of hosts” - In the presence of Ahab Elijah had used the title “Yahweh Elohim of Israel” (1 Kings 17:1); to Obadiah it had been “Yahweh Tzvaoth” (1 Kings 18:15); now he combines the covenant title with the militant title. He implies that Yahweh should be enforcing His covenant. This is the first occurrence of this title in the mouth of an individual.

“Israel have forsaken thy covenant” - *Forsaken* is *azab* - to relinquish. That is, in favour of another. This was true, but the ground had been laid on Carmel for this to be reversed.

“thrown down thine altars and slain thy prophets” - This was true too, but Elijah had reversed this situation on Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 18:30-32,40).

“I, even I only” - Yng. - “I am left, I by myself”. He was not, but he **thought** he was.

“they seek my life” - This was an overstatement. Jezebel alone sought him; not all Israel.

V.11 - **“the LORD passed by”** - The awesome display of Divine power in wind, earthquake and fire was designed to demonstrate to Elijah how people react to the manifestation of raw power. Elijah was commanded to “Go forth, and stand upon the mount”, but after this awesome display he is found cowering in fear in the security of the cave from which he does not emerge until he hears the ‘still small voice’. God was teaching him forcefully that just as he needed to be called persistently by a gentle voice after feeling the power of the Divine presence, so Israel now needed a persistent teacher to build upon their new found awe for their God. The phrase used here is reminiscent of Ex. 34:6 where the principles are identical. The lesson graphically demonstrated to both Moses and Elijah was that men are

not converted by raw power alone. Lasting response only comes as a result of the appeal of a persistent voice.

“rent...brake in pieces” - The words used *mepareq* and *mesabber* are words signifying “rending” and “shattering”. The rocks were shattered by a wind! This was awesome power.

“the LORD was not in the wind” - When the wind had subsided, like the earthquake and fire after it, Yahweh could not be found. The reason for this was that He had “passed by” in a powerful manifestation that was now over. This produced a vivid impression, but only a temporary effect. Herein lay the lesson for Elijah.

V.12 - **“a still small voice”** - Roth. - “the voice of a gentle whisper.” *Still* is *demamah* meaning quiet. *Small* is *daq* - crushed, i.e. small or thin. There is clearly a deliberate contrast made between the loud, boisterous, and destructive elements and the small quiet voice in order to teach Elijah a great lesson. Men are not changed for the Kingdom by miracles, but by the persistence of quiet teaching.

V.13 - **“it was so, when Elijah heard it”** - Elijah responded to the gentle voice but had been overawed by the violent elements. Here was a lesson for him that effective and lasting conversion is only accomplished through the quiet influence of God’s word. He had been outside the cave but had retreated in fear. Now he emerges in response to the “still small voice”. The awe-inspiring manifestation of the power of God had the same effect upon Elijah as the events upon Mt. Carmel upon the people of Israel. They were struck with fear. What was now needed was the “still small voice” of God’s word to cause them to respond and draw near unto Yahweh. This had been indicated by the sending of rain immediately after the contest on Camel (rain is a symbol of the doctrine of God - Deut. 32:1-2). But where was Elijah? He was not in Israel teaching those ready to respond to God’s word, but sitting in solitude on a mountain far away pleading against his nation. No wonder the voice of the Spirit enquired again; “What doest thou **here**, Elijah.

“he wrapped his face in his mantle” - This was a mark of his fear; typical of Israel’s state of mind after the events on Carmel. Like Elijah they were now susceptible to the voice of God, but Elijah was not there to deliver it or teach them! So rattled was he that when asked again what he was doing at Horeb he could only weakly repeat the soliloquy of verse 10.

V.15 - **“Go, return on thy way”** - There was in this direction both a rebuke and a command. There was work to be done in Israel but Elijah would not do it himself. His teaching work would be reserved for a much later time in the Second Exodus of Israel (Mal. 4:5-6). For now his task was to anoint men who would be like wind, earthquake, and fire to Israel before Yahweh’s ‘still small voice’ would work persistently through Elisha the prophet.

“Hazeal” - “God has seen”. Like the east **wind** he swept out of Syria to punish Israel.

V. 16 - **“Jehu”** - “Yah is he”. He brought a violent political **earthquake** to Israel in the total destruction of Ahab’s house and idolatry.

“Nimshi” – Heb. “extricated”, from the root, “to pull out”. This summarised Jehu’s mission.

“Elisha” – Heb. “to whom God is salvation”.

“Shaphat” – Heb. “judge or judgement”. Elisha is first seen in a work of judgement (**fire**) in the death of 42 scornful youths who typified many in Israel (2 Kings 2:23-24).

“Abel-meholah” – Heb. “meadow of dancing”.

V.17 - **“the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay....shall Elisha slay”** - These Divine messengers sent to destroy the wicked in Israel were like the wind, earthquake, and fire on Mt. Horeb. Once they had ‘passed by’ Elisha could begin his work as the “still small voice” in Israel.

V.18 - **“Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel”** - Roth. and RV both translate, “Yet will I leave remaining in Israel”. There had always been 7,000 who remained faithful to Yahweh at the height of Ahab’s apostasy. Here was a strong rejoinder to Elijah’s argument that he was alone. Seven is the covenant number and a thousand is representative of a family (Judges 6:15 mgn.). God is saying that He had preserved a covenant family in Israel who now needed to hear the ‘still small voice’. This passage is cited in Rom.11:4 where Paul refers to “a remnant according to the election of grace” (V.5).

THE ANOINTING OF ELISHA – 1 Kings 19:19-21

V.19 - **“plowing with twelve yoke of oxen”** - Like all Israel, who were represented by the 12 yoke of oxen, Elisha was capitalising on the recent rain and breaking up the fallow ground (Hos. 10:12). The echoes of this scene are heard in Luke 9:62 in a chapter where Elijah’s name occurs 5 times.

“and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him” - The mantle was the symbol of Elijah’s prophetic office (Cp. Zech. 13:4). Elisha’s use of the mantle in 2 Kings 2:13-14 shows its relationship to Elijah’s spirit and power. Significantly, the words “passed by” are used to take the mind back to verse 11 and to Ex. 34:5. Elijah as the dramatic “power of Yah” would pass by and be replaced by Elisha as the “still small voice.”

V.20 - **“Go back again: for what have I done to thee”** - Gray translates: “Go, but (remember) what I have done to you”. Comp. Bible: “What is the meaning of what I did”. The emphasis is upon the great responsibilities and uncompromising nature of the call (cp. Luke 9:62).

V.21 - **“and took a yoke of oxen and slew them”** - Elisha made a burnt offering using the oxen and the instruments of his former occupation. He was indicating he would now dedicate his life to cultivating men’s minds.

“and went after Elijah” - Elijah had not stopped. Like the wind, earthquake, and fire he had “passed by”. Elisha who would become the ‘still small voice’ had to catch him up to begin his apprenticeship for greater things.

CONFLICT WITH BENHADAD OF SYRIA – 1 Kings 20:1-43

V.1 - **“And Ben-hadad...went up and besieged Samaria”** - Here was proof to Elijah of God’s power to incapacitate Ahab and Jezebel whenever he wished to do so. Ben-hadad of Syria had assembled a large confederacy of 32 Kings, some of whom Ahab had previously approached seeking Elijah (1 Kings 18:10). “Benhadad” means “son of Hadad” and Hadad was the Canaanite storm god ‘responsible’ for storms and rain. Ahab was now to suffer at the hands of the ‘son’ of his own preferred god, Baal.

V.4 - **“I am thine, and all that I have”** - Ahab was astute enough to count the odds and so accedes to Ben-hadad’s demands probably in the hope of subsequently reducing them. If he had agreed to these demands he would have been relieved of his greatest liability - Jezebel.

V.6 - **“they shall search thine house”** - The demands were extended and made virtually unconditional. Ahab balked at this and war became inevitable.

V.10 - **“if the dust of Samaria shall suffice for handfuls”** - Ben-hadad threatens to reduce Samaria to dust so that there would not be sufficient for his men to carry away in handfuls.

V.11 - **“Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off”** - This Hebrew aphorism is like the English saying; “Don’t count your chickens before they hatch”. He was warning Ben-hadad not to count on victory before it had been won.

V.12 - **“pavilions”** - *cukkah* - A hut or lair. Ben-hadad’s unrestrained drinking with the confederate kings deprived his army of essential leadership (v.16).

V.13 - **“there came a prophet”** - The word *came* is *nagash* - to be or come near. This emphasises that God was able to call upon a prophet from among His people as required. They were there all the time even though Elijah failed to recognise their existence (1 Kings 19:10).

“I will deliver it into thine hand this day” - Ahab was to receive further proof of Yahweh’s power to save. This was a remarkable display of Divine mercy. God was persisting with a combination of miracle and gentle appeals to turn the heart of Ahab before it was too late.

V.14 - **“Who shall order the battle”** - *Order* is *acar* - to yoke or hitch, bind or tie. Roth. - “Who shall begin the war”. Ahab’s question rings of doubt, but the abrupt reply is, “You”!

V.22 - **“Go, strengthen thyself”** - Ahab is warned to strengthen himself against a fresh Syrian campaign within the year. God’s helping of Ahab can only be interpreted as an attempt to turn his heart from idolatry and to produce conditions in Israel conducive to Elisha’s work.

V.23 - **“Their gods are gods of the hills”** - The Syrian view of Israel’s God was Ahab’s best weapon. It guaranteed their defeat because the contest was one between national deities. Baal was supposedly a god of the hills (see note 1 Kings 18:19), but Yahweh was not only God of the hills, but of heaven and earth.

V.26 - **“Aphek”** – Heb. “fortress”. Most authorities seem to place this Aphek on the highway from Israel to Damascus 7 km (4 miles) east of the Sea of Galilee.

V.27 - **“were numbered, and were all present”** - Roth. - “were numbered and provisioned”.

“like two little flocks of kids” - Roth. and Yng. Both have, “goats”. See the chapter on Abijah for a comparison of the armed forces of Israel and Judah. Israel had plunged from 800,000 men in the days of Jeroboam to 7,232 in the time of Ahab.

V.28 - **“And there came a man of God”** - This man may have been the same prophet as verse 13, but he is described differently for a reason. There was more than ‘one’ of God’s servants in Israel able to witness on His behalf, contrary to Elijah’s assessment. His message was simple. The sole purpose of God’s support for Ahab was to vindicate His

power before the Gentiles in an attempt to convert Ahab. He would not help him for any other reason.

V.30 - **“inner chamber”** - Roth. “a chamber within a chamber”. The son of Hadad was virtually entombed. But for the folly of Ahab he would have died.

V.31 - **“merciful”** - *chesed* - loving-kindness. This is the word used to describe God’s characteristic of mercy in Ex. 34:6. Even in wicked kings and reprobates like Ahab some of the ameliorating influences of the Truth were observable. The pagan Gentiles by contrast did not know what *chesed* was as Ben-hadad was to later prove.

“and ropes upon our heads” - They presented themselves like captives who were roped together, thus signifying complete surrender.

V.32 - **“he is my brother”** - In a sense he was! Ahab’s god was Baal; akin to Hadad, god of storms. To spare his enemy whom God had consigned to utter destruction (V.42) was a foolish mistake by the short sighted and faithless Ahab.

V.33 - **“the men did diligently observe”** - RSV - “Now the men were watching for an omen, and they quickly took it up from him and said, Yes your brother Ben-hadad.”

“and did hastily catch it” - *chalat* - to snatch at. Here were desperate men prepared to grasp at any straw for survival. They were shocked by Ahab’s conciliatory reply. Almost in a stunned response they merely repeated his words, affirming them.

“into the chariot” - This was hardly the place for a defeated enemy king - riding in the victor’s chariot as an honoured guest.

V.34 - **“thou shalt make streets for thee in Damascus”** - In absolute amazement at the turn of events Benhadad makes lavish promises of reparation and recognition for Ahab in Damascus which he had no intention of keeping. The credulous Ahab believed him. Ahab prized worldly recognition above Divine approbation. He had squandered a rare opportunity to cooperate with God to the crushing of Israel’s enemies. Even worse he proceeded to make a “covenant” with Ben-hadad to the total exclusion of Yahweh who had given him the victory!

V.35 - **“And a certain man of the sons of the prophets”** - Another prophet emerges from the host of Israel at Aphek described in a different way to those who had preceded him (cp. verses 13 & 28). God is seemingly able to call on any number of prophets to further His work in Israel. If only Elijah had been able to harness and organise these resources things may have been somewhat different in Israel.

V.43 - **“And the king of Israel went to his house heavy and displeased”** - *Heavy* is *car* - vexatious, fretful; and *displeased* is *zaeph* - angry; root, to boil up. The self-willed and petulant Ahab did not take kindly to rebuff as 1 Kings 21:4 reveals. The same words are used in that place.

THE INCIDENT OF NABOTH’S VINEYARD – 1 Kings 21:1-16

V.1 - **“Naboth”** - His name means “fruits”. In the brief glimpse we get of Naboth in the record he is revealed as a righteous man; clearly one of the 7,000 referred to in 1 Kings 19:18.

“Jezreelite” – Heb. “God sows”. It is significant that next door to Ahab’s palace God had sown and a man had brought forth “fruit” to him in righteousness.

“vineyard” - The vineyard is used to symbolise God’s ecclesia (Isa. 5:1-2; Matt. 21:33). A vineyard is useless unless it produces fruit (Ezek. 15). This is what Naboth had done as he developed his little ‘ecclesial’ family right next door to Ahab’s palace.

“hard by” - *etsel* - joining; a side.

V.2 - **“garden of herbs”** – *Herbs* is *yaraq* - a vegetable. Ahab proposed to convert the vineyard into a vegetable garden for his own pleasure (see the principle of Deut. 11:10). He proposed two alternatives, both of which were unacceptable to Naboth. Ahab’s complete ignorance of the principles of the Law is revealed. An Israelite could not swap or sell his inheritance for the land was Yahweh’s (Lev. 25:23). To Ahab one vineyard was as good as another. He simply could not grasp the principles involved.

V.3 - **“The LORD forbid it me”** - Roth. - “Far be it from me of Yahweh.” Naboth unashamedly declares his commitment to the law of his God. He did not attempt to conceal that he was a servant of Yahweh, faced as he was by the king who served another god.

“the inheritance of my fathers” - The law of inheritance was clearly laid down (Num. 36:7; Lev. 25:13-28). The Israelite could not sell his inheritance permanently, nor was the king to take another’s inheritance (Ezek. 46:18).

V.4 - **“And Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased”** - The same phrase is used in 1 Kings 20:43 and means “fretful and angry.” Ahab’s frustration when confronted by Divine principles faithfully upheld is a revelation of his capricious and selfish character. He was not improved by the rebuke of a righteous man (Prov. 9:7-9).

“And he laid him down upon his bed” - The picture is of the king sulking like a spoilt child after being denied the gratification of his whims and fancies. The only redeeming feature is that Ahab showed some capacity for emotion. There was at least something to appeal to in him. By contrast the cold and calculated unscrupulousness of Jezebel knew no bounds.

V.5 - **“Why is thy spirit so sad”** - Yng. - “What is this, thy spirit sulky....” The word *sad* is *car* - peevish, vexatious; and is used in verse 4 and 20:43. Jezebel is contemptuous of Ahab’s sensitivities. She possessed no such ‘weaknesses’ herself and could not understand how a king could be prevented from achieving any desire of his heart.

V.6 - **“he answered, I will not give thee my vineyard”** - Typical of Ahab when confronted with Jezebel he only told half the story. No mention is made of the **reasons** why Naboth refused.

V.7 - **“Dost thou now govern”** - Moffatt - “And are you not in command of Israel’s kingdom?” He was king to be sure, but Jezebel was the real ruler. She proved this in the following events.

“I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth” - Jezebel had no scruples at all. At least Ahab, though ignorant of the principles involved, had acquiesced to the firm stand of Naboth.

V.8 - **“she wrote letters”** - Jezebel’s treachery was later to be savagely and poetically avenged by Jehu the destroyer of Ahab’s house (2 Kings 10:1-7).

“in Ahab’s name” - This is a fascinating insight into the way Ahab’s regime ran. His name and seal were used, but the nobles knew the real origin of the instructions. When the evil work was done they dutifully reported their deeds to Jezebel (V.14).

“the elders and to the nobles....in his city” - Naboth was prominent and well known for his uprightness. The men who knew his integrity and qualities best were incited to treachery by Jezebel. So it was with Christ that those who acknowledged his righteousness also sought to kill him for envy (Zech. 13:6; John 11:47-53). These men were to pay a heavy price for their murderous cooperation with Jezebel (2 Kings 10:1,11).

V.9 - **“Proclaim a fast”** - Fasts were called on occasions of national introspection and repentance (Joel 1:14; 1 Sam. 7:6). This was an act of breathtaking hypocrisy.

“set Naboth on high” - *High* is *rosh* - the head or at the head. Josephus suggests that he was from an illustrious family and was given a position at the head of the people so as to be in the limelight at the time when false witnesses arose to accuse him. Thus he would be utterly humiliated and discredited in the sight of the people of his city, and his fall would be sudden and great. More devious treachery it is difficult to imagine.

V.10 - **“set two men, sons of Belial before him”** - Roth. - “now let two reckless men take their seats before him”. False accusers termed “sons of Belial” (Heb. “without profit, worthlessness”) were to be prepared as a nice touch of legitimacy. Jezebel was shrewd enough to conform to the requirements of the Law to give a veneer of legality to her treachery (Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6).

“Thou didst blaspheme God and the king” - These trumped up charges of blasphemy based on the Law (Ex. 22:28; Lev. 24:16; Deut. 13:9-10) were later to be levelled at Christ by a similar elaborate subterfuge (John 19:1-12).

V.11 - **“who were the inhabitants in his city”** - The way this phrase is added to those which precede it almost suggests incredulity. How could they do this to a man they knew so intimately as a man of integrity. Every one knew the charges were simply not true.

“did as Jezebel had sent unto them” - The elders and nobles seem to have had no compunction. This surely emphasises the power of Jezebel and the fear engendered by her cruelty and ruthlessness toward those who stood in her way.

V.13 - **“and stoned him with stones, that he died”** - What the record does not say is that they also slew at the same time Naboth’s sons (2 Kings 9:26). This was necessitated because of the law of inheritance (Deut. 25:5) if Jezebel was to achieve her purpose.

V.15 - **“Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth”** - It is significant that while Ahab was being instructed to “arise” and take possession of Naboth’s vineyard Yahweh was similarly instructing Elijah to “arise” and condemn him and his house in that very place (V.18).

ELIJAH CONDEMNS AHAB’S HOUSE – 1 Kings 21:17-29

V.19 - **“Hast thou killed, and also taken possession?”** - Roth. - “Hast thou committed murder and also taken possession?” The question serves to underline the horror of the crime.

“in the place where the dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood” - Dogs did in fact lick Ahab’s blood, but not in Naboth’s vineyard (1 Kings 22:38). This prophecy was fulfilled in detail on the death of Jehoram Ahab’s son (2 Kings 9:25-26).

V.20 - **“Hast thou found me, O mine enemy”** - Compare Ahab’s words in 1 Kings 18:17. There he called Elijah “the troubler of Israel”, now he is seen as a mortal enemy. The language indicates that Ahab was aware that he had gravely sinned against God.

“sold thyself” - *makar* - to sell, surrender into slavery. Ahab had sold himself to Jezebel as a slave to her will and ways (V.25).

V.21 - **“shut up and left”** - The words are *asur* and *azab* and probably indicate “helpless or hindered” and “abandoned or destitute”. Roth. translates, “whether shut up or left at large.”

V.22 - **“like the house of Jeroboam”** - Compare 1 Kings 15:27-30; 16:10-13.

V.23 - **“the dogs shall eat Jezebel”** - *Dogs* (*keleb* - to yelp, or else to attack) were an abomination in Israel (Deut. 23:18; Isa. 66:3). They symbolised cruel and vicious men (Psa. 22:16-20; 59:6,14,15). Considered the lowest form of animal life (1 Sam. 24:14; 2 Sam. 3:8; 9:8; 16:9; Rev. 22:15) with despicable habits (Prov. 26:11), they were an extremely appropriate symbol for Jezebel. She was to suffer an even worse fate than Naboth.

“by the wall” - *cheyl* - an entrenchment (margin, ditch). Yng. “by the bulwark”. The dogs consumed Jezebel in the ditch or gutter beside the wall of Jezreel (2 Kings 9:36).

V.25 - **“there was none like unto Ahab”** - Verses 25 and 26 are in parenthesis in the RSV. This comment from the inspired recorder is inserted to emphasise the source of Ahab’s wickedness. It is couched in the language of exclamation as Yng. translates: “surely there hath been none!”

“did sell himself” - *makar* - to sell, surrender to slavery. Ahab had something to sell into slavery. He had the potential to be different, but not the will. He sold out instead to Jezebel.

“stirred up” - *cuwth* - to prick, i.e. to stimulate. It is from a root word meaning briars, thorns used in Josh. 23:12-13 and Num. 33:55. These passages are significant because of their reference to the Canaanites being thorns in the side of Israel. By marrying Jezebel and adopting her ways Ahab had reintroduced the Canaanites and Amorites into the land.

V.26 - **“abominably”** - *ta’ab* - to loathe, detest.

“as did the Amorites” - Refer to the earlier note on 1 Kings 16:34.

V.27 - **“went softly”** - *at* - to move softly or gently. RSV - “dejectedly”. Here again Ahab demonstrated that he had some sensitivity to Yahweh’s word.

V.29 - **“Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself”** - *kana* - to bend the knee, hence to humiliate. *Kana* is the root word for “Canaan”. This was not a repentant or reforming humility, but the humility of mortification and exposure. It was brought on by fear and trepidation, for Ahab knew that Elijah’s words would be fulfilled. However these circumstances amply demonstrate God’s great mercy. He mitigates the judgement by changing the time of its fulfilment. If such mercy could be shown to Ahab for humbling

himself in the face of an unalterable edict, then those who genuinely serve God should be encouraged to always seek mercy, whatever their failures and sins. There is forgiveness with God that He may be feared (Psa. 130:4).

AHAB and JEHOSEPHAT

Due to the inter-twining of the lives of Ahab and Jehoshaphat at a certain point during their reigns it is necessary to consider them together in the following passages.

THE FATAL ALLIANCE – 2 Chron. 18:1-3 (1 Kings 22:1-34)

V.1 - **“Now Jehoshaphat had riches and honour in abundance”** - Herein lay the source of Jehoshaphat’s failure. A spirit of self-sufficiency and self-confidence had developed through the prosperity of Judah under his rule and due to the universal respect of his greatness. Success had blunted his earlier awareness of the dangers involved in seeking closer relations with Israel (2 Chron. 17:1).

“joined affinity” - *chathan* - a primary root signifying to give (a daughter) away in marriage; hence to contract affinity by marriage. The same word is used of Solomon contracting affinity with Pharaoh (1 Kings 3:1) and of Saul’s ploy to ensnare David (1 Sam. 18:21). Another significant use is in the law forbidding marriage with the alien (Deut. 7:3 - note the context). The initiative to form the alliance by marriage was from Jehoshaphat; not from a position of weakness, but of strength. Ahab, whose kingdom was desperately weak militarily, quickly exploited the opportunity, for he had on-going wars with Syria.

The marriage was between Jehoram, Jehoshaphat’s eldest son and successor, and Athaliah, Ahab’s daughter. Jehoram means, “Yahweh raised” and Athaliah, “Yah has constrained” from the root, to compress, constringent. These names tell the story of Jehoshaphat’s reign. 2 Chron. 17 shows how Jehoshaphat rose high in the things of God while chapter 18 reveals how his reforms and ambitions were constrained. God had warned of the results of any alliance with aliens, and Ahab’s house was alien in every way. The effect of introducing Athaliah into the royal house of Judah was nothing short of catastrophic. Everything Jehoshaphat had laboured to build up was constrained and ultimately destroyed because of her.

V.2 - **“after certain years he went down”** - The AV margin says, “at the end of years”. This marked a crucial period in Jehoshaphat’s life. He went ‘down’ spiritually by seeking a foolish and unnecessary alliance with Ahab.

“to Ahab to Samaria” - The declension implied in these steps reveal a sorry and pathetic situation. By verse 9 he is sitting in the gate of Samaria the centre of Baal worship in Israel. All his preparations for war to defend the ecclesia from its enemies, and his labours to exclude idolatry, were now negated by one act of compromise.

“Ahab killed sheep and oxen for him” - This display of honour and respect for the man was part of Ahab’s seduction of Jehoshaphat. The offerings should have been made to Yahweh!

“persuaded” - *cuwth* - to prick, to stimulate; by imp. to seduce. The same word is used of Jezebel’s seduction of Ahab (1 Kings 21:25). It is used again in 2 Chron. 18:31 where Yahweh reverses the predicament in which Jehoshaphat found himself. See also its use in the law concerning relatives (Deut. 13:6 - “entice”).

“Ramoth-Gilead” - The name means “Heights of Gilead”. The root *ramah* means “high place” (sometimes a seat of idolatry). Gilead means “a heap of testimony”. Ramoth- Gilead was a city of refuge situated in central Gilead (Deut. 4:43; Josh. 20:8).

V.3 - **“Wilt thou go with me”** - This was an expectant invitation to join Ahab’s forces which were pitifully weak. For Ahab to retake Ramoth-Gilead from Benhadad, who evidently had not lived up to his promise (1 Kings 20:34), required support from Jehoshaphat who had 1,160,000 men under arms (Cp. 1 Kings 22:1-3).

“I am as thou art” - Jehoshaphat declared complete unity with Ahab in his cause. The problem was that unity with Ahab meant the absence of God (19:2). A powerful army and many horses (mentioned in 1 Kings 22:4) were quite useless without Divine help. There is a tragic contrast here with Jehoshaphat’s early years. He had strengthened himself against Israel because of the wickedness of its kings, including Ahab, and Yahweh had blessed him. Did he now expect that the opposite would also be true?

CRACKS APPEAR IN THE ALLIANCE – 2 Chron. 18:4-11

V.4 - **“Enquire....at the word of the LORD”** - *Enquire* is *darash* and is usually translated “tread” or “frequent”. It refers to walk and indicates to follow, to seek or ask; specially to worship. Such a request immediately highlighted the enormous differences that existed. Ahab was not in the habit of seeking Yahweh’s counsel! Despite all the declarations of unity they were really poles apart. The only foundation for true unity did not exist (Amos 3:3). The whole arrangement was a sure recipe for disaster as it indeed transpired.

V.5 - **“prophets, four hundred men”** - Coming out of Samaria these may have been Jezebel’s prophets (1 Kings 18:19). Their general demeanour and hasty and optimistic contribution immediately betrayed their incompetence and unfitness to Jehoshaphat.

V.6 - **“Is there not here a prophet of the LORD”** - Jehoshaphat’s discomfort is evident in this rebuff. His words are diplomatic but blunt. Imagine Ahab’s consternation as these proceedings revealed how fragile the alliance really was. Desperate to maintain the union he grudgingly avers to a hated prophet of Yahweh.

V.7 - **“There is yet one man”** - Yng. translates, “Still -one man.”

“but I hate him” - *sane* - to hate personally. Ahab’s deep-seated bitterness now manifests itself. Being often reprov’d he had hardened his neck (Prov. 29:1). Obviously Micaiah was well known as a constant thorn in Ahab’s side. Elijah was wrong in claiming to be alone as a faithful prophet in Israel. Micaiah incurred Ahab’s hatred for his constant opposition to his evil ways and yet he had survived!

“always evil” - Roth. - “but all his days - evil”. This implies that Micaiah’s opposition was longstanding and persistent. Ahab’s testimony should have warned Jehoshaphat that he was in the wrong place. If Ahab had never accepted the advice of a prophet of Yahweh hitherto, prospects for a successful campaign together were very grim.

“the same is Micaiah the son of Imla” - Contempt smoulders in Ahab’s words. He felt nothing but hatred for God’s prophet who clearly had the king’s measure. *Micaiah* means “Who is like Yah” (This is not a question but a statement). This was true and was the reason for Ahab’s hatred of Micaiah. He was too much like Yahweh. “Imla” means “full” and Micaiah had often shown himself to be full of the things of God.

“Let not the king say so” - Jehoshaphat endeavours to diplomatically calm the disturbed atmosphere. His real sympathies were with Micaiah, so he calms Ahab’s temper as best he can, continuing to walk a shaky tightrope over spiritual quicksand. His wisdom at this point would have been to pack up and go home, but he was committed now by intermarriage.

V.8 - **“officers”** - *caric* - to castrate, a eunuch; by implication a valet, (especially for female apartments). This word is used of Potiphar (Gen. 37:36); King’s sons (2 Kings 20:18); and Rabsaris the chief eunuch (2 Kings 18:17). Its usage throughout the Old Testament is of officers of kings made eunuchs to ensure dedicated, reliable, and loyal servants.

“Fetch quickly Micaiah” - Roth. and Yng. translate: “Hasten”. Obviously Micaiah lived nearby. How had he survived Jezebel’s purges? Ahab’s impatience is again revealed. The quicker this embarrassing interlude was over the better! He endured it only because he was militarily dependent on an alliance with Jehoshaphat.

V.9 - **“sat either of them”** - Roth. - “were sitting each upon his throne, clothed in robes”. This was a formal occasion with royal regalia and thrones. The sad fact was that effectively the throne of Judah was now in the gate of Samaria.

“in a void place” - *goren* - to smooth; a threshing floor; by anal. an open area. Roth. - “an open space.” This was at the entrance of the gate of Samaria (cp. context of 2 Kings 7).

“and all the prophets prophesied before them” - Roth. - “and all the prophets were prophesying before them.” Jehoshaphat had already rejected the 400 prophets of Ahab but they continued to rant and rave before him.

V.10 - **“Zedekiah”** - His name means “Yah is righteous” but is a classic misnomer.

“Chenaanah” – Sig. “Humiliated”, from the primary root *kana* (the root of “Canaan”).

“horns of iron” - The horn is a symbol of power (Psa. 118:27; Hab. 3:4). Zedekiah as leader of the false prophets symbolised by graphic imagery their confidence in victory at Ramoth-Gilead.

“thus saith the LORD” - He prefaces his optimistic prophecy this time with the name of Yahweh who was omitted previously (V.5). Like all in their trade they quickly adapted to the situation and included God’s name to arrest Jehoshaphat’s attention.

V.11 - **“Go up...and prosper: for the LORD shall deliver”** - *Prosper* is *tsaleach* - to push forward. The name of God is again invoked by Ahab’s prophets in a concerted effort to project themselves as prophets of Yahweh.

THE PROPHECY OF MICAIAH – 2 Chron. 18:12-27

V.12 - **“with one assent”** - Roth. - “with one mouth”. Ahab’s servants primed Micaiah in an attempt to solicit his cooperation and avoid disturbing the fledgling alliance with Jehoshaphat.

V.13 - **“As the LORD liveth”** - This emphasised the real difference between Micaiah and the 400. His words would be as Yahweh gave them. He was inflexible on this point. He was sensitive to the Divine presence, therefore his actions were predicated upon that fact and not on human demands for political convenience. Ahab had reason to hate him!

V.14 - **“And he said, Go ye up, and prosper”** - Micaiah repeats the words of the prophets but with such sarcasm in his voice that everyone knew he meant the opposite. His cynicism was expected by Ahab who had experienced it before.

V.15 - **“How many times shall I adjure thee”** - So this had not been the first time Micaiah had used this method. It reveals that Ahab had been wrestling with God’s prophet for a long time yet he had never fully responded. Only Elijah’s condemnation in Naboth’s vineyard had shaken his steadfast obstinacy for a moment (1 Kings 21:27-29). This exchange shows that Ahab knew that the true prophecy belonged to Micaiah, not Zedekiah. He clung to the optimistic forecast nevertheless, even though it was only wishful thinking.

“the truth” - *emeth* - The Divine characteristic of faithfulness and stability (Exod.34:6). He always demanded the truth but never found it palatable. Ahab had reached a point where he expected, as a matter of course, that Yahweh’s views would contradict his own.

V. 16 - **“I did see all Israel scattered upon the mountains”** - Micaiah saw the whole army including Judah scattered in defeat without a leader. Ahab would be dead and Jehoshaphat so weakened and compromised that all he could do was return in shame to Jerusalem.

“as sheep that have no shepherd” – *Shepherd* is *ra’ah* - to tend a flock, i.e. to pasture it; to rule. Jehoshaphat the great shepherd of Judah would lose that distinction because of compromise.

“and the LORD said, These have no master” - *Master* is *adon* - ruler, controller.

“let them return...every man in peace” - To return in peace is a strange sequel to a lost war, but God was going to give Jehoshaphat a chance to recover himself. The phrase is used of Jehoshaphat’s return to Jerusalem after his defeat (19:1).

V.17 - **“Did not I tell thee”** - Ahab impatiently reminds Jehoshaphat that such a prophecy was to be expected from Micaiah. It is difficult to conceive that some alarm bells would not now be ringing in Jehoshaphat’s mind! But the prophet was not finished.

V.18 - **“I saw the LORD sitting upon his throne”** - The graphic depiction of Yahweh enthroned gloriously in his habitation and surrounded by his angels with whom He is discussing this very incident is one of the most astounding revelations of arrangements in heaven presented anywhere in scripture. Its appearance here is evidence of the extraordinary lengths that God went to in the hope of extracting Jehoshaphat from this predicament. The scene is of the Almighty in complete control of all things as men proceed

with their plans unconscious of His unseen hand. Surely Jehoshaphat would identify with this and deliver himself?

V.19 - **“Who shall entice Ahab”** - *Entice* is *pathah* - to delude, seduce. The result was inevitable. Ahab would believe man’s word. All that needed to be decided was the method by which this would be accomplished. The angels’ participation in deciding what should be done is a delightful insight into Divine methods in making the work of the heavenly host interesting and challenging despite their access to overwhelming power. Much is indicated in this for the saints who will become the ‘angels’ of the future age (Luke 20:36; Heb. 2:5).

V.20 - **“Then there came out a spirit”** – *Spirit* is *ruach* - God’s angels were made spirits [ruach] (Psa. 104:4; Heb. 1:7,14). The term is virtually synonymous with creative power.

“wherewith” – The RSV has, “by what means”.

V.21 - **“and be a lying spirit”** – *Lying* is *sheqer* - untruth; by implication, a sham; from the root, to cheat, be untrue. Roth. translates: “a spirit of falsehood”. God through the angel would providentially influence Ahab’s prophets to vehemently contend for him to go up to war.

“thou shalt also prevail” - God would be working in two ways: indirectly, but very surely through Ahab’s prophets; and directly through Micaiah. He knew the result. Ahab would reject Micaiah’s words as he always had done. But what about Jehoshaphat who had called for Micaiah? Would he heed the warning? Sadly, no! He was in too deep. There are times when God is unable to persuade His servants to abandon a project that is clearly doomed to failure, and the only way out is via a very painful lesson.

V.24 - **“when thou shalt go into an inner chamber to hide thyself”** - Roth. - “a chamber within a chamber”. Zedekiah would seek refuge from one room to another in shame and fear when disaster struck at Ramoth-Gilead. Only then would he be impressed with the reality of things.

V.25 - **“Amon the governor of the city”** - Amon means “skilled builder” or “architect”. *Governor* is *sar* - a head person.

“Joash the king’s son” - His name means “Yahweh-fired”. Presumably he was a younger son of Ahab than his two successors Ahaziah and Jehoram. Micaiah was to be given ‘special’ treatment to ensure he would cause no further trouble for the alliance.

V.26 - **“Put this fellow”** - The word *fellow* (italics) can be deleted. Then Ahab’s contempt and hatred for Micaiah becomes clearer.

“bread....water of affliction” - *Affliction* is *lachats* - to press, i.e. to distress. Roth. has “oppression.” RSV - “scant fare.” Micaiah was to be harshly treated.

“until I return in peace” - Typically, Ahab boldly declares his defiance of Micaiah’s prophecy (V.16). Ahab himself was excluded from those who would return in peace (V.27).

V.27 - **“Hearken, all ye people”** - Yng. - “Hear ye, O peoples, all of them.” Micaiah reiterates verse 6 and calls upon all to take notice. There is a remarkable similarity with the prophet Micah’s (the name is the same as Micaiah in Hebrew) call to Israel many years

later (Mic. 1:2). This is the only other place the phrase occurs. Significantly the theme of Micah's prophecy is the Shepherd of Israel (cp. 2 Chron. 18:16).

THE DISASTROUS CAMPAIGN AT RAMOTH-GILEAD – 2 Chron. 18:28-34

V.28 - **“So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat...went up”** - This simple statement reveals a significant shift in Jehoshaphat's thinking. That he could persist with this alliance in the face of the jarring events in the gate of Samaria shows that he had suppressed his better judgement against all the indications of impending disaster. It illustrates the very real dangers of policy decisions that involve compromise of previously firm positions which have been Divinely blessed. “If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” (Psa. 11:3).

V.29 - **“I will disguise myself...but put thou on thy robes”** - Ahab chooses a *disguise* (*chaphas* - to conceal oneself) while enrobing Jehoshaphat as king of the allied army. In fact the Septuagint translates this passage: “Disguise me, and I will enter the battle and do thou put on my raiment.” Contextual support exists for this translation in the fact that Jehoshaphat was indeed mistaken for Ahab (V.31). This was Ahab's plan to escape the consequences of Micaiah's prophecy. He would be disguised as an ordinary soldier while Jehoshaphat would substitute for him as king. The amazing thing is that Jehoshaphat agreed to become “the king of Israel” and as a consequence the target of Ben-hadad's concerted campaign to eliminate Ahab. This illustrates the power of Ahab's seduction and the extent of Jehoshaphat's temporary blindness.

V.30 - **“Fight ye...only with the king of Israel”** - The king of Syria had only one deadly purpose in this conflict. He wanted the life of the king of Israel. It is almost certain that this is the same Ben-hadad whose life Ahab had spared in their previous battle. This situation is very instructive about human nature. Instead of honouring Ahab as he had promised (1 Kings 20:34), Ben-hadad now sought to destroy him. So much for the ‘gratitude’ of a deceitful heart. The flesh is relentless, it shows no mercy and should be given no quarter. Now Ahab was to pay the price of his perfidy and die in Ben-hadad's stead in fulfilment of the prophecy of 1 Kings 20:42.

V.31 - **“they compassed about him”** - The word *compassed* is *cabab* - to revolve, surround or border. Jehoshaphat, dressed as king of Israel in Ahab's royal robes found himself caught in the vortex of a whirlpool of hostile Syrians all anxiously seeking to be the hero that killed ‘Ahab’ the king of Israel according to Ben-hadad's command.

“Jehoshaphat cried out” – *Cried out* is *za'aq* - to shriek, from anguish or danger. This is a special cry for help from Yahweh made out of anguish and despair. It is used of Israel in Egypt; throughout the book of Judges; of David in Adullam; and occurs in Kings and Chronicles five times [1 Chron. 5:20; 1 Kings 22:32 (parallel); 2 Chron. 18:31; 20:9; 32:20]. The usage in 2 Chron. 20:9 reveals Jehoshaphat's deep sense of trust in Yahweh. So now in these alarming and menacing circumstances the real Jehoshaphat is revealed.

“God moved them from him” - The word *moved* is of the utmost significance. It is *cuwth* - to prick, to stimulate; and is an obvious connection with verse 2 where the same word is used of Ahab's ‘persuasion’ of Jehoshaphat to go with him to war. Reaping now the consequences of that seduction and entrapped as ‘the king of Israel’ it is God who reverses Ahab's work and recovers Jehoshaphat from imminent disaster.

V.33 - **“And a certain man drew a bow at a venture”** - The word *venture* is *tome* signifying completeness, and by extension, innocence. It is translated “integrity” 10 times, “uprightness” 6 times, and “simplicity” once. The plural form is translated “thummim” 5 times. God’s unerring judgement, in what is almost a cameo in a military setting of the judgement of Urim and Thummim in the breastplate of the high-priest, is about to fall on Ahab, executed unwittingly by a Syrian bowman.

“between the joints of the harness” - *Joints* is *debeq* - a joint and is used only in Kings and Isa. 41:7 where it is rendered “soldering”, i.e. the solder or metallic substance used in melted form to hold metals together. Thus the RSV translates, “between the scale armour”; Roth. - “shoulder joints”; and Yng. - “joinings”. Thus it refers to the weaker join around the shoulder and arm-pit area of a coat of mail. The word for *harness* is *shir-yahn* and refers to the breastplate of mail armour worn from a girdle around the waist up to the neck. The only other occurrence of the word is in Isa. 59:17 where it is translated “breastplate” by the RSV, and “coat of mail” by both Yng. and Rotherham. Ahab was therefore struck in the upper chest through the shoulder joint around an arm-pit. While the military breastplate here is not to be confused with the breastplate of the high-priest (Exod. 28:30), there are clearly echoes of Divine judgement meted out by Yahweh himself.

“Turn thine hand” - Ahab orders his chariot driver to manoeuvre his chariot out of the front line so that his wound can be treated, but it was impossible to escape because of the intensity of the fray (1 Kings 22:35). He was compelled to prop himself up in the chariot and remain in the battle.

“wounded” - *chalah* - weak, sick. In this form the word is only found in the parallel record and 2 Chron. 35:23 where the death of Josiah by an arrow wound is recorded.

V.34 - **“the battle increased that day”** - *Increased* is *alah* - to ascend, mount. RSV: “the battle grew hot”. There was no chance for Ahab to retire, remove his armour and dress the wound.

“stayed himself up in his chariot” - *Stayed* is *amad* - to stand. RSV - “Propped himself up in the chariot facing the Syrians until evening, then at sunset he died”. Ahab lived for some hours and consequently died from a heavy loss of blood which could not be staunches because he was caught in the battle. This is indicated by the companion account in 1 Kings 22:35.

THE DEATH OF AHAB – 1 Kings 22:35-40

V.35 - **“and the blood ran out of the wound”** - *Ran* is *yatsaq* - to pour out. RSV - “flowed”.

“into the midst of the chariot” - The RSV translates the word “midst” as “bottom”, and Roth. has: “into the hollow of the chariot.”

V.36 - **“a proclamation....about the going down of the sun”** - At the time of Ahab’s death a *proclamation* (*rinnah* - a creaking or shrill sound, i.e. a shout) was made throughout the host ordering withdrawal. The significance here is the absence of Jehoshaphat in ordering the retreat in fulfilment of Micaiah’s prophecy that “all Israel” would be scattered without a shepherd (2 Chron. 18:16). Ahab was dead and Jehoshaphat was nowhere to be seen.

V.38 - **“one washed his chariot in the pool of Samaria”** - The word *pool* is *berekah* - a reservoir. It seems to have been more than a well and was perhaps outside of the walls of Samaria. This seemingly needless detail is recorded for a special reason.

“the dogs licked up his blood” - The dogs licking the congealed blood of Ahab was a necessary, but only partial, fulfilment of Elijah’s prophecy in 1Kings 21:19.

“washed his armour” - The word for *armour* has been mistranslated. It is *zonowth* signifying harlots. The word has been confused by translators with *zuwn* meaning equipment, but is in fact the plural of *zanah* - to commit adultery (highly fed and therefore wanton). Roth. translates: “also the harlots bathed there”, and the RSV has: “And the harlots washed themselves in it”. This was truly a fitting end for a man whose ‘whoredoms’ had filled the land with Jezebel’s priestesses (Rev. 2:20). These ritual priestesses who presided over ‘worship’ in the temple of Baal washed their filthy bodies in this very pool.

“according unto the word of the LORD” - It had taken 3 years, but finally the Divine edicts against Ahab had been fulfilled (1 Kings 20:42; 21:19).

V.39 - **“the rest of the acts”** - The scriptural record does not describe in detail Ahab’s architectural and structural achievements which are legendary among archaeologists. It is concerned only with amplifying the reason for the Divine summary of this man: “There was none like Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness” (1 Kings 21:25).

“the ivory house” - The word *ivory*, *shen* of course refers to the ‘tooth’, or tusks of elephants. Ahab’s palace was resplendent with carved ivory and was the envy of his times.

“all the cities that he built” - Like Omri, Ahab was industrious in character and an enthusiastic builder. All the evidence is that he was dedicated and determined to succeed in whatever he pursued. Such a man had enormous potential for good but instead gained the ‘distinction’ of being Israel’s worst king because his enterprise was in the wrong direction. Together with Jezebel, an even more determined and strong willed individual, he managed to introduce an apostasy in Israel that prefigured the rise of the Roman Catholic harlot system out of the First Century ecclesia (Rev. 2:20).

JEHOSHAPHAT -

The Enigmatic Educator

(JUDAH)

HEBREW - “Yahweh is judge.” From a root word meaning to judge (hence, vindicate). Therefore by extension the name can mean “Yahweh is vindicated”.

FIRST MENTION - 1 Kings 15:24 **LAST MENTION** - 2 Chron. 22:9

AGE AT ACCESSION - 35 **LENGTH OF REIGN** - 25 years 871-847 BC

MOTHER - Azubah - Heb. “Desertion”. Daughter of Shilhi - “armed” (1 Kings 22:42; 2 Chron. 20:31).

CONTEMPORARY KINGS - Ahab 874-853 BC; Ahaziah 853-852 BC; Jehoram 852-841 BC.

NOTE - The only record of Jehoshaphat’s reign in Kings is in connection with Ahab of Israel (1 Kings 22). A full history is supplied in Chronicles (2 Chron. 17-20). For notes on Jehoshaphat’s alliance with Ahab refer to the chapter on Ahab.

SUMMARY OF CHARACTER

Jehoshaphat stands in the annals of Israel’s history as one of its finest rulers. Few kings ever rose to the heights attained by Jehoshaphat, and few experienced his success and acclaim. He excelled in the leadership of men and was unsurpassed as an organiser and educator of the people in Divine things, for which he was mightily blessed. Under his leadership and guidance Judah became a powerful and prosperous nation greatly feared by their neighbours. And yet Jehoshaphat was an enigma! He must be held responsible for initiating a marriage alliance with the house of Ahab that brought Judah to the brink of total disaster. The trouble which his persistent attempts to confederate with Israel brought on Judah during his reign and after his death leave a dark shadow on an otherwise remarkable life.

Jehoshaphat was a zealous man with clear and positive objectives for his kingdom. He proved to be a wise king who saw the need to educate **all** his people in the things of God so as to fortify them against the gentile evils that had been introduced into Israel. But strangely, when he had reached the zenith of his power, he reversed his policy of separation from Israel and chose to ignore the dangers of an alliance with the house of Ahab. By contracting a marriage alliance with Ahab he introduced into Judah the corrupt offspring of Ahab and Jezebel, apparently not aware that “a little leaven, leaveneth the whole lump.” He was also a powerful military warrior who sought and received Divine help, but was seemingly unaware that both his military power and Divine help would leave him when he made an alliance with God’s enemies.

There were two distinct phases in the life of Jehoshaphat as there was in the life of Asa his father. The record presents these in an interesting way in the early verses of 2 Chronicles 17 and 18. In the former, the language employed is of a man ascending to great heights through a policy of separation from apostate Israel, strong defence at home, and instruction of the people in spiritual things. In the latter the emphasis is upon descent (“Jehoshaphat

went down”) through a policy of integration with Ahab’s house and alliance with Israel’s military forces. The record of 2 Chronicles 17 is a dynamic account of the multiplying success of a man ‘soaring’ to great heights in the truth through complete trust in Yahweh. His dramatic rise was coupled with a sensitivity to the dangers of the world about him and the need to fortify the ecclesia against those dangers by the spiritual education of every member. The latter phase of his reign saw a complete change of policy and is marked by a gradual decline through his marriage alliance with the house of Ahab that eventually culminated in Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, seizing control of Judah.

On no less than three occasions did Jehoshaphat seek to confederate with Israel in military and trading ventures and each occasion was a disaster for Judah. Only the intervention of God through Elisha prevented the third alliance from becoming a total disaster. The great lesson of Jehoshaphat’s life is that compromise with error and idolatry inevitably leads to disaster regardless of reputation or strength. The key to success is found in the example of Jehoshaphat’s early years.

In summary, Jehoshaphat as an individual was a righteous and dedicated servant of God who walked uprightly all his days and left a rare example for subsequent leaders of Judah. Without doubt the single most important feature of his reign was the diligent and thorough manner in which he sought to educate the ecclesia in spiritual things. Had he refused to dabble with Israel while it was ruled by idolaters the record of his achievements would have been unique. Instead having brought Judah to its greatest strength he also unwittingly sowed the seeds of its collapse.

Elijah’s estimation of Jehoshaphat in 2 Chron. 21:12 is worth noting as a final epitaph of a great man.

HARMONY OF THE RECORDS OF JEHOSEPHATH’S REIGN	1 Kings	2 Chron.
Accession at age 35	22:41-42	17:1
Consolidates his kingdom and is blessed	22:46	17:1-6
Commences a campaign of education		17:7-9
Given peace and is celebrated		17:10-11
Organises the defences of the nation		17:12-19
Makes a fatal alliance with Ahab	22:1-4	
18:1-3		
Rejects Ahab’s prophets and embarrasses him	22:5-14	18:4-11
Seeks a prophet of Yahweh - Micaiah called	22:13-14	18:12-13
The prophecy of Micaiah	22:15-28	18:14-27
Goes into battle with Ahab at Ramoth-Gilead	22:29-36	18:28-34
Returns defeated to Jerusalem in peace		19:1
Jehu reproves him for his foolish alliance		19:2-3
He institutes a revival throughout Judah		19:4
Appoints judges in every city		19:5-7
Instructs the priests and Levites		19:8-11
A threat of war from Moab and Ammon		20:1-4
His prayer for help before the people		20:5-13
Yahweh’s answer through Jahaziel		20:14-19
He leads Judah into battle		20:20-21

Victory from Yahweh - great spoil taken		20:22-25
He leads Judah in praise of their God		20:26-30
A foolish alliance with Ahaziah	22:48-49	20:35-37
Alliance with Jehoram and Edom	(2 Kings 3:6-12)	
Dies aged 60	22:50	21:1
Final summary and Divine estimation	22:43-45	20:31-34

VERSE BY VERSE NOTES

CONSOLIDATION OF THE KINGDOM – 2 Chron. 17:1-6

V.1 - “**and strengthened himself against Israel**” - *Strengthened* is *chazaq* - to fasten upon, seize, to be strong. *Against* is *al* - above, upon, over; from a root *alah* signifying to ascend (to be high), to mount. Jehoshaphat strengthened himself to rise above Israel and its ways. This was a positive approach which met with immediate and enormous success.

V.2 - “**and set garrisons**” - *Garrisons* is *netsiyb* - something stationary, i.e. a military post. The word is used of Lot’s wife (“pillar”) in Gen. 19:26 and of David’s garrisons in the land. Cities in Judah and the captured cities of Israel were fortified by Jehoshaphat. This was a sound policy because Ahab was king in Israel at this time and was actively promoting his new found religion.

V.3 - “**And the LORD was with Jehoshaphat**” - Rotherham prefaces this phrase with, “And it came to pass that...”. This was a realisation of the principle of 2 Chron. 15:2. The Divine blessings which follow are directly connected with Jehoshaphat’s actions in verses 1 & 2.

“**the first ways of his father David**” - Some texts read differently; e.g. RSV - “earlier ways of his father (Asa).” However the margin of the AV is probably correct; “of his father and of David”. The early days of Asa were exemplary and Jehoshaphat followed his example (2 Chron. 14:2-8). He also modelled himself on David.

“**and sought not unto Baalim**” - This does not suggest that Asa did, but directs attention to what was happening in Israel as Ahab assiduously promoted Baal worship. The proof of this is in verse 4 in the parallel phrase: “and not after the doings of Israel”.

V.4 - “**sought**” - *darash* - to tread, frequent (to follow). The stark contrast with Israel is emphasised deliberately. Yahweh is jealous over His truth and blessed Jehoshaphat because of his jealousy for Divine things (James 4:5).

V.5 - “**therefore the LORD established the kingdom in his hand**” - There is cause and effect here. Jehoshaphat had set about establishing the kingdom and consolidating its foundations, but God made it sure in his hands. The secret lay in his cooperation with Divine guidance. Like his father Asa he acted in accordance with the principles of truth and Yahweh helped him.

“**Judah brought to Jehoshaphat presents**” - The term *presents* (*minchah* - tribute) refers to tokens of acknowledgment. Here is an unusual phenomenon. Subjects normally expect to be given something by their ruler, but here the people of Judah out of appreciation and respect for their king and his ways bring him “tribute”.

“**and he had riches and honour in abundance**” - Asa had used his wealth to buy help from Ben-hadad against Baasha (16:2) but Jehoshaphat reached great heights of wealth and honour by turning to Yahweh alone. Jehoshaphat had learnt from the failure of his father.

V.6 - “**his heart was lifted up in the ways of the LORD**” - *Lifted up* is *gabahh* meaning to soar, to be lofty. Roth. translates: “his heart was encouraged.” The RSV has: “was courageous.” His heart was not lifted up in pride, despite his success, but rather soared in the strength and courage that alone can come from God (Prov. 28:1).

“**he took away the high places**” - Other records such as 2 Chron. 20:33 and 1 Kings 22:43 seem to indicate the opposite. Quite probably like Asa he completely curtailed activity at the high places and probably destroyed many, but did not entirely remove them physically out of Judah.

“**and groves**” - *asherim* (see previous notes). This was the abominable idolatry associated with Astarte and Aphrodite.

THE CAMPAIGN OF EDUCATION – 2 Chron. 17:7-9

V.7 - “**in the third year**” - The third year of Jehoshaphat was Ahab’s 6th year.

“**princes**” - *sar* - a head person. Roth. - “rulers.” He selected five to supervise the campaign of education throughout the land. It was a campaign of ‘grace’. Their names were: **Benhail** - “son of might”; **Obadiah** - “serving Yahweh”; **Zechariah** - “Yah has remembered”; **Nethaneel** - “given of El”; **Michaiah** - “who is like Yah”.

“**to teach in the cities of Judah**” - *Teach* is *lamad* - to goad, i.e. to teach. The king himself had gone through this process of instruction as he wrote out the Law of God and knew by personal experience its value (Deut. 17:19; Ecc. 12:11).

TEACHING - ITS IMPORTANCE IN THE SCRIPTURES

- Deut. 4:10; 5:1; 31:9-13 - Israel’s continuance as a nation was dependent upon the education of its people in Divine things.
- Isa. 1:16-17 - Repression of evil is only successfully achieved by education in Divine principles, i.e. by overcoming evil with good (Rom. 12:21).
- Ezra 7:10; Mal. 2:7 - The true purpose of the priests and the Levites was to teach the Law and its principles to the nation.
- Psa. 25:4-10 - Spiritual education is the only pathway to salvation.
- Col. 1:9-10; Rom. 12:2; John 15:3; 17:17 - Teaching is fundamental to the renewing of the mind and sanctification before God.

V.8 - “**he sent Levites**” - The name Levi means attached; from a primary root, to twine, i.e. to unite, to remain. Their purpose was revealed in their name. By teaching they were to unite God’s people to Him (John 15:3-7). There were nine Levites selected for the task of assisting the work of education. Their names were: “**Shemaiah**” - “Yah has heard”. **Nethaniah** - “Given of Yah”. **Zebadiah** - “Yah has given”. **Asahel** - “El has made”. **Shemiramoth** - “Name of heights”. **Jehonathan** - “Yahweh given”. **Adonijah** - “Yahweh is my Lord”. **Tobijah** - “Goodness of Yahweh”. **Tob-Adonijah** - “Pleasing to Yahweh my ruler”. With them he sent two teaching priests named: **Elishama** - “El of hearing” or

“Whom El hears” (Oxford) and **Jehoram** - “Yahweh raised” or “Yahweh is high” (Oxford).

V.9 - **“they taught in Judah”** - **Taught** is *lamad* - goad (as in V.7). A well organised and thorough campaign of education was begun throughout all Judah. Jehoshaphat was intent on spiritually educating all his subjects. This was tragically rare during the days of the kings.

A TIME OF PEACE – 2 Chron. 17:10-11

V.10 - **“fear...fell upon all the kingdoms...so that they made no war”** - The nations around Judah sued for peace with Jehoshaphat, and even offered tribute (V.11), because of God’s intervention. Compare the blessing of peace granted to his father Asa (2 Chron. 14:6). The principle of operation is that of Prov. 16:7: “When a man’s ways please Yahweh, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.”

JUDAH ORGANISED AND STRENGTHENED – 2 Chron. 17:12-19

V.12 - **“Jehoshaphat waxed great exceedingly”** - **Waxed** is *halak* - to walk. **Great** is *gadel* - large. **Exceedingly** is *maal* - the upper part; upward, above, overhead, from the top. Literally, this phrase could be rendered, “Jehoshaphat walked exceedingly upward.” The repeated use of words and phrases that speak of rising high and soaring aloft in the things of God are too prominent to be ignored. It is a record of multiplying blessings from God.

“castles” - *biyraniyth* - a fortress; from a root meaning a palace. Jehoshaphat adopted the wise policy of building cities of defence combined with store-cities throughout Judah, even though it was a time of peace.

V.13 - **“he had much business”** - **Business** is *melakah* - deputyship, i.e. ministry. The term refers to men employed by the king to promote the nation’s economic interests.

V.14 - **“Adna the chief”** - His name means “Pleasure” from a primary root - to be soft or pleasant. **Chief** is *sar* - a head person. It was a pleasure to serve in Judah’s army in the days of Jehoshaphat. Its numbers swelled to 1,160,000, the largest army since the days of David.

V.15 - **“next to him was Jehohanan the captain”** - Roth. - “under his direction.” Jehohanan (“Yahweh favoured”) was next in rank to Adna but the word *sar* is also used for “captain”.

V.16 - **“Amasiah”** - “Yah has loaded”. This man was ‘loaded’ with responsibility because of his ‘memorable’ spontaneity in serving his God.

“Zichri” - “Memorable”. See 2 Chron. 23:1 for mention of another member of this family.

“who willingly offered himself unto the LORD” - **Willingly** is *nadab* - to impel; hence to volunteer (as a soldier); to present spontaneously. **Offered** is *zabach* - to slaughter (sacrifice). This man was an example of ‘a living sacrifice’ (Rom. 12:1).

V.17 - **“Eliada a mighty man of valour”** - His name means “God is knowing.” Roth. translates the latter phrase: “a hero of valour.”

V.18 - **“Jehozabad”** - “Yahweh endowed”.

“ready prepared for the war” - **Prepared** is *chalats* - to equip. Tragically when the war came it was the wrong one, or at least with the wrong allies that it was fought.

JEHOSHAPHAT'S ARMY		COMPARE	
Adna	300,000	Rehoboam	180,000
Jehohanan	280,000	Abijah	400,000
Amasiah	200,000	Asa	580,000
Eliada	200,000	Ahab	"2 little flocks of goats"
Jehozabad	<u>180,000</u>		
	1,160,000		

V.19 - **"beside those....throughout all Judah"** - Many other soldiers were dispersed throughout the cities of Judah. Therefore the army was considerably larger than 1,160,000. The ecclesia was ready to fight the battles of the Truth. But all this preparation and strength was of no purpose in the end. When the war came, the army was shattered; the tragic result of Jehoshaphat's compromise with Ahab.

Refer to the section entitled "Ahab and Jehoshaphat" in the chapter on Ahab which deal with the alliance recorded in 2 Chron. 18.

JEHOSHAPHAT REPROVED, REFORMS JUDAH- 2 Chron. 19:1-11

V.1 - **"returned to his house in peace"** - These are the exact words used in Micaiah's prophecy (2 Chron. 18:16). Israel had no shepherd, and Judah's great teacher had been severely embarrassed and weakened as a result of the disaster at Ramoth-Gilead. God now gave Jehoshaphat a brief period of peace to recover himself and rebuild his wounded nation.

"to Jerusalem" - This is where Jehoshaphat belonged; not in the gate of Samaria (18:9). This fact is again emphasised in verse 4.

V.2 - **"Jehu the son of Hanani"** - Jehu means "Yah is he" and Hanani "gracious". This same prophet had appeared in the record approximately 40 years earlier when he condemned the house of Baasha (1 Kings 16:1). He also recorded the history of Jehoshaphat's reign (2 Chron. 20:34). His father Hanani had rebuked Asa for putting his trust in Ben-hadad (2 Chron. 16:7). It was fitting that God dealt with Jehoshaphat through a prophet named Jehu to bring reformation to his house, and with Ahab's house by another Jehu to its destruction.

"went out to meet him" - Mercy is displayed to Jehoshaphat as the prophet representing Yahweh "went out" to confront him immediately on his return from Ramoth-Gilead. The aim was to recover Jehoshaphat from the effects of his compromise with Ahab.

"shouldest thou help the ungodly" - The word *ungodly* is *rasha* - morally wrong, actively bad. This is clearly a rebuke for his change of policy from that of 2 Chron. 17:1-3. He may have desired to help Israel return to Yahweh, but instead he and his family were entangled in their evil ways.

“love them that hate the LORD” - *Love* is *ahab* a primary root meaning to have affection for. *Hate* is *sane* - to hate personally. Ahab used it in 2 Chron. 18:7 referring to Michaiah.

“therefore is wrath upon thee” - The operative principle here is that of James 4:4. To support those who have repudiated God is to become like them in His eyes.

V.3 - **“found”** - *matsa* - to come forth, i.e. appear or exist. There were many good things in Jehoshaphat with which God could work if he was prepared to make a new start.

“thou hast taken away the groves” - Refers to the purge of 2 Chron. 17:6.

“prepared thine heart to seek God” - *Prepared* is *kuwn* - to be erect, (i.e. stand perpendicular), to set up, fix, establish; while the word *seek* (*darash* - to follow, tread or frequent) had been used of Jehoshaphat previously in 2 Chron. 17:4.

V.4 - **“dwelt at Jerusalem”** - The record seems at pains to emphasise this point (see note V.1).

“he went out again” - Roth. - “and he again went forth”. Jehoshaphat resumes his campaign of education to bring his scattered and disillusioned people back to their God.

“Beersheba to Mt. Ephraim” - He travelled from the “well of an oath” in the south to the mountain of “double fruit” in the north. This covered the entire area of his kingdom and was clearly a reinstitution of the campaign of 2 Chron. 17:7-9. This positive approach following rebuke was a sign of true repentance in sharp contrast to Asa his father (2 Chron. 16:10).

“and brought them back unto the LORD God of their fathers” - Implicit in this statement is a hint that the period leading up to and during Jehoshaphat’s alliance with Ahab was one in which his reformation was relaxed. The disaster at Ramoth-Gilead saw the nation in disarray and confusion. Jehoshaphat makes a new start by vigorously taking up his work of education and restoration. Such a renewal was needful in view of the later comment in 2 Chron. 20:33 that the people had not fully prepared their hearts before God.

V.5 - **“And he set judges in the land”** - *Judges* is *shaphat* - to judge, to pronounce sentence, vindicate. To consolidate his renewed reforms he appointed judges to administer the principles of the Law of Moses “city by city” to ensure a comprehensive dissemination of justice throughout all Judah (Deut. 16:18).

V.6 - **“Take heed what you do”** - *Take heed* is *ra’ah* - to watch, to see. RSV has “consider”. Roth. translates: “See what ye are doing”. Jehoshaphat is careful to instruct his appointed judges that their work was for God not him. They judged “not for man but for Yahweh” and He would be with them in the work. They needed to ‘observe’ this fact. He reminded them of the principles laid down by Moses (Deut. 1:16-17). There is something of a play on Jehoshaphat’s name in this. It means “Yahweh is judge”.

“who is with you in the judgement” - *Judgement* does service here for two words in the Hebrew - *dabar* - a word; matter; and *mishpat* – verdict, sentence. Roth. – “who will be with you in the word of justice”. RSV - “he is with you in giving judgement.” This fact imposes a great responsibility upon judges (cp. 2 Sam. 16:23; 1 Peter 4:11) and must be remembered by anyone acting on God’s behalf (Isa. 1:17).

V.7 - “**let the fear of the LORD be upon you**” - *Fear* is *pachad* - a sudden alarm; from the root, to be startled. See its use in 2 Chron. 17:10. The word is always used in the sense of dread and terror and not normally of reverence.

“**take heed and do it**” - The word for *take heed* (*shamar* - to hedge about, i.e. guard, to protect) is used extensively throughout the Law translated “keep” and “observe” (cp. Deut. 17:19 - There may be a reference to the ideas contained in “The Law of the King” who was to “keep and do it”).

“**for there is no iniquity with the LORD**” - *Iniquity* is *avlah* - evil; to distort. This fact is so obvious and well attested (Deut. 32:4; Psa. 92:15) that it hardly seems necessary to state it, but it reveals how determined Jehoshaphat was to establish justice in the land.

“**nor respect of persons**” - *Respect* is *masso* signifying partiality (as in lifting up) and is the only occurrence of this word. *Persons* is *pane*h - the face (as the part that turns), so Yng. translates: “an acceptance of faces.”

“**nor taking of gifts**” - *Taking* is *miqqach* - reception. *Gifts* is *shachad* - a donation; from a root to bribe (Ex. 23:8; Deut. 16:19; Prov. 17:23; 18:16; 21:14; Ecc.7:7). Jehoshaphat was very sensitive to these principles at this time. His own ‘acceptance of faces’ and taking of Ahab’s gifts had skewed his judgement in the gate of Samaria (18:2).

V.8 - “**Jehoshaphat set of the Levites**” - He *set* (*amad* - caused to stand) the Levites in their proper role to teach and administer the Law (cp. 2 Chron. 17:8).

“**of the chief of the fathers of Israel**” - RSV - “heads of the families of Israel”, i.e. the chief of each tribe who were to support the Levites in the work of judgement.

“**for controversies**” - *riyb* - a contest; from a root to toss, wrangle, grapple. Roth. - “to settle disputes”.

“**when they returned to Jerusalem**” - i.e. when they had completed their task in the country and returned they did not cease their work but continued it in Jerusalem.

V.9 - “**and he charged them**” - *Charged* is *tsavah* - to constitute, enjoin.

“**in the fear of the LORD, faithfully, and with a perfect heart**” - *Fear* is *yirah* - fear, reverence. *Faithfully* is *emunah* - firmness; fig. security, trustworthy. *Perfect* is *shalem* - complete; to be safe (see note 2 Chron. 15:17).

V.10 - “**ye shall even warn them**” - *Warn* is *zahar* - a prim. root signifying to gleam, hence to enlighten. It is used in the future tense in Dan. 12:3 in the context of reward for faithful teachers. The word is used 22 times in the O.T. and occurs 12 times in Ezek.3 & 33 where the context is “watchmen” and their responsibilities.

“**and so wrath come upon you**” - Jehoshaphat had experienced this (verse 2) because of his foolish alliance with Ahab. This underlines the lesson that a heavy responsibility rests on teachers and leaders (Heb. 13:17; James 2:1).

“**this do and ye shall not trespass**” - Roth. - “Thus shall ye act and not incur guilt.”

V.11 - “**Amariah the chief priest**” - *Amariah* means “Yah has said”, i.e. promised. The high-priest was to be assisted by Zebadiah (“Yah has given”) the son of Ishmael (“God will hear”) who was “*ruler* (*nagid* - a commander) of the house of Judah.”

“for all the king’s matters” - There was complete organisation both in religious and civil matters.

“the Levites shall be officers” – *Officers* is *shoter* - to write, a scribe; by imp. a superintendent.

“deal courageously” - *Deal* is *asah* - to do, act. *Courageously* is the word *chazaq* - be strong, courageous. Roth. translates this passage: “be strong and act, and Yahweh be with the good.” There is plainly seen in all this effort a reversion to Jehoshaphat’s policies of 2 Chron. 17:1-3, and even a significant upgrading of them.

THE THREAT FROM MOAB AND AMMON – 2 Chron. 20:1-4

V.1 - **“the children of Moab and the children of Ammon”** - The news of Judah’s defeat at Ramoth-Gilead emboldened previously submissive nations to rise against Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. 17:10-11). This confederacy of peoples were related to Israel through their origin in Lot (Gen. 19:36-38). Israel were commanded to leave alone when they drew near to the land of Canaan under Moses (Deut. 2:4-5,9,19). Moab and Ammon invited Edom (Seir, verses 10 & 22) to join them in this campaign against their ‘brother’. Jehoshaphat was to make much of the fact that God had not allowed Israel to invade these nations on their way into the land in his prayer seeking Divine help (verse 10).

V.2 - **“Hazazon-Tamar, which is in Engedi”** - *Hazazon-Tamar* which means “division of the palm tree” was on the western shore of the Dead Sea near the spring of Engedi (“fountain of a kid”). The menacing confederacy which were reported as “a great multitude” had advanced into the territory of Judah.

V.3 - **“Jehoshaphat feared”** – *Feared* is *yare* - to fear, revere. The word can mean to be frightened, and that is clearly its meaning here. The decimation of Judah’s well prepared military forces at Ramoth-Gilead found Jehoshaphat militarily unprepared but equal to the challenge because of his faith in God.

“and set himself to seek the LORD” - Roth. translates, “and set his face” to *seek* (*darash* - to follow, tread; cp. 2 Chron. 19:3) his God. This was characteristic of the man.

“and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah” - Fasts were normally proclaimed at times of national crisis, or to call the nation to collectively reflect upon their ways (Ezra 8:21; Joel 1:14; Jonah 3:5). The purpose of this fast was plain. What was urgently required was a national focus on prayer. Jehoshaphat had “set himself” to seek God; now his people needed to join him.

V.4 - **“Judah gathered themselves together to ask help of the LORD”** - This is a testimony to the success of Jehoshaphat’s work (chapter 19). He had instilled into the people a dependence upon their God so that they came as one to *seek* (*baqash* - to search out; to strive after) His help against the enemy.

JEHOSHAPHAT’S PRAYER FOR HELP – 2 Chron. 20:5-13

V.5 - **“Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation”** - The word for *congregation* is *qahal* meaning assembly and is the O.T. equivalent of ‘ecclesia’. The whole nation was there for this occasion; men, women, and children (V.13).

“**the new court**” - This new court was evidently one of his own projects in the Temple. Though the record is silent about his building projects he was doubtless very active in this area.

JEHOSHAPHAT’S PRAYER

Jehoshaphat’s prayer from verses 6 to 12 of this chapter is one of the great prayers of the Bible. It has a classic opening with its declaration of the power and sovereignty of Yahweh which was later duplicated with more brevity in the Lord’s prayer (Matt. 6:9-13). This acknowledgment of the power of God to rule irresistibly among the nations was fundamental to the situation Jehoshaphat now faced. In verse 7 he recalled the use of this power to remove the nations of Canaan so that Israel might inhabit the land God had promised to His “friend” (*ahab* - to have affection for) Abraham.

Then in verses 8 & 9 he drew attention to the Temple where the nation was now gathered and invoked Solomon’s prayer at the dedication of the Temple (2 Chron. 6:28-3), and God’s assurance to Solomon of help in times of “affliction” (*tsarah* - tightness) such as they now experienced (2 Chron. 7:12-16).

Having expressed their absolute dependence on God’s help Jehoshaphat then turned to the invaders “whom thou wouldst not let Israel invade” (V.10). Israel had obeyed the Divine edict (Deut. 2:4-5) when in a position of strength, but were now being rewarded evil when Moab and Ammon knew them to be weak (V.11). The real issue was whether God would allow these nations to cast His people out of what Jehoshaphat rightly termed “thy possession”. Here was a proper view of things which he was confident Yahweh would not ignore (cp. Psalms 83:12).

Jehoshaphat concludes this beautifully crafted and sincere prayer with a plaintive appeal for help against this unsought foe. His acknowledgment that “we have no might” (*kowach* - to be firm; vigour; lit. force) against this great company” was the final but most critical factor in his appeal. Though he then adds, “neither know we what to do”; but the fact is they were doing exactly what God would have them do: place their complete trust in Him to save. As Jehoshaphat expressed it in his final phrase: “our eyes are upon thee” (Psalms 123:1-2). It is impossible for God to ignore such a prayer. He may choose to answer it in various ways depending on the situation and the objectives to be achieved, but answer it He will.

V.13 - “**and all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives, and their children**” - This is a rare scene in the Scriptures. There had been a complete response from all of Judah to Jehoshaphat’s call. Families gathered as one to Jerusalem to seek Yahweh’s help in this time of great crisis. It was a marvellous testimony to the effects of Jehoshaphat’s national campaign of education and his renewed reformation after the disaster of Ramoth-Gilead.

GOD’S ANSWER TO JEHOSHAPHAT – 2 Chron. 20:14-19

V.14 - “**Then upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah**” - Here was God’s answer to Jehoshaphat’s prayer. The Spirit came upon Jahaziel (“Beheld of God”) the son of

Zechariah (“Yah hath remembered”) out of the midst of the great company gathered in the Temple courts. He was from the family of Asaph (“collector”) the Levite who had arranged the Temple services of song and praise in the days of David (1 Chron. 6:31,39; 15:16-17). This is why the genealogy of Jahaziel is given in such detail with the names of his forbears “Benaiah” (“Yah has built”), “Jeiel” (“carried away of God”), and “Mattaniah” (“gift of Yah”) tracing him back to Asaph. One notable thing about the sons of Asaph is the way ‘family’ names were carried on through successive generations (note 1 Chron. 9:15; 2 Chron. 29:13; 1 Chron. 16:4-6). They were a family dedicated to continuing the work of Asaph as leaders of song and praise in the Temple service. The Divine messenger was carefully selected, for praise to God in song was to play the major role in the following events leading to Judah’s deliverance.

V.15 - “**nor dismayed**” - *chathath* - to prostrate, hence to breakdown. It would be easy for faith to break down under the circumstances facing Judah at this time.

“**for the battle is not yours**” - This is what Jehoshaphat had asserted in his prayer and his confidence in that fact was to be vindicated (cp. 1 Sam. 17:47).

V.16 - “**To morrow go ye down against them**” - Divine help is offered but only on the basis of their preparedness to demonstrate their faith in God. They needed to act on that faith and go out against the enemy. This is the way God’s providence works in the lives of His saints.

“**cliff of Ziz**” - The *cliff* (*ma’alah* - an elevation or platform) of **Ziz** (“bloom”, glistening, i.e. a burnished plate) was an ascent or cleft leading up from the Dead Sea to the region of Tekoa (V.20) about 16 km (10 miles) south of Jerusalem.

“**ye shall find them at the end of the brook**” - This exact description of the position of the invaders was to indicate God’s complete control of events. They would locate them at the end of the *brook* (*nachal* - a stream in a valley or wadi) in the “wilderness of Jeruel (rounded of God).”

V.17 - “**Ye shall not need to fight....set yourselves**” - There are some curious paradoxes in this verse. They would not need to fight but had to *set* (*yatsab* - to place, to station) themselves in battle formation. Similarly they were told to:

“**stand ye still.....go out against them**” - This seeming paradox is the secret of Divine help and guidance. God can only work with those who actively cooperate with Him. He requires the manifestation of faith by action. Compare the similarities of the only other occurrence of the phrase “stand still and see the salvation of God” in Exod. 14:13-15. Israel in their distress ‘stood still’ but what God required of them was to “go forward” in faith!

V.18 - “**Jehoshaphat bowed his head...and all Judah...fell before the LORD, worshipping**” - This was a truly marvellous answer to Jehoshaphat’s prayer, and they acknowledged it by *worshipping* (*shachah* - to depress, i.e. prostrate) spontaneously in recognition of Yahweh’s greatness and mercy (cp. 2 Chron. 7:3). There are very few scenes that equal this one in the period of the kings. The people were overwhelmed with thankfulness and gratitude that flowed forth in unrestrained praise and songs of joy.

V.19 - **“And the Levites...of the children of the Korhites”** - The sons of Korah among the Levitical family of Kohath were prominent in the praises that were raised on this day, the events of which were indelibly impressed upon their minds and provided the source of many echoes in the psalms of the sons of Korah (cp. Ps. 42 to 48).

“with a loud voice on high” - RSV - “a very loud voice”. Roth. - “an exceeding loud voice”. Rarely were songs of praise ever sung as they were on this day, and yet the battle was not yet won! In this lay the key to victory - absolute confidence that salvation would come because the battle was Yahweh’s, not their own. Under these circumstances they could sing praise as though the victory was won.

JUDAH GOES TO BATTLE ARMED WITH PRAISE – 2 Chron. 20:20-21

V.20 - **“into the wilderness of Tekoa”** - *Tekoa* means “a trumpet” and was later the home of Amos the prophet (Amos 1:1). From Amos we learn that it was a place of shepherds who eked out an existence in the inhospitable wilderness (Amos 7:14-15).

“believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established” - Jehoshaphat’s exhortation to assembled Judah as they rose early the next day employs a play on words. The words *believe* and *established* are both *aman* a primary root signifying to build or support; in a figure, to render firm, to trust or believe. Yng. translates: “remain steadfast in Yahweh...and be steadfast”.

“believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper” - *Prosper* is *tsaleach* - to push forward (cp. 2 Chron. 18:11,14). Jehoshaphat would have said this with real intensity for he himself had only recently not hearkened to Micaiah, one of God’s prophets, before going into battle (18:16,27-28). But he was full of confidence now that they would see the salvation of God that day.

V.21 - **“when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers”** - When Jehoshaphat *consulted* (*ya’ats* - to advise) with the people the decision was unanimous that Judah would march into battle led by singers!

“that should praise the beauty of holiness” - Judah’s secret weapon that day was a company of Levites robed in the garments of their Temple duties and leading the singing that resounded from Judah’s ranks. The word *praise* is *halal* signifying to be clear, i.e. sing. The word *beauty* is *hadarah* - decoration and is always used of worshippers in appropriate attire or disposition (1 Chron. 16:29; Job 40:10; Ps. 29:2; 96:9). Roth. translates: “and offer praise with holy adornment”. The only similar occasion when an army went into battle like this was in the overthrow of Jericho (Josh. 6:3-5).

“Praise the LORD; for his mercy endureth forever” - *Praise* is *yadah* - to use the hand; i.e. worship with extended hands. This refrain has been taken up and woven into many songs of remembrance (cp. Ps. 136 where it occurs 26 times).

VICTORY FROM GOD TO THE SOUNDS OF PRAISE – 2 Chron. 20:22-30

V.22 - **“And when they began to sing and to praise”** - Yng. translates: “And at the time...”, i.e. as they marched out of Jerusalem the battle began. But they were a half day’s march from Tekoa! Yahweh went before them as soon as they began to sing and “praise” (*tehillah* - laudation, a hymn; the Hebrew word for ‘Psalms’ is *tehillim*).

“**the LORD set ambushments**” - Who actually was employed for the *ambushments* (*arab* - to lurk) is not revealed, but the result was that Moab and Ammon joined battle with the people of Mt. Seir to their mutual destruction. Clearly God intervened in some way to sow the seeds of disunity and suspicion which under provocation exploded into war.

“**they were smitten**” - RSV - “and they were routed”. Just as the Midianites were before Gideon (Judges 7:22), and Gog will be before Christ (Ezek. 38:21). The rout was complete, for verse 23 adds that they stood up against each other “utterly to slay and destroy”, for which both Yng. and Roth. translate: “to devote and to destroy.”

V.24 - “**when Judah came toward the watch tower**” - When Judah arrived at an eminence called “the watch tower” (*mitseph* - an observatory) the battle was over. The battle field was strewn with dead bodies. Roth. translates the phrase “and behold” by “and lo, there they were” dead bodies fallen to the earth. Like Israel under Moses before them they could only look on the scene in utter amazement (cp. Exod. 14:30).

V.26 - “**the valley of Berachah**” - The name means “benediction” and is related to the word *blessed* (*barak* - to kneel, to bless God) which Judah paused to do on the fourth day after three days of collecting the spoil of the fallen enemy. There is an allusion to this passage in Psa. 84:6 where the word *pool* is *berachah*. Significantly, Psa. 84 is a song of the sons of Korah.

V.27 - “**Jehoshaphat in the forefront of them**” - The triumphant return to Jerusalem was attended by intensified praise and joy for the deliverance that Yahweh had given. Appropriately their great leader was in the *forefront* (*rosh* - at the head) for it had been his example of faith that had galvanised the whole nation. Now with him they could “joy” (*simchah* - blithesomeness or glee) and “rejoice” (*sakach* - to brighten up, be gleesome) over their enemies.

V.28 - “**psalteries**” - *nebel* - a skin bag; thought to be a form of harp like a guitar which looked like the shape of a filled water skin. The psaltery, together with the harp and trumpet were instruments used by the Levitical singers in the Temple (1 Chron. 15:16). So the Levites who had led Judah out to battle returned at the forefront leading the praise.

V.29 - “**and the fear of God was on all the kingdoms**” - So the peace given to Jehoshaphat in his earlier days returned (17:10), for the *fear* (*pachad* - sudden alarm) of God fell upon the surrounding nations. God had removed this fear when Jehoshaphat put trust in the strength of his own arm and joined himself with Ahab.

V.30 - “**the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet**” - *Realm* is *malkuyah* - a rule, a dominion. So God restored to Jehoshaphat the *quiet* (*shaqat* - to repose) rule he once enjoyed and gave him the *rest* (*nuwach* - to rest, i.e. settle down) that escaped him when he turned to make his alliance with Ahab. This is clearly reminiscent of 2 Chron. 17:10; 15:15; 14:6.

DIVINE SUMMARY AND ESTIMATION – 2 Chron. 20:31-34

V.33 - “**the people had not prepared their hearts**” - The word *prepared* is *kuwn* - to be erect, hence to set up, establish or fix (see note on 2 Chron. 19:3). Extensive as Jehoshaphat’s reformation was, it did not match the complete success of his father’s (2 Chron. 15:15). There remained many who had not fully set their hearts to seek their God.

V.34 - “**the book of Jehu the son of Hanani**” - Both this prophet and his father had played an important part in the reign of Jehoshaphat and his father (see 2 Chron. 19:2; 16:7).

“**who is mentioned**” - This phrase has been better rendered by Roth.: “which hath been added to the book” of the kings of Israel.

A FOOLISH COMMERCIAL VENTURE WITH AHAZIAH – 2 Chron. 20:35-37

V.35 - “**and after this did Jehoshaphat**” - i.e. after a period of peace given to him in the wake of the victory over Moab and Ammon. Peace and tranquillity had brought about his downfall before, as well as that of Asa. Unmixed peace and prosperity is dangerous if not approached with vigilance. There needs to be diligent spiritual activity, but Jehoshaphat turned to commerce in partnership with a rank idolater.

“**join himself with Ahaziah**” - The term (*chabar*) means to join; specially by means of spells, hence to fascinate. This was a family problem. Blood proved thicker than ‘water’. Jehoshaphat was locked in by a family connection with the house of Ahab. Athaliah was married to Jehoram his oldest son and could well have been the source of this renewal of ventures with the house of Ahab.

“**who did very wickedly**” - Roth. has, “he was lawless in his doings.” Ahaziah was a replica of his father and mother who pursued their idolatry with enthusiasm.

V.36 - “**they made the ships in Ezion-geber**” - The name means “backbone like of a man.” It is now the modern port of Eilat. This had been the hub of Solomon’s commercial ventures in the east (2 Chron. 8:17-18) which Jehoshaphat sought to revive. He might have been successful if he had undertaken the venture alone.

V.37 - “**Eliezer the son of Dodavah**” - The prophet God raised up to rebuke Jehoshaphat has a name that means “God of help” and was the son of Dodavah (“Love of Yah”). These are significant names in the light of the mistake that Jehoshaphat was making again (cp. 19:2).

“**Mareshah**” - “summit”. This was the place of Asa’s victory over the Ethiopians (2 Chron. 14:9-10). The hallmark of that victory had been complete trust in the help of God. Selection of a prophet from this town must surely have stirred some memories for Jehoshaphat.

“**the LORD hath broken thy works**” - **Broken** is *parats* - to break. There is symmetry in this edict. Jehoshaphat had “joined” himself to Ahaziah; so God would “break” their works.

“**the ships were broken**” – **Broken** here is *shabar* - to burst (see its use 2 Chron. 14:13). Here was another disastrous venture in which all Jehoshaphat’s efforts were wasted because of Divine intervention. He had experienced this in his alliance with Ahab at Ramoth-Gilead, as a result of which much of his good work in Judah had been undone. He recovered himself, only to fall back into the same trap again. When Ahaziah renewed attempts to join with Jehoshaphat in a fresh venture (1 Kings 22:48-49), he wisely declined having learnt the lesson, at least for the time being, that compromise with the apostate kings of Israel spelled disaster. Incredibly, he was to fall into this same trap again 2 years later by a military venture with Jehoram, Ahab’s son.

Additional notes on Jehoshaphat are to be found in the chapter on Ahab under the sub-heading “Ahab and Jehoshaphat”, and in the chapter on Jehoram of Israel under the sub-

heading “Jehoram and Jehoshaphat”.

AHAZIAH -

The Clumsy Pagan

(ISRAEL)

HEBREW - "Yah has seized"

FIRST MENTION - 1 Kings 22:40 **LAST MENTION** - 2 Chron. 22:11

LENGTH OF REIGN - 2 years from 853-852 BC

FATHER - Ahab ("The brother of his father")

MOTHER - Jezebel ("chaste")

SISTER - Athaliah ("Yah has constrained") wife of Jehoram the crown prince of Judah.

CONTEMPORARY KING - Jehoshaphat 871-847 BC.

Note - No history is supplied in Chronicles, but he is mentioned 3 times.

SUMMARY OF CHARACTER

The brief reign of the eldest son of Ahab was characterised by continual misfortune. External peace was shattered by the revolt of the vassal kingdom of Moab, and disaster struck at home when Ahaziah fell from a balcony of his palace and was fatally injured. On his death-bed Ahaziah reveals himself to be a genuine product of Ahab and Jezebel by sending to the centre of the pagan god Baal-zebub for a prognostication regarding his future. Such demonstrations of infidelity and idolatry were to be expected from the children of Jezebel, but it was nevertheless an appalling state of affairs that such a man should sit on the throne of Israel once occupied by David the beloved. How low Israel had fallen through the apostasy of Ahab and his unholy alliance with Ethbaal king of the Zidonians!

So infuriated was Yahweh with the infidelity of Ahaziah that He intervened through no lesser a prophet than Elijah, and passed the death sentence upon him. So he died of the injuries sustained in the fall from the balcony of his palace; a fitting end for a man who ignored the law of Deut. 22:8 which provided for a safe place upon the housetop where prayer to God could be offered. This man who used the roof top only as a place for drunken pleasure could only think in his distress to offer his 'prayers' before the pagan god of the dung heap.

HARMONY OF THE RECORDS OF THE REIGN OF AHAZIAH	1 Kings	2 Chron.
Accession and Divine estimation	22:51-55	
Makes an alliance with Jehoshaphat	22:49	20:35-37
Moab rebels against him	2 Kings 1:1	
Falls from the balcony - fatally injured	1:2	
Messengers to Baal-zebub meet Elijah	1:3-4	
The messengers return to Ahaziah	1:5-8	
He sends troops to apprehend Elijah	1:9	
Elijah calls down fire twice from heaven	1:10-12	
Third captain and his fifty receive mercy	1:13-15	

Elijah declares Ahaziah's doom
The death of Ahaziah

1:15-16
1:17-18

VERSE BY VERSE NOTES

ACCESSION AND DIVINE ESTIMATION – 1 Kings 22:51-53

V.52 - “**walked in the way of his father, and in the way of his mother**” - The Divine summary of Ahaziah is that he did evil by following dutifully in the way of Ahab and Jezebel, and in the way of Jeroboam. The only other person of whom the precise words were spoken was Athaliah. Jezebel was to feature as the force behind both Ahaziah and his brother who succeeded him, though much less in the latter than the former (2 Kings 3:2).

V.53 - “**For he served Baal, and worshipped him, and provoked the LORD God of Israel**” - Ahaziah's zealous adoption of Baal worship was the result of sound training in idolatry. He religiously followed Ahab and Jezebel without deviation. The circumstances of his untimely death demonstrate that he did not give any recognition to Yahweh Israel's God.

THE DEATH OF AHAZIAH – 2 Kings 1:1-17

V.1 - “**Then Moab rebelled against Israel**” - The death of Ahab caused previously subservient nations to reassess their relationship to Israel. However, as it was Jehoram his brother who went to war with Moab (2 Kings 3:5-6), Ahaziah's reign was probably only a little over a year (see 1 Kings 22:51; 2 Kings 3:1). He was not given time to quash this rebellion.

V.2 - “**Ahaziah fell down through a lattice in his upper chamber**” - The word for *lattice* is *sebakah* signifying a network (in an arch). Such were used to keep out light and give privacy on the roof of the palace, but not in accordance with the law of Deut. 22:8 which provided for a firm balustrade that would prevent anyone falling from the roof. The term *upper chamber* is the word *aliyah* - lofty, i.e. a stairway; also a second story room. He had an area on the roof of his palace for recreation where the balconies were bordered only by a flimsy lattice. Somehow he had an accident and fell through the lattice. Whether this was due to drunkenness or carelessness is not stated. The law of Deut. 22:8 had been ignored and Ahaziah paid the ultimate penalty.

“**Go, enquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron**” - Gravely injured in the fall, Ahaziah sent messengers into the land of the Philistines to *enquire* (*darash* - to tread or frequent; Lit. to seek) of *Baal-zebub* who was worshipped as “Lord of the flies” (i.e. the god of the dung-heap). He was so called because he was deemed to have power over disease (carried by flies which bred in the dung-heap). This reveals how effective Jezebel's work in conditioning the minds of her children had been. They had a god for every purpose but the all-seeing, all powerful Creator and Sustainer did not enter their considerations. It is interesting to contrast Jehoshaphat, his contemporary in Judah, who at this time was actively seeking (*darash*) Yahweh his God (2 Chron. 19:3). *Ekron* means “eradication”, from the root to pluck up, to hamstring, figuratively, to exterminate. This is exactly what God proposed for the house of Ahab because of its adherence to pagan gods. It was a city 18 km (11 miles) from Gath in Philistine territory.

“whether I shall recover of this disease” - Ahaziah probably suffered serious internal injuries and was anxious to know if he would **recover** (*chayah* - to live) from the **disease** (*choliy* - malady, anxiety, calamity) which he could sense threatened his life.

V.3 - **“the angel of the LORD said to Elijah”** - Elijah was normally instructed by “the word of Yahweh” but on this occasion it is an angel who speaks to him. He does so again in verse 15.

“Is it not because there is not a God” - Roth.: “Is it because there is no God in Israel”. There is an air of incredulity in this question. Surely at the moment of his greatest need when he knew his life hung in the balance Ahaziah would turn to Israel’s God. But no, he had been so thoroughly paganised by his mother that Yahweh did not enter into his thoughts.

V.7 - **“What manner of man was he which came up to meet you”** - The word for **manner** (*mishpat* - verdict, a sentence) has a wide application and can mean “style”. Ahaziah suspected the worst. The message sounded though it came from Elijah!

V.8 - **“an hairy man”** - **Hairy** is *sa’ar* - dishevelled hair (as if tossed or bristling) and is a different word to that used of Esau (*sa’ir* - shaggy, he goat). Elijah’s hair may have been the mark of naziriteship.

“girt with a girdle of leather about his loins” - **Leather** is *owr* a skin (as naked) by implication, hide, leather; from the primary root *uwr* - to be bare. With animal skin slung around his waist and dishevelled hair Elijah was unique in appearance even in those days. Like John the Baptist he stood out from those who frequented kings palaces and wore soft garments (Luke 7:25).

“It is Elijah the Tishbite” - Roth.: “Elijah the Tishbite it was”. Some commentators suggest Elijah wore a hairy camel skin tied on with a leather belt. Whatever it was he was instantly recognised like John the Baptist, who came in “the spirit and power of Elijah,” and whose unique manner and dress characterised his position as a reforming prophet in Israel.

V.9 - **“a captain of fifty with his fifty”** - Students may wish to compare the use of **fifty** in 2 Kings 2:16 and Luke 9:14. It is notable that Elijah’s name occurs 5 times in Luke 9 and that one of those occasions is based on this incident of fire being called from heaven (cp. Luke 9:54-56).

V.10 - **“let fire come down from heaven”** - Lxx. - “fire shall come down”. Connect the context of Luke 9:51-56. Elijah was not justified in regarding Ahaziah’s messengers as being in the same category as the king who was deserving only of Divine wrath, but God could do little else under the circumstances but send fire from heaven. To withhold the fire would have negated the condemnation on Ahaziah and his Baal worship. Yahweh was vindicated but at the cost of 102 lives, for a second captain and his fifty similarly perished (V.11-12).

V.13 - **“And the third captain of fifty...fell on his knees...and besought him”** - The third captain having witnessed the fate of his predecessors came and “bowed on his knees” (Roth.) before Elijah and pleaded for his life. The word **besought** (*chinin*) means to bend or stoop to implore. As the two previous captains had done he acknowledged that Elijah was a man of God but went a step further in pleading for his life and that of his men by

adding, "I pray thee, let my life, and the life of these fifty thy servants be precious in thy sight."

V.15 - "**Go down with him: be not afraid of him**" - The angel of God intervenes to save the life of this band. There was plainly a measure of reverence and fear in this captain for Elijah's God. Elijah's fear was a mark of his inability to discern between his enemies and his supporters in Israel. He seems to have retained his sense of isolation from the rest of the nation, expressed on Horeb, right to the end.

V.17 - "**and Jehoram reigned in his stead**" - Jehoram was Ahaziah's brother, and Ahab's second son who acceded to the throne because Ahaziah had no son. Confusion can be caused by the fact that during this era the names of the kings of Judah and Israel were the same. There was a Jehoram and an Ahaziah on each of the thrones of Israel and Judah.

"**the second year of Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat**" - Jehoshaphat still had 7 years to reign in Judah but Jehoram his son was co-regent. This perhaps reveals the influence of Athaliah and Jezebel (there was no reason for a co-regency except Jehoshaphat's absence in Samaria and Ramoth-gilead). These two evil women had contrived to seize power in Judah and effectively neutralise Jehoshaphat.

JEHORAM -

The Moderate

(ISRAEL)

HEBREW - “Yahweh raised”

FIRST MENTION - 2 Kings 1:17 **LAST MENTION** - 2 Chron. 22:7

LENGTH OF REIGN - 12 years from 852-841 BC

FATHER - Ahab

MOTHER - Jezebel

SISTER - Athaliah

CONTEMPORARY KINGS - Jehoshaphat 871-847 BC; Jehoram 848-841 BC; Ahaziah 841 BC.

SUMMARY OF CHARACTER

Whereas Ahab's eldest son Ahaziah had vigorously pursued his father's Baal worship, Jehoram the younger son who acceded upon the accidental death of his brother was a “moderate” in idolatry by comparison. He removed the idol to Baal from Samaria and reinstituted the more innocuous, but no less evil, idolatry of Jeroboam. When it is remembered that Jezebel was still alive at the time this was no mean feat. Jehoram probably considered his action to be a grand gesture of conciliation to Judah and to the God of Jehoshaphat.

His approach to Jehoshaphat for military assistance after the revolt of the king of Moab, reveals him as a diplomat of some skill and indicates that he considered his rejection of Baal as a concession to Judah which would permit a military alliance to be established with Jehoshaphat. The message sent to Jehoshaphat seeking his help is couched in diplomatic terms and casually assumes that no impediment to an alliance existed. Following the debacle of Ramoth-Gilead and the stern rebuke of Jehoshaphat for his alliance with Ahab it might have been expected that never again would Jehoshaphat need to be admonished with the words; “Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate Yahweh” (2 Chron. 19:2). However, now that Baal worship had been officially rejected in Israel by Jehoram, perhaps Jehoshaphat considered that the situation was different. Whatever may have been Jehoshaphat's perceptions, he foolishly entered into a military alliance with Israel that almost ended in disaster again.

The campaign against Moab is the only event in which an insight into Jehoram's character is offered. He is revealed as a man who recognised Yahweh but placed no faith in Him. As soon as adversity threatened the welfare of the confederate armies he ascribed their misfortune to Yahweh. Not for one moment did he entertain the obvious fact that the troubles experienced were directly attributable to his evils and that of his father's house. God revealed what He thought of Jehoram in the encounter that that king had with Elisha at the height of the crisis in the wilderness of Edom, saying through the prophet: “What have I to do with thee? Get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother...surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee.”

HARMONY OF THE RECORDS OF JEHORAM'S REIGN	2 Kings	2 Chron.
Succeeds his brother to the throne	1:17	
Reverts to Jeroboam's idolatry	3:1-3	
Moab revolts against him	3:4-5	
Makes alliance with Jehoshaphat and king of Edom	3:6-8	
Lack of water - Elisha called	3:9-12	
Elisha prophesies victory over Moab	3:13-20	
Moab's forces defeated	3:21-25	
Withdraws as tripartite alliance crumbles	3:26-27	
War with Hazael of Syria	8:28-29	
Elisha anoints Jehu to destroy Ahab's house	9:1-10	22:7
Jehu proclaimed king	9:11-13	
At Jezreel recovering from wounds	9:14-15	22:5-6
Jehu conspires against him	9:14-16	
Jehu comes to Jezreel	9:16-20	
Jehoram rides out to meet Jehu	9:21-22	
Is slain by an arrow from Jehu	9:23-24	
His body dumped in the field of Naboth	9:25-26	

VERSE BY VERSE NOTES

ACCESSION AND DIVINE ESTIMATION – 2 Kings 3:1-3

V.1 - “**the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat**” - Jehoram began to reign towards the end of Jehoshaphat's reign in Judah. This was actually the 2nd year of Jehoram's co-regency with Jehoshaphat his father (2 Kings 1:17). So while Jehoram the son of Ahab ascended the throne of Israel, Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat was co-regent with his father in Judah.

V.2 - “**he wrought evil....but not like his father, and like his mother**” - Jehoram bravely reverted to Jeroboam's “religion” and rejected Baal as his god even while his mother was alive. By adopting Jeroboam's idolatry he probably considered, as many others did, that he had given some acknowledgment to Yahweh who was ostensibly represented by the golden calves. This of course was quite unacceptable but an ‘improvement’ on both Ahab and Ahaziah and their pagan idolatry. There is therefore some amelioration in the severity of the Divine assessment.

“**he put away the image of Baal**” - The word *image* (*matstsebah*) indicates a column idol. Ahab had introduced the image of Baal early in his reign as the mark of his marriage to Jezebel (1 Kings 16:31-32). It would seem however that Jezebel's will eventually prevailed, for the image of Baal was erected again and later destroyed by Jehu (2 Kings 10:27).

V.3 - “**nevertheless he cleaved unto the sins of Jeroboam**” - *Cleaved* is *dabaq* - to impinge, i.e. cling, adhere. Israel never escaped the apostasy of Jeroboam. Once installed its roots were too deep to be eradicated, primarily because any reversion to the true worship of Yahweh would have required a political sacrifice that no ruler in the north was prepared to make. Not even Jehu who so brutally destroyed Baal worship could take the step to abandon Jeroboam's religion.

THE REVOLT OF MOAB – 2 Kings 3:4-5

V.4 - “**Mesha king of Moab was a sheepmaster**” - Mesha’s name means “safety” and he was a vassal of Israel paying substantial tribute each year. He is described as a *sheepmaster* (*noqed* - a spotter, i.e. owner or tender of sheep) and was a useful source of meat and wool for Ahab. On Ahab’s death he saw an opportunity to be released from this burden and rebelled against Ahaziah and then Jehoram.

V.5 - “**when Ahab was dead, that the king of Moab rebelled**” - This is also stated during the reign of Ahaziah (2 Kings 1:1). There was a rapid turn of events after the death of Ahab. Ahab’s defeat and death at Ramoth-Gilead provided the opportunity and incentive for rebellion. Moab rebelled against Ahaziah and also joined in a confederacy with Ammon and Edom against Judah (2 Chron. 20:1). Though defeated in that conflict Moab recovered sufficiently to mount another challenge to Jehoram king of Israel.

JEHORAM and JEHOSHAPHAT

THE TRIPARTITE ALLIANCE - WAR WITH MOAB – 2 Kings 3:6-7

V.7 - “**he went and sent to Jehoshaphat**” - Roth.: “so he departed and sent unto Jehoshaphat.” Having numbered all Israel (V.6), Jehoram found his forces too weak to put down the revolt of Moab. He desperately needed allies and so used his diplomatic wiles on Jehoshaphat to obtain his military support. Amazingly, Jehoshaphat succumbed to his appeal.

“**I will go up, I am as thou art**” - These are familiar words (see 2 Chron. 18:3). Less than 2 years had passed since the fatal alliance of 1 Kings 22:4. Jehoshaphat had not learnt the lesson of the dangers of compromise with apostate Israel, seemingly because his thinking was clouded by continuing family ties with the house of Ahab. Jehoram his son was co-regent at the time, and Jehoram was married to Athaliah whose influence here is unmistakable.

V.8 - “**And he said, Which way shall we go up**” - The record does not state the fact, but it is Jehoram who asks Jehoshaphat which way to advance. Jehoshaphat advises ‘the way of Edom’ for Edom was confederate with them against Moab in this war (cp. 2 Chron. 20:23). There is no evident prayer to Yahweh, and no seeking of counsel from a prophet of God as in 2 Chron. 18:6. Jehoshaphat was again courting disaster.

V.9 - “**and the king of Edom**” - 1 Kings 22:47 says there was no king in Edom at this time, but adds that a deputy acted as king.

“**they fetched a compass of seven days journey**” - Roth. translates, “they went round...” This was the long way round through the land of Edom where they found to their cost “there was no water for the host” or for their animals. This was a ‘covenant’ (seven) journey without ‘water’ (a symbol of the word of God) in the wilderness of Edom (Adam). What a disaster was looming for Jehoshaphat Judah’s great teacher.

V.10 - “**Alas, the LORD hath called these three kings together to deliver them into the hand of Moab**” - When men are under pressure their true character is revealed. Jehoram predictably manifested his disdain for Yahweh and accused Him of deliberately seeking to destroy the

confederate kings. Implicit in this accusation is a consciousness that he was deserving of Yahweh's wrath. The only ameliorating factor is the grudging recognition of the existence of Jehoshaphat's God.

V.11 - **"But Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the LORD"** - These are almost exactly the same words that Jehoshaphat spoke in the gate of Samaria a few years before as he made his foolish alliance with Ahab (1 Kings 22:7; 2 Chron. 18:6). That he should be in the same position again so soon is almost incredible. That Elisha should be on hand in the company at that time was equally amazing!

"Here is Elisha the son of Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah" - It was a Middle East custom at meal times for a servant to pour water on the hands of his master. Water is symbolic of the Word and the hands of 'works'. So it was a fitting symbol of the cleansing of a man's works by the application of the word of God. This principle was lacking because of Jehoshaphat's compromise with Ahab's house. What was now needed was salvation from thirst in the wilderness of Edom. Marvellously, Yahweh had provided *Elisha* ("To whom El is salvation") the son of Shaphat ("Judgement") to provide it.

V.12 - **"Jehoshaphat said, The word of the LORD is with him"** - Jehoshaphat acknowledged Elisha's spiritual standing and recognised him as their only hope of access to Divine help in this crisis. He could provide the "Word" to break the spiritual 'drought'.

V.13 - **"Elisha said unto the king of Israel, What have I to do with thee"** - Elisha immediately turns on the source of Jehoshaphat's troubles and repudiates Jehoram. His opening words are translated by Rotherham; "What have I and thee in common". He scathingly advises Jehoram to seek the prophets of his parent's gods whom he still served. Jehoram's response is interesting. Unwittingly perhaps he acknowledges Yahweh's sovereignty in this situation, but again bitterly blames Him for their troubles. He does not accept that his own evils and idolatry were the primary cause for their predicament.

V.14 - **"As the LORD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand"** - Elisha takes up Elijah's familiar introductory words to Ahab (1 Kings 17:1) to preface his uncompromising rebuttal.

"were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat" - Only the *presence* (*paneh* - the face) of Jehoshaphat redeemed this situation. Despite his repeated failure to stand with God against the evils of Ahab's house he was 'regarded' by God's prophet as a man of integrity.

"I would not look toward thee, nor see thee" - Elisha plainly reveals the Divine attitude towards Jehoram. His adoption of Jeroboam's worship and a modified version of 'Ahabism' was not acceptable to God and He would not countenance it.

V.15 **"But now bring me a minstrel"** - Elisha's request for a *minstrel* (*nagan* - to thrum, i.e. beat a tune with the fingers, to play a stringed instrument) seems very strange, and obviously must have a purpose outside of his own needs. To be sure, music had its place in prophesying (see 1 Sam. 10:5-6; 1 Chron. 25:1-3), but there was an important reason for this request in the presence of Jehoshaphat. Had he not recently been involved in one of the greatest deliverances ever wrought by Yahweh for His people? (Refer to notes on 2 Chron. 20 in the chapter on Jehoshaphat). And had not that victory been won in the absence of weapons and fighting simply by the power of praise led by the musicians and singers of the Temple? Jehoshaphat's mind is being taken back to that deliverance (2 Chron. 20:20-28).

Implicit in this was a rebuke; why was he out in the desert on a campaign against Moab without having sought God's help?

"the hand of the LORD came upon him" - Elisha's experience is quite reminiscent of Elijah (1 Kings 18:46), but would have taken Jehoshaphat's mind back to Jahaziel (2 Chron. 20:14).

V.16 - **"Make this valley full of ditches"** - *Ditches* is *geb* - well or cistern (as dug). The water they so desperately needed was to flow freely in the desert.

V.17 - **"Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain"** - The mountains of Edom rising to 1,500 metres (5,000 feet) receive occasional heavy rains brought by westerly winds, but this was to be a miracle with no apparent signs of rain. The message was plain that deliverance would come from God alone as it had done in 2 Chron. 20. Elisha then added that provision of water was "a light thing" compared to the victory God would give over the Moabites (V.18)!

V.19 - **"ye shall smite...every choice city"** - The subjugation of Moab was to be total with the destruction of the best of everything (*choice* - *mibchar* - select, i.e. the best).

"fell every good tree" - This was expressly forbidden under the Law but was not observed in this war (Deut. 20:19-20). In addition they were to "stop all wells" (contrast V.16-17) and *mar* (*ka'ab* - to spoil) every field so as to cripple Moab's economy (V.25).

V.20 - **"when the meat offering was offered"** - Roth. - "when the offering ascended". RSV - "offering of the sacrifice". *Meat offering* is *minchah* the normal word for the meal offering. The *minchah* was primarily an offering of acknowledgement. Deliverance in the form of water came when the offering acknowledging Yahweh as the provider of all was made.

V.22 - **"they rose up early in the morning"** - This is the same morning as V.20, hence the feverish activity of the allied armies seeking water for men and animals would appear like confusion in the camp to the men of Moab. Additionally, God caused the water to appear like blood so that they assumed there had been mutual slaughter among the allies (cp. 2 Chron. 20:23).

V.23 - **"This is blood, the kings are surely slain"** - Seeing the 'blood' the Moabites left their fortifications prepared only to take the spoils of war. They were sure the kings were *slain* (*chareb* - to parch through drought, i.e. by analogy, to desolate, destroy, kill). They were in for a surprise, for the opposite was true (cp. V.10,13).

V.24 - **"when they came to the camp of Israel, the Israelites rose up"** - This description is noteworthy for the submergence of the identity of Judah. The generic term Israel is used to demonstrate a similar outcome to the previous alliance (2 Chron. 18:16). The Moabites running headlong towards the camp in pursuit of easy spoil were completely disorganised and no match for 'Israel' of whom it says; "they went forward slaughtering the Moabites as they went" (RSV).

V.25 - **"only in Kir-Haraseth left they the stones thereof"** - The last stronghold of the king of Moab was *Kir-Haraseth* ("fortress of earthenware") and was not completely overthrown because of a breakdown in the unity and resolve of the alliance. Because of this the edict of V.19 was not completely carried out.

V.26 - **“The king of Moab saw that the battle was too sore for him”** - Roth. - “prevailed against him”. The king of Moab took desperate measures to save himself. He saw that his only hope was to undermine the unity of the allies, so he endeavoured to “break through” (*baqa* - to cleave, to rend, break) to the king of Edom, his former ally (2 Chron. 20:22), and make peace with him. However he was unable to break through and was forced to retreat into the city. There he undertook one of the most desperate acts recorded in scripture. The Mesha Inscription attributed Moab’s subjugation to the anger of Chemosh, and so in his extremity the king of Moab made the supreme sacrifice to appease his deity’s anger.

V.27 - **“he took his eldest son...and offered him for a burnt offering”** - The public sacrifice of the crown prince on the wall to Chemosh his god was designed to accomplish two things. Firstly, it was an appeal to his god who was worshipped with human sacrifice; and secondly, it was performed in the sight of the invading armies so that they might know that he had made the supreme sacrifice to invoke the help of his god. Fortunately for him this second purpose was effective in undermining the cohesion of the alliance.

“there was great indignation against Israel, and they departed from him” - The word *indignation* is *qetseph* signifying a splinter (as chipped off); figuratively, rage, strife. A split emerged in the alliance probably because the king of Edom was frightened of some immediate and catastrophic intervention from Chemosh, and so withdrew hurriedly. The matter had become a religious contest and is another clear demonstration of the weakness of an alliance based on compromise. There was no unity on religion among Judah, Israel, and Edom. The tensions were so high in the camp of ‘Israel’ that it was deemed fitting to retire from Moab even though the war was unfinished (V.19).

For notes on the death of Jehoram refer to the chapter on Jehu king of Israel.

JEHORAM -

The Ill-fated Murderer

(JUDAH)

HEBREW - “Yahweh raised”

FIRST MENTION - 1 Kings 22:50

LAST MENTION - 2 Chron. 22:11

LENGTH OF REIGN - 8 years from 848-841 BC.

FATHER - Jehoshaphat (“Yahweh is judge”) **WIFE** - Athaliah (of Israel)

CONTEMPORARY KING - Jehoram 852-841 BC.

AGE AT ACCESSION - 32

AT DEATH - 40

SUMMARY OF CHARACTER

The righteousness of Jehoshaphat was sharply contrasted with the wickedness of Jehoram his son in the circumstances surrounding the latter’s accession to the throne. True to his character, Jehoshaphat bestowed the crown upon his eldest son according to the law of the firstborn. But not satisfied with this ‘rightful succession’ Jehoram brutally murdered his younger brothers in order to remove all potential rivals to the throne. There seems no doubt that he was motivated to commit this vile crime by his wife Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. Murder was always considered a justifiable political expedient by Jezebel and her offspring in order to secure power, and that clearly was the object of Jezebel and Athaliah in becoming involved in the affairs of Judah. Jehoram was only a pawn in the plans of Jezebel and her daughter to take control of the affairs of both kingdoms. The subsequent actions of Athaliah confirm that she harboured the ambition of ruling Judah. Jehoram allowed himself to be manipulated to this end and is portrayed in the record as a man who had little or no control over the affairs of his family or the kingdom, although he always manifested shrewdness in matters of self interest and self preservation.

The history of Jehoram is a long list of disasters as one problem after another came upon him until he was finally smitten by a terrible disease which brought him to a premature and agonising death. He fully deserved such an end because of the evils he had introduced into Judah. Backed by Athaliah he embarked upon a deliberate campaign to pollute the minds and corrupt the practices of his people, thus undoing all the faithful work of his father Jehoshaphat. It is recorded that he seduced Judah to commit adultery by introducing the vile and immoral ‘worship’ of Baal into his kingdom. So incensed was God with the evils of Jehoram that he moved Elijah, who had earlier been removed in the dramatic circumstances recorded in 2 Kings 2, to send a withering letter of condemnation to him proclaiming his impending doom.

Jehoram was a complete man of the flesh whose evils were made immeasurably more gross through the influence of Athaliah and his mother-in-law Jezebel than they might have been had not Jehoshaphat foolishly forged a marriage alliance with Ahab. The consequences of this marriage alliance for Jehoram, his brethren, and the nation of Judah were nothing short of catastrophic, and eventually plunged God’s ecclesia into one of its

darkest periods. The lesson of this disaster is two-fold: (1) Union with those who have departed from the Truth, doctrinally or morally, is fraught with the greatest of danger and should not be attempted except where evidence clearly exists that the doctrinal and moral deviations have been corrected; (2) The selection of a marriage partner is a crucial decision in determining the direction of one's spiritual life and destiny. Unity of mind and purpose in the things of the Truth are essential for success if the marriage is to prosper. It was because Jehoshaphat ignored both of these principles that Judah was plunged into apostasy.

In summary, Jehoram was a self-seeking murderer and a corruptor of his own people; a man moved by his wife to commit the grossest of evils. He died as he had lived; in the corruption of his flesh. The inspired record summarises the miserable end of Jehoram by commenting: "so he departed without being desired."

HARMONY OF THE RECORDS OF JEHORAM'S REIGN

	1 Kings	2 Kings	2 Chron.
Accession at age 32	22:50	8:16-19	21:1
Murders his own brethren			21:2-4
The Divine estimation of him		8:18-19	21:5-7
The Edomites revolt against him		8:20-22	21:8-10
His idolatry and wickedness			21:11
A letter of doom from Elijah			21:12-15
Attacked by the Philistines and Arabians			21:16-17
Dies a horrible death		8:23-24	21:18-20

VERSE BY VERSE NOTES

JEHORAM'S ACCESSION AND MURDER OF HIS BRETHREN – 2 Chron. 21:1-4

V.1 - **"And Jehoram his son reigned in his stead"** - Jehoram had reigned as co-regent with Jehoshaphat for 7 years (2 Kings 1:17; 3:1). The influence of Athaliah upon him was great and it is almost certain she had a part in securing the throne for him while Jehoshaphat was still alive.

V.2 - **"And he had brethren the sons of Jehoshaphat"** - These brethren are named in the record which is unusual. They were: Azariah - "Yah has helped"; Jehiel - "God will live"; Zechariah - "Yah hath remembered"; Azariah" (it seems strange there were two with the same name); Michael - "Who is like El"; and Shephatiah - "Yah has judged". Including Jehoram, there were seven sons in all. Sadly, this 'covenant' family was to fall victim to Athaliah as a precursor for what was to come upon the house of David at her hand a decade later (2 Chron. 22:10).

"Jehoshaphat king of Israel" - He was of course the king of Judah. His frequent attempts at unity with Israel put the matter in doubt. Now his connection with the house of Ahab had destroyed his house and was almost to result in the dissolution of the line of David.

V.3 - **“but the kingdom gave he to Jehoram, because he was the firstborn”** - Jehoshaphat was generous to all his sons, but when it came to the throne it was a matter of principle with him to grant succession to the firstborn. This was typical of Jehoshaphat’s integrity.

V.4 - **“he strengthened himself and slew all his brethren”** - He did this to remove all potential rivals to the throne, but it was for no purpose because his father had secured that right for him. The hand of Athaliah is observable in this murderous treachery (2 Chron. 22:10). The Divine retribution was to come in poetic fashion in verse 17.

“and divers also of the princes of Israel” - Other members of the royal family and court also suffered the same fate to ensure Athaliah would have a free hand to govern through Jehoram.

DIVINE ESTIMATION OF JEHORAM – 2 Chron. 21:5-7

V.6 - **“he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, like as did the house of Ahab”** - This might be expected from one married to Ahab’s daughter! Unwise marriages have often led to departures from the way of truth regardless of how sound upbringing might have been. Jehoshaphat was to blame for this outcome. He had involved his oldest son in a marriage of ‘political’ convenience and as a result lost all of his sons.

V.7 - **“Howbeit the LORD would not destroy the house of David”** - This is a clear indication that if the covenant to David had been lacking Yahweh would have destroyed Jehoram and his house just as effectively as He did the house of Ahab. Only the existence of the covenant prevented the abolition of David’s line.

THE REVOLT OF THE EDMITES – 2 Chron. 21:8-11

V.8 - **“In his days the Edomites revolted from under the dominion of Judah and made themselves a king”** - The Edomites who had no king (1 Kings 22:47) sought to throw off the *dominion* (*yad* - a hand, indicating power or means) of Judah. Prefaced by the phrase “in his days”, this fact can be attributed to Divine punishment for his corruption. It was as though God released his ‘hand’ from the surrounding nations allowing them to rise up against Judah. It is interesting to note how many times it is stated that one or other revolted “from under his hand”. He lost control because of Divine retribution for iniquity (V.10).

V.9 - **“and smote the Edomites which compassed him in”** - Jehoram’s campaign to subdue the Edomites turned sour when they encircled him and he was compelled to fight desperately to escape. He was unable to subjugate them, and while away from home one of his strongest cities revolted against him.

V.10 - **“The same time did Libnah revolt”** - The name comes from a root word meaning “to be white.” It was a fortress city in south-eastern Judah near Adullam and a priestly city (Josh. 21:13). That a major city felt disposed to revolt against their king is testimony to the contempt felt for his ways by many of his own people. They revolted “because he had forsaken Yahweh”. The motivation was religious and was probably fomented by the Levites who strongly objected to Jehoram’s corruptions. They sensed his growing weakness and took the opportunity to make a firm stand for purity.

V.11 - **“he made high places in the mountains of Judah”** - Thus undoing Jehoshaphat’s work (2 Chron. 17:6; 19:3). He returned to Rehoboam’s corruptions of 70 years previous.

“and caused the inhabitants of Jerusalem to commit fornication” - Jehoram introduced a deliberate campaign of corruption aimed at demoralising and corrupting the people. The hand of Athaliah is obvious in this, for she had learnt well from her mother (Rev. 2:20). While the word *fornication* (*zanah* - to commit adultery) can be used figuratively of spiritual adultery, it seems that its use here is a reference to the immorality practised at high places (Amos 2:7-8).

“and compelled Judah thereto” - Roth. - “and seduced Judah”. The word *compelled* is *nadach* - to push off, and is often translated “driven” (see its use in Prov. 7:21 where it is rendered “forced”). Not content with providing the means for the vilest immoral practices at places of ‘worship’, Jehoram, backed by Jezebel and Athaliah, used every inducement to involve the people in his corruptions (2 Kings 17:21).

ELIJAH’S LETTER OF CONDEMNATION ARRIVES – 2 Chron. 21:12-15

V.12 - **“there came a writing from Elijah the prophet”** - Elijah had been removed miraculously some 12 to 15 years before. This letter is implicit proof that he was not dead and that he was somewhere in the vicinity of Israel. God had probably removed him to a secluded place (perhaps Gilead) to live out his days and it was from there he wrote the condemnatory letter to Jehoram. As the “letter” (*miktab* - a thing written) is couched in the past tense, and records the actions of Jehoram after Jehoshaphat’s death, it is certain it was written after Elijah’s removal as recorded in 2 Kings 2 (at which time Jehoshaphat was still alive).

“Thus saith the LORD God of David thy father” - Such an introduction was a stinging rebuke of Jehoram and takes the mind back to verse 7. Elijah had watched from afar with increasing horror and anger at the insinuation of Ahab’s ways into Judah as Jehoram, under the spell of Athaliah, forsook the “ways (*derek* - a road as trodden; fig. a course of life) of Jehoshaphat and Asa” and introduced Ahab’s “whoredoms”.

V.13 - **“to go a whoring like to the whoredoms of the house of Ahab”** - The word *whoring* here is *zanah* the same as “fornication” in verse 11. He was part of the house of Ahab by marriage. It was Jezebel’s influence through her daughter Athaliah that resulted in much of the iniquity. We can only imagine the grief this fact caused Elijah the prophet.

“and also hast slain thy brethren...which were better than thyself” - Fratricide was his other great crime. Unlike Jehoram his brothers were not connected to Ahab’s house and probably would have reigned after the example of Asa and Jehoshaphat. They certainly would have been “better” than him!

V.14 - **“with a great plague will the LORD smite thy people”** - The word *plague* is *maggephah* indicating a pestilence; and can mean by analogy, defeat. Yng. translates: “a great smiting” (see use Lev. 26:21). Judgement would come upon his people because many had supported him (Hos. 5:11; Mic. 6:16); on his “children and wives” as retribution for his murders, and on his “goods” because he probably took all the possessions of his brethren (V.3).

V.15 - **“thou shalt have great sickness by disease of thy bowels”** - The edict is very specific. He was to have *sickness* (*choliy* - malady, anxiety, calamity - used 2 Kings 1:2) caused by disease of the *bowels* (*me’ah* - to be soft; the intestines or the abdomen).

“until thy bowels fall out by reason of the sickness day by day” - Yng. - “till thy bowels come out.” Some commentators suggest this was a severe form of dysentery from which, they say, Antiochus Epiphanes and Herod Agrippa apparently died. Whatever the prognosis, his was to be a prolonged, excruciatingly painful and wretched death.

INVASIONS BY THE PHILISTINES AND ARABIANS – 2 Chron. 21:16-17

V.16 - **“the LORD stirred up...the spirit of the Philistines...and Arabians”** - This was the antithesis of 2 Chron. 17:10-11 where the reverse had been true for Jehoshaphat because of his righteousness. In Jehoshaphat’s days God had struck sudden terror upon their “spirit” but now unleashes them against Jehoram. There is a simple lesson in this that is timeless (Prov. 16:7).

“that were near the Ethiopians” - Roth. - “who were under the direction of the Ethiopians.” This statement seems superfluous but is actually highlighting another contrast with Asa who is mentioned by Elijah in verse 12. He had been given a great victory over a vast multitude of Ethiopians by faith (see 2 Chron. 14:13). Now Jehoram is overrun by the vassals of Ethiopia!

V.17 - **“they came up into Judah and brake into it”** - Roth. - “and forced their way into it.” The “plague” of verse 14 had begun.

“and carried away all the substance that was found in the kings house” - The precision of the fulfilment of Elijah’s condemnation was awesome. First all his “goods”; then “his sons” as Divine poetic retribution for verse 3; and “his wives” except for Athaliah unfortunately (2 Chron. 22:10) were taken.

“save Jehoahaz the youngest of his sons” - *Jehoahaz* means “Yahweh seized”. This was actually Ahaziah who was the only survivor among his sons (2 Chron. 22:1).

DEATH AND OBITUARY – 2 Chron. 21:18-20

V.18 - **“the LORD smote him in his bowels with an incurable disease”** - The phrase *incurable disease* is interesting. It is two words (*ayin marpe*) meaning “not exist”, and “medicine” or “cure”; therefore literally, “no cure!” The important point here is that he was smitten by God.

V.19 - **“in the process of time, after the end of two years”** - Roth. - “in a year beyond a year.” Time passes very slowly in chronic illness especially with such a debilitating disease as dysentery. The discomfort and unpleasantness is difficult to imagine adequately. He suffered increasingly worse effects for two years and in the end “his bowels *fell out* by reason of his sickness.” The imagination balks at this picture, but it was a fitting end and punishment for his sins. He had chosen corruption as a way of life; now he died in the most awful physical corruption it is possible to conceive.

“his people made no burning for him” - Burning of sweet odours was a mark of honour and respect. Such had been made for Asa (2 Chron. 16:14). It was not as some think to dispose of the corrupting corpse. The people as a whole did not love or respect him, though many had succumbed to his seductive idolatry.

V.20 - **“and departed without being desired”** - *Desired* is *chemdah* - delight. Roth. - “and went his way unregretted.” When Athaliah was slain the people actually rejoiced (2 Chron. 23:21). The operative principle is Prov. 10:7. The legacy of Jehoshaphat’s work of

education was not completely gone. There was still some moral fibre left in the nation but it was soon to be sorely tested with the mad grab for dominance by Athaliah.

AHAZIAH -

The Doomed Puppet

(JUDAH)

HEBREW - “Yah hath seized”

FIRST MENTION - 2 Kings 8:24

LAST MENTION - 2 Chron. 22:11

AGE AT ACCESSION - 22 years - 2 Kings 8:26

AT DEATH - 23

LENGTH OF REIGN - 1 year during 841 BC

FATHER - Jehoram (Judah)

MOTHER - Athaliah (Israel)

CONTEMPORARY KING - Jehoram 853-841 BC.

SUMMARY OF CHARACTER

The youngest son of Jehoram reigned only 1 year and was completely overshadowed in all that he did by his infamous mother, Athaliah. Being the only survivor of Jehoram’s sons he was installed on the throne of Judah as a mere puppet by Athaliah who had not yet summoned the courage to seize supreme power for herself. She dominated her 22 year old son and counselled him to do wickedly after the ways of the house of Ahab. The only thing recorded concerning Ahaziah’s character is that he was willing to walk in the counsel of his mother and abandon himself to gross evils as his father had done.

Ahaziah was inseparable from the house of Ahab. He was a true son of Jezebel (his grandmother) and it was therefore fitting that he should receive Divine retribution along with the rest of Ahab’s house in the land of Israel. While visiting Samaria to see his convalescing uncle, with whom he had recently joined in war against Syria, he was found by Yahweh’s avenger Jehu who struck him down. As the record simply states; “The destruction (treading down) of Ahaziah was of God by coming to Joram.”

HARMONY OF THE RECORDS OF AHAZIAH'S REIGN	2 Kings	2 Chron.
Accession at age 22	8:24-26	22:1-2
Divine estimation of his reign	8:27	22:3-4
Makes an alliance with Jehoram	8:28-29	22:5-6
The anointing of Jehu	9:1-13	22:7
Ahaziah slain by Jehu in Israel	9:27-29	22:8-9

VERSE BY VERSE NOTES

ACCESSION AND DIVINE ESTIMATION – 2 Chron. 22:1-4

V.1 - “**the inhabitants of Jerusalem made Ahaziah his youngest son king**” - Athaliah coveted the rulership of Judah but the people of Jerusalem anointed Ahaziah the only surviving son of Jehoram. The Arabians had “slain all the eldest” in retribution for the slaughter of Jehoshaphat’s sons (2 Chron. 21:17). Athaliah was forced to acquiesce in favour of her son, but did not hesitate to grasp the throne upon his death (V.10).

V.2 - **“forty and two years old was Ahaziah”** - This should read 22 as in the companion account of 2 Kings 8:26. It would be impossible to reconcile 42 in view of 2 Chron. 21:5.

“Athaliah the daughter of Omri” - Her name means “Yah has constrained”, and so God had while Jehoshaphat was alive. Now she was unleashed and Judah quickly plunged into the apostasy of the house of Ahab under her leadership. Athaliah was actually the granddaughter of Omri and daughter of Ahab but curiously Omri is said to be her father. The reason for this lies in the fact that she was a “counsellor” of iniquity to Ahaziah as Omri had been to Ahab. Omri has been ‘memorialised’ as the renowned “statute-maker” of Israel (Mic. 6:16). Omri means “heaping”, and Athaliah heaped up iniquity in Judah as Ahab had done in Israel.

V.3 - **“he walked in the ways of the house of Ahab”** - The statutes were Omri’s, the ways Ahab’s, for his “mother was his counsellor (*ya’at* - to advise, to deliberate or resolve) to do wickedly”. The word *ya’at* is used of Balak in Mic. 6:5.

V.4 - **“Wherefore he did evil...for they were his counsellors”** - The stress laid on this point is too great to be ignored. It was a natural consequence that with such counsel iniquity would follow. The principle held true in reverse: “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Prov. 22:6). In a sense the ‘union’ of the two nations was now complete. Ahaziah was completely dependant upon the house of Ahab for direction. The kingdom of Judah which had reached such lofty heights under Jehoshaphat was now ruled by a 22 year old king under the complete domination of his evil mother and her even more evil family.

“to his destruction” - And so it was, literally. He was killed at the age of 23 while on a visit to Jehoram his uncle in Samaria. Fittingly, he died where he truly belonged.

THE DEATH OF AHAZIAH – 2 Chron. 22:5-9

V.5 - **“and went with Jehoram...to war against Hazael king of Syria at Ramoth-Gilead”** - There are depressing echoes here of Jehoshaphat’s disastrous campaign with the house of Ahab fighting against Syria at Ramoth-Gilead (2 Chron. 18).

“the Syrians smote Joram” - Jehoram’s injury was the catalyst for the rise of Jehu as the destroyer of Ahab’s house (V.7). He retired to Jezreel to convalesce instead of returning to Samaria the capital. This was necessary in order to fulfil Elijah’s prophecy which required the dogs to lick his blood in the portion of Naboth’s vineyard at Jezreel (1 Kings 21:29).

V.7 - **“the destruction of Ahaziah was of God by coming to Joram”** - The hand of God was not openly visible in the *destruction* (*tebuwcah* - a treading down, i.e. ruin) of Ahaziah, but judgement was as certain as any Divine manifestation of power. Divine providence brought every strand together to ensure fulfilment of God’s edict against Ahab’s house.

“he went out with Jehoram against Jehu” - God’s chosen avenger bore a name that means “Yah is he” and he was the son of “Nimshi” (“extricated”, from the root to pull out) a name which exactly described his work. While Jehoram convalesced at Jezreel, Jehu and his fellows were jockeying for power at Ramoth-Gilead until a messenger from Elisha resolved the issue by Jehu being *anointed* (*mashach* - to rub with oil, i.e. to anoint) to *cut off* (*karath* - to cut, to destroy or consume) Ahab’s house. That Jehoram could go out

against Jehu shows he had recovered sufficiently enough to defend his interests against the revolt. His dallying at Jezreel proved fatal.

V.8 - **“Jehu...found the princes of Judah”** - Ahaziah had taken the royal household with him including the sons of his deceased brothers of whom he had custody. Consequently the decimation of the house of David was almost complete. Only very young children remained in Jerusalem, and all but one of these were to die at the hand of Athaliah (V.10).

V.9 - **“And he sought Ahaziah”** - Jehu's thoroughness was to become legendary. He *sought* (*baqash* - to search out, to strive after) Ahaziah diligently, for the latter had “hid in Samaria” when Jehu pursued Jehoram. This does not mean that he fled to the city of Samaria but is the term used for the land. Ahaziah was caught at Gur by Ibleam on the way to Megiddo where he died (2 Kings 9:27).

“they buried him” - The companion account in 2 Kings 9:28 says that Ahaziah's servants brought his body to Jerusalem and buried him among his fathers. This may mean at some later time.

“Because said they, he is the son of Jehoshaphat” - Whereas the body of Jehoram was left to be consumed by dogs in the portion of Naboth (2 Kings 9:26), Jehu buried Ahaziah because he was the son of Jehoshaphat who they acknowledged “sought Yahweh with all his heart.” This formerly obscure captain of Israel's army was well aware of the enormous reputation of Judah's great king even though he was instrumental in wiping out his connection with the house of Ahab.

“So the house of Ahaziah had no power to keep still the kingdom” - The epitaph of Ahaziah is illuminating. This doomed 23 year old puppet of his mother had no power to bring peace or tranquillity to his kingdom because the house of Ahab were his “counsellors” to his destruction (V.4). God was in control of events which were shaped to bring about the inevitable and far reaching judgements upon that house of which he was an integral part. There was only one way to “keep still the kingdom”, and that was by faithful service to Yahweh as had been shown by Jehoshaphat his grandfather and Asa his great-grandfather (2 Chron. 14:1,6; 15:15; 17:10).

JEHU -

Yahweh's Avenger

(ISRAEL)

HEBREW - "Yah is he"

FIRST MENTION - 1 Kings 19:16 **LAST MENTION** - Hos.1:4

LENGTH OF REIGN - 28 years from 841-814 BC

FATHER - Jehoshaphat ("Yahweh is judge") - 2 Kings 9:2. He is also called the son of Nimshi (1 Kings 19:16) who was in fact his grandfather.

CONTEMPORARY KINGS - Ahaziah 841 BC; Athaliah 841-836 BC; Joash 835-796 BC.

SUMMARY OF CHARACTER

Jehu is one of the most curious characters to appear in the record of the kings. He manifested an unquenchable zeal for Yahweh while undertaking the mission of annihilating Ahab's house, but as soon as he came to the throne he casually reintroduced the apostasy of Jeroboam, completely ignoring the law of God concerning Israel's worship. Therefore, in order to plumb his character, attention must be focused on what really motivated his professed zeal for Yahweh. The scripture provides some valuable clues in this search.

Jehu massacred in succession, Jehoram, Ahaziah, Jezebel, seventy sons of Ahab, forty two princes of Judah and many thousands of Baal worshippers gathered by his decree to a special conference in Samaria. The cool and calculated ruthlessness with which he accomplished the vengeance of God upon Ahab's house is a clear indication of the real essence of Jehu's character. God commended him for destroying the house of Ahab (2 Kings 10:30), but not for the attitude he adopted in accomplishing it. Jehu relished bloodshed and derived great satisfaction from the destruction of his fellow Israelites, as is revealed in the death of Ahab's seventy sons whose heads he had piled up in two heaps at the gate of Jezreel (2 Kings 10:8-11). His zeal for Yahweh was really only a cloak for a bloodthirstiness unequalled in the history of the kings; hence God later declared that He would in turn "avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu" (Hos. 1:4).

However, before Jehu was given an opportunity to manifest his bloodthirstiness he appears as a man of considerable ingenuity in manoeuvring himself into a position of absolute authority over the army of Israel. He was one of the captains of Jehoram who had been left to maintain the siege of Ramoth-Gilead while the king retired to Jezreel to recover from wounds received in battle. In the absence of the king, a messenger from Elisha arrived to anoint Jehu the son (grandson) of Nimshi king over Israel in accordance with the instructions given to Elijah (1 Kings 19:16). The secretive manner of this anointing provided the backdrop for one of the most interesting revelations of character in the kings. The hasty departure of Elisha's messenger was naturally followed by inquisitive questions from Jehu's fellow captains as to the origin and purpose of the messenger. Jehu's reply; "Ye know the man, and his communication" is a calculated move to gain a psychological advantage over his fellows, and to condition their minds to accept the coming revelation

that he had in fact been anointed king. It was a delicate situation masterfully handled by Jehu who is indeed revealed in the record as a shrewd man in all the accounts of his dealings with people.

Consider a little more closely the way Jehu handled the arrival of Elisha's messenger at the camp (2 Kings 10:5), and it will be seen that Jehu was carefully working out a strategy to seize control of the army. When the messenger came in, looked at Jehu and said; "I have an errand to thee, O captain", Jehu replied; "Unto which of all us." This was not a genuine display of humility but a calculated self-effacement to ingratiate himself with his peers so that his ambition to seize power could be concealed until exactly the right moment. He was carefully preparing the ground for a rise to the supreme authority of the monarchy which he knew was available to the man who fulfilled the prophecies of Elijah against the house of Ahab. He had heard Elijah pronounce the doom of his master's house (2 Kings 9:25-26,36), and since that time had been waiting for the opportunity to fulfil his ambition of ruling Israel. The first step was control of the army, and this he ingeniously secured without bloodshed. The incumbent of the throne and his house were not to be so fortunate when Jehu moved to secure the monarchy!

Jehu was known by the idiosyncratic driving of his chariot. It appears he drove neither at full tilt or at normal walking pace while traversing the countryside, but rather at something close to a canter, which was the most uncomfortable way possible for the rider. As the watchman on the tower of Jezreel observed; "He drives like a madman". This in itself was perhaps a testimony of his character. He was an ambitious man, eager to accomplish the task before him and fulfil his desire to reign, but able to suppress his eagerness only until his plans could be implemented and the doors opened for him to proceed. He then went forth with murderous haste and furious agitation to remove Ahab's house from the land of Israel. Truly God knows the hearts of men and can use them for His purpose at the appropriate season.

HARMONY OF THE RECORDS OF THE REIGN OF JEHU	2 Kings	2 Chron.
Anointed by a messenger from Elisha	9:1-10	22:7
Proclaimed king by the army of Israel	9:11-13	
Conspires against the wounded Jehoram	9:14-15	
Advances on Jezreel to destroy Ahab's house	9:16-20	
Slays Jehoram and fulfils a prophecy	9:21-26	
Slays Ahaziah king of Judah	9: 27-29	22:8-9
Slays Jezebel and fulfils a prophecy	9:30-37	
Procures the death of Ahab's 70 sons	10:1-7	
Their heads piled up at gate of Jezreel	10:8-10	
Wipes out the residue of Ahab's house		10:11
The house of Ahaziah massacred	10:12-14	
Makes a pact with Jehonadab the son of Rechab	10:15-17	
Massacres Baal worshippers by subterfuge	10:18-25	
Destroys Baal worship completely	10:26-28	
Reverts to the idol's of Jeroboam	10:29-31	
Attacked by Hazael of Syria	10:32-33	
Dies and is buried in Samaria	10:34-36	

VERSE BY VERSE NOTES**THE ANOINTING OF JEHU – 2 Kings 9:1-10**

V.1 - **“Elisha...called one of the children of the prophets”** - *Elisha* (“To whom El is salvation”) was head of the school of the prophets (2 Kings 4:38) that had been established by Samuel. At the precise moment revealed to him by God he appointed one of the “sons of the prophets” (Roth.) to go to Ramoth-Gilead to anoint Jehu king over Israel and fulfil 1 Kings 19:16.

“gird up thy loins” - This is the language in scripture for obtaining control of thought by the power of the Word (1 Pet. 1:13). Coupled with a “box of oil” (Roth. - “flask of oil”) which represents the spirit word there is spiritual import here.

V.2 - **“Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat”** - *Jehu* means “Yah is he”. Appropriately his father’s name means “Yahweh is judge”. Here was the personal representative of God as judge of Ahab’s house. He is called the son of Nimshi in 1 Kings 19:16 and 2 Chron. 22:7, but it is clear from this chapter that Nimshi was his grandfather. Nimshi means “extricated” from a root signifying to pull out. The appropriateness of this name to Jehu’s mission is obvious.

“make him arise up from among his brethren” - Roth. - “get him to rise up out of the midst of his brethren”. He may have been in command of the troops in Jehoram’s absence, but the language conveys a sense of equality among the captains present. Elisha’s messenger was to make some display of the separation of Jehu from among his peers.

“and carry him to an inner chamber” - Roth. - “take him into an inner chamber”. Yng. - “into the inner part of an inner chamber”. Jehu was to be treated with curious exclusiveness so that it was plainly apparent that something special was being done to him. In the upshot his fellow captains interpreted the actions of Elisha’s messenger as so strange they thought he was a madman (V.11).

V.4 - **“the young man”** - Twice in this verse it is stated that the prophet selected by Elisha was a “young man.” This emphasis on his youth must have a purpose. The reason seems to lie in the remarkable events that follow. Jehu’s elevation was to be by a combination of flowering personal ambition and Divine appointment. God intended to unleash his smouldering ambition to be the one that would fulfil Elijah’s edict against Ahab’s house that was now only being restrained by the problem of succession to the throne. How was an obscure captain to rise to supreme power without meeting the same fate as Zimri? It would have been easy for Elisha to anoint Jehu in a public ceremony perhaps, but this too would not have achieved the result intended. God needed a man driven by murderous personal ambition who would see his ticket to power in the meticulous fulfilment of Elijah’s edict against Ahab and his religion. By sending an unknown “young man” on a secretive mission to furtively anoint Jehu, Elisha was creating the environment for Jehu’s natural ingenuity and resourcefulness to take over. All Jehu needed was the confidence to take the step he was already contemplating.

V.5 - **“when he came, behold, the captains of the host were sitting”** - These captains of Israel’s army would appear to be all of the same rank. That is the impression gained by the

description of them “sitting” together perhaps in conference or as equals at banquet. The events that follow reinforce this impression.

“and he said, I have an errand to thee, O captain” - Elisha’s messenger could not have been more precise. Approaching the assembled group of captains he fixed his gaze on Jehu and said “I have an errand (*dabar* - a word, a matter) to *thee*, O captain.” No-one could mistake who was being addressed. Jehu’s response is illuminating!

“And Jehu said, Unto which of all us?” - Roth. - “For which of us all.” Despite the fact that Jehu knew the message was for him alone he diplomatically responds in a way that acknowledged that he was just one captain among a number of equals. This was a cunning way of preparing his fellows for his impending elevation above them. It is clear that Jehu was already manoeuvring himself into a position to seize absolute authority over the army. His ambitions, conceived in Naboth’s vineyard (V.25), were now ripening. He anticipated that he would fulfil the role of the destroyer of Ahab’s house. All he needed was an opening, and suddenly it had come. But he must proceed cautiously, and so the subtlety of Jehu came to the fore. He feigned humility before his peers even as his heart leapt in anticipation of the fulfilment of his dreams.

V.6 - “And he arose, and went into the house” - Jehu’s anointing was conducted in the seclusion of “the house”. He alone heard the message that he was to repeat to his fellows in verse 12. Only the anointing oil poured on his head remained as evidence of the mysterious visitation of the young prophet.

“I have anointed thee king over the people of the LORD, even over Israel” - This statement is enlightening as a revelation of the way God viewed Israel even after 30 years of the most hideous apostasy. They were still “the people of Yahweh” and hence His ‘ecclesia’, albeit apostate. There remained a remnant in Israel for whose sake God had not abandoned His people. Compare the position of the ecclesia at Thyatira (Rev. 2:18-29).

V.7 - “Thou shalt smite the house of Ahab...that I may avenge” - Divine vengeance lay at the heart of Jehu’s elevation. It was to be extensive and thorough. The blood of God’s prophets and His servants who had stood against Ahab and Jezebel at the cost of their lives was to be savagely avenged. It is noteworthy that no mention is made of the destruction of the Baal worship that Jehu so assiduously eradicated. To be sure, this was to be swallowed up in the total annihilation of Ahab’s house, but in this edict it is peripheral to the primary concern: vengeance for the savage and relentless pursuit of God’s faithful servants by Jezebel.

V.8 - “and him that is shut up and left in Israel” - These words (*asur* and *azab*) are employed in almost every Divine pronouncement against a doomed house. Their probable meaning is “helpless or hindered” (*asur*), and “abandoned or destitute” (*azab*). Roth. translates the phrase, “whether shut up or left at large.” The words appear to be idiomatic demonstrating the all-embracing comprehensiveness of the judgement. No matter what their status, position, or circumstances; all who belonged to Ahab would perish (V.9).

V.10 - “the dogs shall eat Jezebel, and there shall be none to bury her” - Jehu had heard these words before (V.25-26; 1 Kings 21:23). Now he knew he would fulfil them, but even he was to be surprised by the accuracy of their fulfilment (V.36). When he slew Jezebel he intended to bury her (V.34-35), but the dogs pre-empted him exactly as these words

implied: and there was “nothing to bury”, as the phrase can literally be rendered. So it came to pass (V.35-37).

“And he opened the door and fled” - The final scene of this drama served to heighten the mystery surrounding Jehu’s anointing. Suddenly the door of the house burst open and the young prophet fled away in the sight of the captains leaving Jehu to emerge covered in anointing oil. Little wonder they enquired of him, “Is all well?” (V.11).

JEHU PROCLAIMED KING OF ISRAEL – 2 Kings 9:11-15

V.11 - **“wherefore came this mad fellow to thee”** - Roth. translates: “madman”. The unusual sequence of events furtively played out by an intense and nervous young man with a battle-hardened warrior must surely have been very mystifying to Jehu’s compatriots. They were to get no relief as Jehu cunningly spun his web at their expense.

“And he said unto them, Ye know the man and his communication” - This was a bold and carefully calculated assertion which Jehu knew to be untrue. He did not know the young man. How were they to know who he was or what his message had been? Cunningly, he suggests that they were fully aware of the reason for the young prophet’s visit, and perhaps had a hand in arranging it! The psychological impact of this ploy had been carefully considered, and proved very effective.

V.12 - **“And they said, It is false; tell us now”** - The word *false* is *seger* signifying a deliberate lie. Roth. translates, “False, pray tell us”. The immediate response of the other captains reveals that they were in a defensive and mystified frame of mind, and had been psychologically prepared for the announcement of Jehu’s accession to the throne. Jehu seized the moment and made the announcement of his elevation.

V.13 - **“Then they hasted, and took every man his garment”** - This scene has often been repeated in the annals of human history in both the secular and religious realm. Human nature is consistent. Jehu had perfectly used the elements of mystery and surprise to support his claim to the throne in the wake of the visit by Elisha’s messenger. At this moment not one of his fellow captains would have the courage to demur from the claims of Jehu and the actions of his peers. Once he had their commitment of allegiance the rest was a relatively simple matter of consolidation.

“and put it under him on top of the stairs” - Roth. translates: “upon the very steps”; i.e. they hastened to acknowledge their submission to Jehu’s authority by forming a throne comprised of their outer robes placed on the stairs where he stood.

“and blew with trumpets, saying Jehu is king” - The news was spread instantly to the whole camp as the *trumpets* (*shophar*) wailed over the hills of Gilead and the captains repeated the refrain, “Jehu is king” throughout the host.

V.14 - **“So Jehu...conspired against Joram”** - The word *conspired* is *hitqasser* meaning to bind ones-self, i.e. with others as confederates. This is an important statement in the context referring not only to what transpired after Jehu’s elevation, but also to the motivation which brought him to power. God can use the burning ambitions of men to accomplish His purpose.

V.15 - **“And Jehu said, If it be your minds”** - Roth. - “If such is your mind”. Gray - “If ye are truly with me.” Here is another demonstration of Jehu’s shrewdness in progressing the

consolidation of his power over his still ‘shell-shocked’ peers. The ruthless and impatient spirit is concealed behind the facade of egalitarianism often seen today in business and politics. Jehu was a master in the use of such subtlety to get his way, when in fact he cared nothing for those he called upon to cooperate with him (cp. 10:1-3,9,15,18).

“let none go forth nor escape out of the city to go to tell it in Jezreel” - Roth. - “let no fugitive” or “escaper” (Yng.). The expedient of ensuring that no news would reach Jehoram in Jezreel to forewarn him of the coup was obviously wise. As in all transitions of power there would have been those who did not support Jehu’s conspiracy. Jehu is revealed as a clear thinking man who had thought through his strategy.

THE SLAYING OF JEHOAM – 2 Kings 9:16-26

V.17-19 - The drama heightens as Jehu at the head of the army drew near to Jezreel which has a commanding view of the valley of Jezreel to the east. The watchman on the tower spied a *company* (*shiph’ah* - copiousness, i.e. of a crowd) and Jehoram sent out two messengers in turn to ask; “Is it peace?”. Both joined the company and made no attempt to return. The fearsome countenance of Jehu settled with the unmistakable appearance of a determination that would brook no opposition is vivid in the imagination as we hear his response: “What hast thou to do with peace? turn thee behind me.” No-one in their right mind would have done any different to Jehoram’s messengers on that day.

V.20 - **“the driving is like the driving of Jehu the son of Nimshi; for he driveth furiously”** - Some men were known by their *driving* (*minhag* - driving of a chariot) even in ancient times. Jehu’s idiosyncrasy was that he drove *furiously* (*shigga’own* - craziness; from the root *shaga* - to rave through insanity). Roth. translates: “for with mad haste doth he drive”; Moffatt - “for he drives like a madman”; and Gray - “with abandon.” The indication is that Jehu’s driving was so eccentric as to be characteristic of a madman. It cannot be that he drove at full gallop at all times for this could not be sustained on a long journey, and furthermore others would not be able to keep up with him. The fact that two messengers came to him and then fell in behind proves this to be so. It is more likely that his style of driving showed the animated yet controlled impatience of a man who has a burning zeal to accomplish a work but is constrained by stubborn realities that frustrate him. The picture is of Jehu driving his chariot horses at the fastest sustainable pace; probably something akin to canter. The bone jarring discomfort of this speed could only be endured by a “madman”!

V.21 - **“And Joram said, Make ready”** - Roth.: “Harness.” It is significant that Jehoram rode in a chariot to meet Jehu outside the city, for the prophecy of Elijah required him to die in the vineyard of Naboth which was by the gate (1 Kings 21:19). By the time his chariot was harnessed and ready he just had time to reach the “portion of Naboth” (Roth. - “heritage of Naboth”) as Jehu arrived.

V.22 - **“What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many?”** - Jehu’s reasons for the impending carnage differed from those stated by God’s messenger in verse 7. His focus was on the *whoredoms* (*zanuwn* - adultery) of Jezebel and her *witchcrafts* (*kesheph* - magic, from a root, to whisper; a spell, i.e. to enchant or practise magic. Roth. has “incantations”). The reference is to the ritual prostitution and the mysterious incantations practised by Jezebel in the fertility cult associated with Baal worship. For Jehu’s comment that Jezebel’s evils “are so many”, Rotherham translates: “do abound.” Reflection on this reveals the character of the man. To him Jezebel’s greatest

evils were her idolatry, not her vicious murders. This was natural for a man so used to bloodshed and bent on more of it.

V.23 - “**Joram turned his hands and fled**” - The RSV says he “reined about.” Jehoram was doing his own driving and in the flurry, while shouting the warning: “There is treachery, O Ahaziah” to his nephew the king of Judah, he turned his chariot unwittingly towards Naboth’s inheritance which ran beside the wall adjacent to the gate. The timing and precision of all these events was too much for coincidence. The hand of the angels was clearly evident, even to the eye of Jehu.

V.24 - “**And Jehu drew a bow with his full strength**” - The echoes of the death of Ahab are loud here as Jehu “bent his bow” (Roth.) “with all his might” (Gray) - 1 Kings 22:34.

“**and smote Jehoram between his arms and the arrow went out at his heart**” - Jehu’s arrow was fired with deadly intent. As the RSV translates it struck him “between the shoulders and the arrow pierced his heart.”

“**and he sunk down in his chariot**” - The word *sunk* (*kara* - to bend the knee; to sink.) paints the picture vividly as Jehoram collapses with an arrow piercing his most vital organ.

V.25 - “**Then said Jehu to Bidkar his captain**” - Bidkar’s name appropriately means in the Hebrew; “by stabbing” i.e. assassin! He was a fitting assistant for Jehu in this work.

“**remember how that when I and thou rode together after Ahab**” - There is interesting revelation in this statement. Firstly, it is apparent that Jehu and Bidkar had been very close to Ahab, perhaps as bodyguards, and had heard Elijah’s edict either in Naboth’s vineyard (1 Kings 21:20-24), or at some later stage when Ahab confided in them. Secondly, there is the strong inference that ever since that time Jehu had aspired to fulfil the edict of Elijah.

“**the LORD laid this burden upon him**” - Roth.: “this doom.” Jehu was not a spiritual man (10:31), but he was a believer in Yahweh as God (10:16). His firm conviction that the *burden* (*massa* - a burden; chiefly a doom) would fall on Ahab had worked on his subtle heart to conceive his own part in its fulfilment.

V.26 - “**Surely I have seen yesterday the blood of Naboth and the blood of his sons**” - Roth. - “Surely....have I lately seen.” That is, the time was ripe for vengeance. Not content with the treacherous murder of Naboth, Jezebel had also ordered the death of his sons so that no heirs could claim a right to the land. We are indebted to Jehu’s revelation on this point because there is no record of their murder in 1 Kings 21.

“**I will requite thee in this plat**” - The word for *requite* is *shalam* and is used here in the sense of reciprocation. God would reciprocate Ahab’s evil “in this *plat*” (*chelqah* - an allotment); the very site of the vicious murder of Naboth and his sons.

THE SLAYING OF AHAZIAH – 2 Kings 9:27-29

V.27 - “**Ahaziah...fled by the way of the garden house**” - Lit. - “the house of the garden.” This was probably Ahab’s house near the garden of herbs he had grown in Naboth’s vineyard (1 Kings 21:2).

“**Smite him also in the chariot**” - Roth. captures the urgency of the emphatic Hebrew used in this command: “Him also - smite him in the chariot.”

“going up to Gur, which is by Ibleam” - *Gur* means “a lion cub”. It was a little town south of Jezreel near Ibleam (“Devouring fire”). Having caught up with Ahaziah Jehu’s servants severely wounded him, and it seems he changed direction and headed NW to Megiddo (“Rendezvous”) seeking refuge.

“And he fled to Megiddo and died there” - There are problems reconciling this account with 2 Chron. 22:9 which says Ahaziah was found in Samaria, brought to Jehu, slain and buried. If the records are put together it seems that after being wounded he fled to Megiddo (in the country of ‘Samaria’) where he was finally found and killed by Jehu.

V.28 - **“carried him...to Jerusalem and buried him”** - 2 Chron. 22:9 says Jehu buried him out of respect for the standing of Jehoshaphat before Yahweh. This record may indicate that when Jehu had moved elsewhere to continue his work the servants of Ahaziah took his body from Megiddo and reburied him Jerusalem.

THE SLAYING OF JEZEBEL – 2 Kings 9:30-37

V.30 - **“And when Jehu was come to Jezreel”** - Providentially Jezebel was at this time in Jezreel. This was necessary in order to fulfil Elijah’s edict in 1 Kings 21:23.

“Jezebel heard of it, and she painted her face” - Roth. - “she set her eyes in stibium.” The words *she painted* are *siym puwk* signifying to put (on) paint, or dye: (spec. stibium for the eyes). Stibium is bluish-white in colour. The word *puwk* is translated “with painting” in Jer. 4:30; and “with fair colours” in Isa. 54:11. **Face** is the Hebrew *ayin* - eyes. The world has not changed! Women have always endeavoured to enhance their beauty and attractiveness to men by painting ‘eye-shadow’ around their eyes.

“and tired her head” - Roth.: “ornamented her head.” The word *tired* is *yatab* - to make well (lit. sound or beautiful) in the sense of adornment, ornamentation. She had also ‘been to the hair-dresser for a hair-do’ as it could be expressed in the vernacular.

“and looked out at a window” - Jezebel’s motivation in painting her eyes and setting her hair at this time of crisis seems to have been to seduce Jehu. While he was busy chasing Jehoram and Ahaziah she carefully prepared herself in the only way she knew how - as a seductress. This inveterate seducer of men was probably near, or over, 60 years of age, but was undaunted by the imminent threat to her life. Her survival instincts went into action immediately. It was characteristic of this incorrigible woman that, in the heat of the moment, her fierce spirit blazed out in rage against the man she planned to seduce as he entered the gate beneath her.

V.31 - **“Had Zimri peace who slew his master”** - Roth. - “Was it peace, when Zimri slew his lord.” RSV - “Is it peace, you Zimri murderer of your master.” Knowing that her son was dead she sarcastically recalls the history of 50 years before (1 Kings 16:9-10). There is brazen defiance in this tirade, especially seeing Zimri’s revolt lasted only 7 days!

V.32 - **“And he lifted up his face to the window and said, Who is on my side”** - Jehu was single minded in his purpose. He demanded support from within the palace, counting on there being some who desired the end of such a woman. He was right for:

“there looked out to him two or three eunuchs” - *Eunuchs* is *caric* - to castrate; a eunuch. These were probably palace chamberlains. Real irony exists here in that “the adulteress”

and teacher of whoredoms should die at the hands of eunuchs - men who were not likely to be seduced by her.

V.33 - **“Throw her down”** - The word *throw down* - *shamat* means to fling down. Roth. - “Hurl her down.” This was easier said than done, for Jezebel had no intention of calmly being thrown out of the second story window to her death. This fact is clearly indicated in the record.

“and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall, and on the horses” - For her blood to be sprinkled on both the wall of the building and on the horses below indicates that she was bleeding profusely as she fell. She must have fought furiously to avoid going out of the window, and when the eunuchs finally got her outside and released her grip she appears to have grabbed desperately at the wall protrusions in an attempt to break her fall. The flailing of bleeding arms and legs would sprinkle blood in the manner described. What a fitting death this was for the woman who had spilt so much of the blood of Yahweh’s servants who could not escape her wicked hands (verse 7).

“and he trode her under foot” - RSV - “and they trampled on her.” This was a punishment reserved for the worst of God’s enemies (Mic. 7:10). In utter contempt for Jezebel, Jehu and his men simply drove their chariots over the still twitching corpse of Jezebel as it lay in the gutter of the main street of Jezreel (1 Kings 21:23).

V.34 - **“And when he was come in, he did eat and drink”** - Jehu immediately indulged in a banquet to celebrate his success. Perhaps he involved the sympathetic nobles and leaders of the city, although many of the henchmen of Ahab and Jezebel who had arranged the murder of Naboth were curiously at this time in Samaria (10:1).

“Go and see this cursed woman, and bury her” - The word “woman” in italics can be deleted to give the real sense. *Cursed* is *arar* - to execrate. Yng. - “Look after I pray you this cursed one.” Jehu intended a dignified burial for Jezebel because of her status but God intended otherwise. He had said “there would be none remaining” to bury (V.10).

“for she is a king’s daughter” - She was the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians (1 Kings 16:31). Jehu’s ‘dignified’ treatment of Ahaziah’s body was based on his regard for Jehoshaphat king of Judah because he was a man of God. His words here betray his humble background. As a commoner risen to the purple he had an ingrained respect for royalty despite his hatred of Jezebel as a person.

V.35 - **“they found no more of her than the skull, and the feet, and the palms of her hands”** - The burial party found only the remnants of Jezebel’s body. While Jehu ate in the palace the dogs dined on her body in fulfilment of 1 Kings 21:23 (V.36). But even these vile creatures could not cope with her *skull* (*gulgoleth* - a skull; as round), her *feet* (*regel* - a foot; as used in walking), and the “palms of her hands” (*kaph* - the hollow of the hand or palm). Having eaten most of Jezebel and probably carrying off the remainder, the dogs providentially left those parts of the body which represent **thinking, walk, and works**. This was a sign from God that not even dogs (who can eat their own vomit) would choose those parts of Jezebel that symbolised her moral corruption. She was the archetype of all that is evil and perverse; a complete manifestation of the flesh; mentally, morally and physically.

V.37 - “**the carcase of Jezebel shall be as dung**” - Roth. - “Become like heaps of dung on the face of the field.” This became literally true as the dogs which consumed Jezebel left their dung in the fields surrounding Jezreel.

“**so that they shall not say, This is Jezebel**” - Roth. - “so that they **cannot say**.” There would be no grave and no memorial to Jezebel so that men could not honour her in death. Nothing was to remain of this wicked woman to memorialise her corruptions and idolatry.

THE ANNIHILATION OF AHAB'S HOUSE – 2 Kings 10:1-11

V.1 - “**Ahab had seventy sons in Samaria**” - The reference to Ahab's sons would include the children of Jehoram as well and represented the entire royal line. The slaughter of all Ahab's ‘children’ was Divine poetic justice upon Ahab and Jezebel for the murder of Naboth and his sons. This context should be compared carefully with 1 Kings 21 as there are many similarities.

“**Jehu wrote letters**” - This is what Jezebel had done to secure Naboth's death (1 Kings 21:8).

“**unto the rulers of Jezreel**” - Strangely the *rulers* (*sar* - a head person) of Jezreel were at this time in Samaria. Jehu was in Jezreel and sent his letters to them in Samaria. Jezebel had written from Samaria and sent her letters to these same men in Jezreel. The poetic nature of this judgement is very precise, and was quite deliberate.

“**and to them that brought up Ahab's children**” - Roth. - “them who had been foster-parents.” The word is *omenim* - to foster as parent or nurse. But where was Jezebel? She was their mother or their grandmother. She seems to have been too preoccupied with the pleasures of her vile Baal worship and other pursuits to have concern about the upbringing of her children. That task was committed to ‘foster parents’, some of whom were the murderers of Naboth's sons! Three times the record refers to these foster parents. Clearly the lesson is not to be ignored in this generation where the standards of society in respect to bringing up children are set by ‘career’ women like Jezebel.

V.2-4 - “**seeing your master's sons are with you**” - There is a bold challenge in this letter. They had the ‘heirs’ to Ahab's throne and a defensible city. Would they anoint a king and fight to restore Ahab's dynasty? Jehu's approach was subtle and effective. The readers of his letter were caused to consider step by step the chances and the cost of mounting a successful resistance. Even the *best* (Roth. - “goodliest”) and *meetest* (*yashar* - straight or even. Roth. - “fittest”) of their “master's” sons were not worth fighting for at the risk of their own lives. For this cause they were “exceedingly afraid” (Roth. - “feared they very greatly”) knowing that “two kings”, Jehoram and Ahaziah had fallen before him. Again there are echoes from 1 Kings 21. Jezebel had instructed the same elders of Jezreel to set Naboth “on high” among the people and then to bring “two” false accusers to stand before him. They had felt this fear before too, being “exceedingly afraid” to disobey Jezebel's demand.

V.6 - “**If ye be mine**”- Roth. - “If mine ye are.” The second letter produced more ‘gentle’ prodding by Jehu with a heavy price tag: the heads of the 70 progeny of Ahab's house! Caught between self-preservation and death they obeyed, and conveyed the grisly cargo in *baskets* (*duwd* - a pot for boiling; by resemblance of shape - a basket) to Jezreel.

V.8 - **“Lay ye them in two heaps at the entering in of the gate”** - Yng. - “Make them two heaps.” Perhaps there were two heaps to allow for a heap on either side of the road leading into the city. There may also have been an allusion to Naboth’s sons for his vineyard was near the gate of the city (9:21).

V.9 - **“Ye be righteous: behold I conspired against my master and slew him: but who slew all these?”** - Jehu was a remarkable character. He delighted in bloodshed and plainly derived some satisfaction from watching the discomfort of others who were implicated in his bloodthirsty work. This is the reason for his condemnation in Hos. 1:4. The biting sarcasm of his opening words, “Ye be righteous” as he “went out and took his stand” (Roth.) against the people was indicative of an attitude that was not acceptable to God. It was good that he would let nothing “fall unto the earth” of all God had spoken against Ahab (V.10), but he was not justified in deriving so much pleasure from executing the judgements.

V.11 - **“So Jehu slew all that remained of the house of Ahab in Jezreel”** - The elimination of the remainder of Ahab’s house and *kinsfolks* (*yada* - to know. Roth.: “acquaintances”), and his priests was total. As Rotherham puts it, there was “not left remaining to him a survivor.”

THE HOUSE OF AHAZIAH DESTROYED – 2 Kings 10:12-14

V.12 - **“he was at the shearing house in the way”** - *Shearing house* is *beth eqed* - house of binding (for shearing). In the Hebrew the word *ra’ah* (to tend a flock) appears in the text. Note the margin of the AV. Yng. translates, “at the shepherds’ shearing house in the way.”

V.13 - **“Jehu met with the brethren of Ahaziah”** - Roth. - “so Jehu lighted upon.” Ahaziah’s brothers were dead so these were the 42 sons of his brethren (2 Chron. 22:8). Not having heard the news of Jehu’s coup and Ahaziah’s death they were on their way “to salute” (*shalom*) their relatives in Samaria whose heads now graced the entrance of Jezreel. Their visit indicates intimate links between the two royal houses due to Athaliah’s marriage to Jehoram. True to the meaning of Ahaziah’s name (“Yah hath seized”) they were swept up in the Divine judgements, Jehu having providentially “lighted upon” them.

V.14 - **“and slew them at the pit of the shearing house”** - Roth. - “slew them (casting them) into the pit.” Thus the only survivors of either royal house were the sons of Ahaziah, and soon only Joash (the youngest) remained of them (2 Chron. 22:10-12).

JEHU’S PACT WITH JEHONADAB – 2 Kings 10:15-17

V.15 - **“he lighted on Jehonadab the son of Rechab coming to meet him”** - Jehonadab, whose name means “Whom Yahweh impels”, was the father of the family of the Rechabites who maintained their faithfulness to God and their family principles right through to the days of Zedekiah the last king of Judah (Jer. 35:6,8,14,19). They were a unique family in Israel whose roots were in the Gentile tribe of the Kenites (1 Chron. 2:55) from which the family of Jethro had come (Judges 1:16; 4:11). Rechab means “horseman” or “the rider” and it is fascinating to see how the record plays upon that name as Jehonadab joins Jehu in his work. He had come out to meet the destroyer of Ahab’s house because he earnestly desired to see the eradication of Baal worship out the land and the restoration of the pure worship of Yahweh.

“he saluted him, and said to him, Is thy heart right, as my heart is with thy heart” - Jehu *saluted* (*barak* - to bless. Roth.- “blessed”) Jehonadab and asked if his heart was *right* (*yashar* - straight) with him as Jehu’s heart was with Jehonadab whom he knew to be uncompromisingly straight. As it turned out Jehonadab remained straight but Jehu proved to be crooked. Jehonadab watched with growing disappointment the way in which Jehu’s reformation came to a depressing end as the materialism and pleasures of the throne eroded his professed zeal for Yahweh. As palace, fields and vineyards, and the distractions of wine undermined Jehu’s resolve Jehonadab responded by laying down the most stringent principles to govern his own family, then and through successive generations (Jer. 35:6-7).

“If it be, give me thine hand” - Extending the hand was a mark of unity and sealed their covenant pledging friendship and fidelity in their common objective. So he drew him into the *chariot* (*merkabah*). Compare and contrast 1 Kings 20:33-34.

V.16 - **“Come with me and see my zeal for the LORD”** - *Zeal* is *qinah* - jealousy. That Jehu had to boast about his zeal for Yahweh immediately called its genuineness into question. Jehonadab needed to make no such claim of zeal. Every one knew it. That is why he had come out to meet Jehu.

“So they made him ride in his chariot” - *Ride* is *rakab* the root of Rechab, and the word for *chariot* is *rekeb* (a different word to V.15). There is a play on words here as the man “whom Yahweh impels”, the son of “the rider” is caused to “ride” in Jehu’s chariot.

THE MASSACRE OF THE BAAL WORSHIPPERS – 2 Kings 10:18-28

V.18 - **“Ahab served Baal a little; but Jehu shall serve him much”** - This cunning ploy to embolden Baal’s adherents and devotees to unwittingly walk into destruction by their own choice is characteristic of Jehu’s methods. He was masterful at applying pressure on people through a cunning blend of deceit and compulsion.

V.19 - **“But Jehu did it in subtilty”** - *Subtilty* is *goqbah* - a trick; trickery. Roth. - “but Jehu acted craftily.” The root word *gah-kav* is translated “to supplant” and “take by the heel” (Gen. 27:36; Hos. 12: 3-4).

V.21 - **“the house of Baal was full from one end to another”** - Roth. translates: “was filled from door to door.” Lit. the words mean “from mouth to mouth.” So great was the response from the ‘self-condemned’ that the house of their god was almost inadequate to hold them.

V.22 - **“the vestry”** - *meltachah* - to spread out; a wardrobe. That is, of the priests.

“Bring forth vestments for all the worshippers of Baal” - These *vestments* (*lebush* - a garment) served the purpose of identifying the *worshippers* (*abad* - to work, to serve) of Baal when the time came to slaughter them. They also served to ensure that worshippers of Yahweh who might have inquisitively come into the place would be identified. No servant of the true God could don the garb of a priest of Baal. Just to be sure though Jehu, under pressure from Jehonadab, insisted that they *search* (*chapphas* - to seek) for any servants of Yahweh (V.23). Jehu had gone to extraordinary lengths to conceal his true intentions, and obviously savoured every moment of this subterfuge. He always manifested a cool and ruthless shrewdness in dealing with people who were doomed.

V.26 - “**they brought forth the images**” – *Images* is *matstsebah* - a column. Roth. - “idolrous pillars.”

V.27 - “**and made it a draught house**” – *Draught house* is *machareashah* - a sink. Roth. - “sewer-house.” RSV - “latrine.” This was a very fitting end for a house of moral corruption. Jehu made it into a public toilet!

THE DIVINE ESTIMATION OF JEHU – 2 Kings 10:29-31

V.29 - “**Howbeit from the sins of Jeroboam...Jehu departed not**” - There is almost surprise in the word “howbeit” which Roth. translates “Nevertheless.” The man who had destroyed Baal worship out of Israel (V.28) reverted to Jeroboam’s apostasy. This emphasises the difficulty of complete reformation once apostasy obtains a firm foothold and becomes accepted as the norm.

V.30 - “**hast done unto the house of Ahab according to all that was in mine heart**” - Jehu’s work was in fact Yahweh’s work. He had done it well. What made him unacceptable was his relish for bloodshed and not for purity (Hos. 1:4).

“**thy children of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne**” - His was the longest dynasty in Israel lasting nearly 100 years. God is faithful to His promises even though men are rarely deserving of the benefits received.

V.31 - “**Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the LORD**” - *Heed* is *shamar* - to guard, protect. This was his stumbling block. Extremely efficient at disposing of God’s enemies as a warrior, he was not so inclined towards Divine principles and the positive aspects of love for God and the truth by continuous spiritual development. Time manifests what is truly in the heart of men, and it soon revealed that Jehu did not serve Yahweh “with all his heart.”

JEHU’S DECLINE AND DEATH – 2 Kings 10:32-36

V.32 - “**In those days the LORD began to cut Israel short**” - Roth. - “began Yahweh to make inroads in Israel.” RSV - “to cut off parts of Israel.” Margin AV - “cut off the ends.” The reign of Jehu heralded a period of eclipse for Israel beginning with his submission to Shalmaneser king of Assyria in 841 BC the year of his accession. A.H. Layard discovered the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser 111 in 1846 which is now in the British Museum. It depicts Jehu bowing in submission to the Assyrian king and the inscription mentions his name.

“**Hazael smote them in all the coasts of Israel**” - Hazael had played a role in judging Ahab’s house in accordance with 1 Kings 19:15, for he had wounded Jehoram at Ramoth-Gilead (9:15), which was the catalyst for the rise of Jehu. Now he had a role in punishing Jehu for his perfidy in returning to Jeroboam’s golden calves (8:12). His campaigns probably came later in Jehu’s reign as he too had to contend with Assyria in the north.

V.33 - “**From Jordan eastward, all the land of Gilead**” - The entire area of Gilead eastward or as Roth translates, “towards sunrise” was finally lost to Hazael of Syria. This was one of the “ends” of Israel that God began to “cut off” for their stubborn iniquity.

V.34 - “**Now the rest of the acts of Jehu, and all that he did**” - Jehu’s acts were recorded by God’s prophets but have not been preserved in scripture. He “did” much, and showed “might”, but it was not in the directions God sought, except for the work of annihilating

Ahab's house. The record is silent about his other achievements. He was a bitterly disappointing failure to the few in Israel like Jehonadab who saw his rise as the best hope in 90 years of restoring Israel to the pure worship of Yahweh.

ATHALIAH -

“That wicked woman”

(JUDAH)

HEBREW - “Yah hath constrained”

FIRST MENTION - 2 Kings 8:26 **LAST MENTION** - 2 Chron. 24:7

LENGTH OF REIGN - 6 years from 841-856 BC

FATHER - Ahab (Israel) - “Resembling the father”

MOTHER - Jezebel (Zidon) - “Chaste”

BROTHERS - Ahaziah and Jehoram (Israel)

CONTEMPORARY KING - Jehu 841-814 BC

SIGNIFICANT REFERENCES - 2 Chron. 24:7.

SUMMARY OF CHARACTER

The epithet, “That wicked woman”, is the Scriptural testimonial of Athaliah the daughter of Jezebel (2 Chron. 24:7). She is distinguished in the record of Kings for two acts that amply encapsulate the achievements of her rule. The callous murder of all the children of the royal household, excepting the baby Joash, who narrowly escaped death through the intervention of the faithful Jehoshabeath, illustrates the murderous contempt of Athaliah for Yahweh and the seed of David who were to occupy the throne in accordance with the promise made to David. During her career, firstly as the wife of Jehoram and the dominating mother of Ahaziah, and then as sole ruler of Judah, she manifested utter contempt and bitter hatred of the things associated with Yahweh and His covenant with David, and sought to expunge the Truth from the minds the people of Judah. In enticing the people away from the things of God she was effectively committing “murder” on a massive scale after the pattern established in the brutal slaying of the royal seed.

The second thing noted of Athaliah was that she “had broken up the house of God” and dedicated all of its vessels of service to Baalim. This was true of the Temple, but also of the nation as a whole, who constituted “the house of God”. Athaliah worked to break up God’s ecclesia and to turn its living “vessels of service” to the worship of Baalim. It was as well for Judah that she only partially succeeded in fulfilling this objective, for surely God would have terminated the history of Judah as a kingdom much sooner than he did.

The appalling condition into which Judah had fallen because of Jehoshaphat’s foolish policies towards the house of Ahab fully matured during the 6 dark years of Athaliah’s reign. How low Judah had slipped that a vile and corrupt woman, the daughter of Jezebel, the most hateful woman in scripture, should sit on the throne once occupied by David and Solomon. Not even the idol-conditioned and spiritually apathetic people of Judah were able to tolerate such a state of affairs, and openly rejoiced when Jehoiada overthrew the hated usurper and had her slain, after 6 long years in which he had been preparing the child Joash to be brought forth to the people. It is significant that Athaliah reigned ‘six’ years - the number of man and the flesh! Upon her death the record states; “all the people of the

land rejoiced; and the city was quiet”; for both the land and the people were enjoying a welcome Sabbath (the seventh year).

HARMONY OF THE RECORDS OF ATHALIAH'S RULE

	2 Kings	2 Chron.
Seizes power upon the death of Ahaziah	11:1-3	22:10-12
Reigns for six years	11:3	22:12
Jehoiada prepares to overthrow her	11:4-11	23:1-10
Joash crowned as king	11:12	23:11
She rushes into the temple	11:13-14	23:12-13
Is slain by the king's horse gate	11:15-16	23:14-15
Jehoiada destroys her idolatry	11:17-18	23:16-17
The kingdom is set in order	11:19-21	23:18-21

VERSE BY VERSE NOTES

ATHALIAH'S SEIZURE OF POWER – 2 Chron. 22:10-12

V.10 - “**But when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah**” - This is a revealing phrase for effective power was in Athaliah's hands and her indomitable spirit ruled her children as is clearly illustrated by 2 Chron. 22:2-4 and 24:7.

“**saw that her son was dead**” - Her direct link to power thus severed, she hastened to seize absolute control for herself. There is obviously no sorrow or mourning for her son, or for her brothers who had been slain by Jehu. The rise of Jehu did not deter her ambitions, nor did the fact that “the house of Ahaziah had no power to keep still the kingdom” (V.9). Athaliah was driven by wild and murderous ambition.

“**she arose and destroyed all the seed royal of the house of Judah**” - The word *destroyed* is *dabar* - to arrange, figuratively to speak; rarely (in a destructive sense) to subdue. A more unnatural and despicable act it is difficult to conceive (cp. Isa. 49:15). For “seed royal”, Yng. translates “seed of the kingdom”; i.e. the children of Ahaziah. There could not have been many, and they could have been no older than 8 or 9 as Ahaziah died aged 23.

V.11 - “**But Jehoshabeath the daughter of the king**” - The Davidic promise was gravely threatened, and God will always provide Himself with a man or woman in a time of crisis such as this. He had prepared a remarkable woman whose name means “Yahweh sworn” (Strong's); or Gesen. - “Whose oath is Yahweh”, i.e. she who swears by Yahweh, hence worships and serves Him. She is referred to 3 times, and each time as the daughter of king Jehoram. Hence it seems she was not the daughter of Athaliah, but of another wife. Her faithfulness to God is obvious in the one glimpse we get of her in the record.

“**took Joash the son of Ahaziah**” - *Joash* means “Yahweh - fired”, and his father's name, “Whom Yah hath seized”.

“**and stole him from among the king's sons that were slain**” - Roth. - “that were being slain”. This translation serves to highlight the real urgency and drama of the situation.

“**and his nurse**” - *yanaq* - to suck; to give milk. Joash was probably 6-9 months old.

“in a bedchamber” - *mittah* - a bed (as extended) for sleeping or eating. The word always refers to a “bed”. Yng. has: “into the inner part of the bedchambers”.

“the wife of Jehoiada the priest” - His name means “Yahweh known”, or Ges. - “Whom Yahweh cares for”. Here was a curious marriage of a Levitical priest aged about 90 to a princess of Judah who could not have been older than 25! Together in this union there was an association of royalty and priesthood. In fact, Jehoiada was effectively a king-priest (2 Chron. 24:16).

“for she was the sister of Ahaziah” - This fact is stated as a reason also for her action. She had ready access to the palace.

“hid him from Athaliah” - *Hid* is *cathar* - to hide (by covering). Roth. - “from the face of Athaliah”. This would not have been easy and was done at great risk to herself.

V.12 - **“And he was with them hid in the house of God six years”** - When it was safe Joash was moved from the bed-chamber in the king’s palace to the safety of the Temple and Jehoiada’s care. Athaliah who is styled the “lawless one” (2 Chron. 24:7) reigned for 6 years (i.e. fleshly), and is a type of the religious system styled the “mother of harlots” which enjoys power for 6 millenniums until overthrown by the King-priest (Christ) at the start of the 7th Millennium (2 Chron. 23:1).

“and Athaliah reigned over the land” - She controlled the land, but did not control the hearts of the people of the land (see 2 Chron. 23:21).

JEHOIADA PROCLAIMS JOASH KING – 2 Chron. 23:1-11

V.1 - **“And in the seventh year Jehoiada strengthened himself”** - The ageing priest, who was to become such a dominating force for good during the reign of Joash, waited until the opportune moment to overthrow Athaliah and install the last surviving son of David on the throne at the tender age of 7. To achieve this he had to **strengthen** (*chazaq* - to fasten upon, to seize, be strong) himself, which he did by binding faithful men in a “covenant with him”. The RSV translates the phrase “entered into a compact”. The 5 men he took into his confidence were named: Azariah (“Yah has helped”) the son of Jeroham (“compassionate”); Ishmael (“God will hear”) the son of Jehohanan (“Yahweh favoured”) who was probably a captain in Jehoshaphat’s army (2 Chron. 17:15); another Azariah the son of Obed (“serving”); Maaseiah (“work of Yah”) the son of Adaiah (“Yah has adorned”); and Elishaphat (“God of judgement”) the son of Zichri (“memorable”) who had also distinguished himself in the time of Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. 17:16).

V.2 - **“And they went about in Judah”** - The fact that Jehoiada’s messengers travelled throughout Judah building support for a coup illustrates that feeling against Athaliah was very strong. No-one came and warned her of her impending demise. It required only strong leadership and the support of prominent men to overthrow her.

V.3 - **“And all the congregation made a covenant with the king”** - The companion account in 2 Kings 11:4 says they made a covenant with Jehoiada. In a very real sense he was the “king” as 2 Chron. 24:16 indicates. He was ultimately buried among the kings in recognition of this fact.

“Behold, the king’s son shall reign” - Compare 2 Kings 11:4 which says he “shewed” them the king’s son. The empirical proof that David’s line had survived galvanised the people.

V.4 - **“on the sabbath”** - Jehoiada made elaborate plans for the next Sabbath. The intensification of activity in the Temple and the gathering of the people for normal Sabbath worship provided both a good cover and an opportunity to anoint Joash before all the assembled congregation.

V.5 - **“the gate of the foundation”** - It is called “Sur” in 2 Kings 11:6 meaning in Heb. “turned off”, i.e. deteriorated. From the description it appears to have been a principal entrance to the Temple compound.

V.8 - **“for Jehoiada the priest dismissed not the courses”** - There were the 24 courses of priests serving one week, ending on the Sabbath, who were chosen by lot (1 Chron. 24:1-19; Luke 1:8). Jehoiada retained the outgoing priests so as to build up extra numbers for the coming coronation of Joash.

V.10 - **“the temple”** - The word occurs three times in the verse and is rendered “house” by Roth., as it should be (note AV mg.).

V.11 - **“and gave him the testimony”** - The word *testimony* (*eduwth*) refers to a copy of the Law (Isa. 8:16&20). Though too young to appreciate it, Joash was being instructed that this was the only basis for a successful rule (Deut. 17:18-20).

“and put upon him the crown” - The word *crown* is *nezer* - something set apart; from root *nazar* - to hold aloof, to dedicate. The latter is the root of the word Nazarite. Joash was being dedicated to a life of service to Yahweh based upon the Word.

“God save the king” - Roth. more correctly translates: “may the king live”.

ATHALIAH SLAIN – 2 Chron. 23:12-15

V.13 - **“and such as taught to sing praise”** - Roth. - “and such as led the offerings of praise”. This is a reference to the Levitical singers (1 Chron. 6:31-32).

“Then Athaliah rent her clothes, and said, Treason, Treason” - The margin of the AV has “Conspiracy” for the word *Treason* which is *qesher* - an alliance (usually unlawful). Typical of her kind she did not seem to remember her own seizure of power involving the most hideous treason of all - the murder of the royal family of David.

V.14 - **“Have her forth of the ranges”** - Roth. - “Take her forth within the ranks”. RSV - “between the ranks”. Athaliah was surrounded by soldiers and forcefully marched outside of the Temple court to be slain in the adjoining street.

V.15 - **“So they laid hands on her”** - Both Roth. & RV have - “So they made way for her”. That is, none of the people sought to associate themselves with her.

“the horse gate” - This was evidently not the horse gate of the city wall, but one entering the king’s house.

THE KINGDOM SET IN ORDER BY JEHOIADA – 2 Chron. 23:16-21

V.16 - **“that they should be the LORD’S people”** - This was always in doubt while Athaliah ruled, because of her insidious corruptions. Baal worship was conducted side by side with the worship of Yahweh in Jerusalem. There was now a need for urgent reformation to rid the land of all forms of idolatry.

V.17 - **“Then all the people went to the house of Baal, and brake it down”** - The response evoked in the people was active and genuine. It was ironical that Baal worship had been destroyed out of Israel six years earlier but still flourished in Judah as the awful legacy of compromise by Jehoshaphat with the house of Ahab.

“and slew Mattan” - His name means “a present”, so it was fitting he should be ‘devoted’ to his god “before the altars”.

V.18 - **“the offices”** - Roth. - “the oversight”.

“whom David had distributed” - Roth. - “set by courses”.

V.20 - **“high gate”** - Roth. and RSV - “Upper gate”.

V.21 - **“And all the people of the land rejoiced”** - The word *rejoiced* is *sameach* - blithe or gleeful. Athaliah had ruled the land, but not the hearts of the people (22:12). Universal rejoicing greeted the news of her death and the city was *quiet* (*shaqat* - to repose) enabling Jehoiada to pursue his reforms.

JOASH -

The Ungrateful Dependant

(JUDAH)

HEBREW- “Yahweh-fired”

FIRST MENTION - 2 Kings 11:2 **LAST MENTION** - 2 Chron. 25:25

LENGTH OF REIGN - 40 years from 835-796 BC

AGE AT ACCESSION - 7 years **AT DEATH** - 47

FATHER - Ahaziah (“Yah hath seized”) **MOTHER** - Zibiah (“A female gazelle”)

CONTEMPORARY KINGS - Jehu 841-814 BC; Jehoahaz 813-797 BC; Jehoash 796-781 BC.

SIGNIFICANT FACT - Omission in the genealogy of the kings in Matt. 1.

SUMMARY OF CHARACTER

Joash is one of the great tragedies of the period of the kings. His early reign under the firm spiritual guidance of Jehoiada marked a turning point in Judah’s history. The dark days of Athaliah’s rule, and the supremacy of Ahab’s house in the affairs of the royal house of Judah, came to an abrupt end with the death of “that wicked woman” and the accession, at the age of seven, of the sole and rightful heir to David’s throne. The steady and wise hand of Jehoiada the high priest successfully guided both the young king and the nation on the path of reformation. The fruit was a restoration of faithful service to Yahweh which had suffered enormously through neglect under the successive reigns of Jehoram, Ahaziah, and Athaliah, each of whom had assiduously promoted the idolatrous Baal worship of the house of Ahab in Judah. All went well until the death of Jehoiada, and then the real character of Joash was revealed with tragic results for both him and the nation.

Jehoiada the high priest was the uncle of Joash by his marriage to Jehoshabeath the sister of Ahaziah, the young king’s father. During the early years of Joash’s reign he was virtually king, as the young child was clearly incapable of ruling Judah at the age of seven. In his capacity as “king-priest” Jehoiada was the strength and the conscience of God’s ecclesia as it slowly recovered from the apostasy of Joash’s predecessors. While Jehoiada stood behind Joash he reigned well, and the nation responded to his reforms and his efforts to repair the Temple. Princes and people alike willingly and joyfully contributed to the repairing of the Temple, and such was Joash’s own enthusiasm for the project that he was finally moved to censure his uncle for what he interpreted as procrastination on the project.

However, Joash’s zeal and enthusiasm for Divine things was shallow and short-lived. When the towering presence of Jehoiada was removed by old age, the young king who had been dependent upon his uncle all his life was suddenly thrust upon his own resources, and when the first test came he was found wanting. The moral ‘conscience’ of the nation was gone, and the princes of Judah who had responded to the imposing stature of Jehoiada in Divine things knew that Joash did not possess the same depth of character, nor the old priest’s unshakeable faithfulness to Yahweh. They perceived that Joash was not an individual in his own right, and that he had been entirely dependent upon his mentor and

guide for direction and strength. Sensing that the time was right to uncover their real sympathies, they approached Joash with a proposal to reintroduce the idolatrous and fleshly worship of Asherah which Jehoiada had removed. The sensual pleasures associated with the idol worship in the high places had not been forgotten, and the princes of Judah sought a return to the open “religion” of the high places with all its subtle attractions for the flesh. Jehoiada would not have tolerated such a thing and they knew it, but now he was gone, and they were sure that the Truth did not run as deep in Joash as it had in his uncle. They were right, and Joash succumbed to their pressure, and immediately proceeded to undo all the good of his early years.

Yahweh sent prophets to warn Joash of the consequences of his apostasy, but he and the princes of Judah were unmoved, until the spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada who had become the high priest upon the death of his father. So vehemently did Zechariah condemn the rulers of Judah for their apostasy that they conspired against him and secured his death by commandment of the king. Joash had turned a full circle. From a child totally dependent upon Jehoiada he had now become a ruthless murderer through the influence exerted upon him by the princes of Judah. The result was the death of a man (his own cousin) who was endeavouring to uphold the same principles which his father had diligently taught Joash. This fully illustrates how shallow his character was, and reveals him as a man who was easily influenced to do either good or evil, depending on the prevailing attitudes of those with whom he associated.

Joash the boy-king and Zechariah the high-priest elect had shared the same home and received the same education from Jehoiada. They were cousins, and it is probable that they had grown up together; and yet in the crisis, Joash “remembered not the kindness” of Jehoiada, without whom he could not have reigned, but “slew his son”. Thus the record presents him as being callously ungrateful in addition to being shallow.

The demise of Joash was fitting and exquisitely poetic. A small army from Syria decimated Judah’s forces and slew the princes who had been partners in Joash’s crimes. The invading forces left Joash wounded and helpless, and this tragic king met death at the hand of those upon whom he was totally dependent in his distress - his own servants. As he had begun, so he died: helpless in a bed-chamber; killed by two servants who are described extraordinarily as the sons of an Ammonitess and a Moabitess. Inexorably, the mind is drawn back to the origin of Moab and Ammon who were conceived as Lot lay helpless in the hands of two women (his daughters) after reaping the consequences of forsaking his uncle and associating with the ‘princes’ of the land.

HARMONY OF THE RECORDS OF THE REIGN OF JOASH

	2 Kings	2 Chron.
Rescued from Athaliah by Jehoshabeath	11:1-3	22:10-12
Crowned king at the age of seven	11:4-12	23:1-11
Jehoiada organises his kingdom	11:17-21	23:16-21
Reigns well under Jehoiada’s guidance	12:1-3	24:1-3
Collects money to repair Temple	12:4-6	24:4-5
Rebukes Jehoiada for delay	12:7-8	24:6-7
Collection taken up in Temple	12:9-10	24:8-11

Repairs to Temple completed	12:11-16	24:12-14
Jehoiada dies aged 130		24:15-16
The princes seduce Joash into idolatry		24:17-18
Yahweh sends prophets to rebuke him		24:19
Zechariah the son of Jehoiada rebukes him		24:20
Zechariah stoned in the Temple court		24:21-22
Invaded by Hazael king of Syria	12:17-18	24:23-24
Slain by his own servants	12:19-21	24:25-26
Final summary		24:27

VERSE BY VERSE NOTES

ACCESSION AND DIVINE ESTIMATION – 2 Chron. 24:1-3

V.2 - “**Joash did...right in the sight of the LORD all the days of Jehoiada**” - This is a significant statement, for Jehoiada was effectively king, and while his influence remained Joash reigned well. This was for about 23 years of Joash’s reign of 40 years.

V.3 - “**Jehoiada took for him two wives**” - Even in the selection of Joash’s wives Jehoiada took charge. Joash could not have received a better start. All the influences brought to bear upon him in his early years were carefully guided by the wise and faithful high-priest and his wife Jehoshabeath.

2 Kings 12:1-3

The companion record in 2 Kings 12:1-3 provides some additional details:

V.1 - “**In the seventh year of Jehu**” - Jehu slew Ahaziah, Joash’s father at the time of his coup. As Joash was only seven at the time of his accession in Jehu’s seventh year he could only have been a few months old when Athaliah’s seized power.

V.2 - “**all his days wherein Jehoiada the priest instructed him**” - The word *instructed* is *yara* - to flow as water, i.e. to rain; fig. to point out, hence to teach. It is translated “rain” in Hos. 10:12, and “teaching” in 2 Chron. 15:3. This reveals the source of Joash’s success during his early reign. He was diligently instructed by a “teaching priest”.

V.3 - “**But the high places were not taken away**” - The high places remained, and effectively decentralised Judah’s worship. This was a legacy of Jehoshaphat’s compromise with the house of Ahab. It was to lead to disastrous results when Jehoiada died.

JOASH REPAIRS THE TEMPLE – 2 Chron. 24:4-14

V.4 - “**Joash was minded to repair the house of the LORD**” - *Minded* is *im leb* signifying, in conjunction with the heart. Roth. - “that was near the heart of Joash”. As a young man Joash responded to Jehoiada’s instruction with youthful enthusiasm. The Temple needed *repair* (*chadash* - to be new; to rebuild. Roth. - “renew”) because of the shameful neglect of the rulers since Jehoshaphat.

V.5 - “**see that ye hasten the matter**” - *Hasten* is *mahar* - to be liquid, flow easily i.e. hurry. There was a trace of the impatience of youth in this command, although Joash was correct to seek early completion of the project. He was to be disappointed, for “the Levites hastened it not”.

V.6 - **“And the king called for Jehoiada the priest”** - This is the first indication of Joash showing real independence from Jehoiada who was now nearing 130 years of age. Sadly, it takes the form of a rebuke for alleged procrastination. Joash criticised his adopted father for not organising quickly enough the *collection* (*maset* - tribute) to assist the renovation of the Temple.

V.7 - **“for the sons of Athaliah”** - These were the sons lost by Jehoram in 2 Chron. 21:17; the brothers of Ahaziah (see also 2 Chron. 22:8).

“that wicked woman” - This epithet is one word *mirsha'ath* - a female wicked doer. Roth. translates: “Athaliah the lawless”. She was an exact replica of her mother Jezebel.

“all the dedicated things...did they bestow upon Baalim” - There is a parable in this of Athaliah's policy with the people of Judah. She took all the “hallowed” (Roth.) ‘vessels’ of God's house (the ecclesia) and “offered” (Roth.) them to Baal.

V.10 - **“all the princes...rejoiced”** - These princes later had a change of heart (verse 17). They made their contributions joyfully with the people but deep down they were incubating a desire for an easier and more titillating religion.

V.12 - **“And the king and Jehoiada gave it”** - Jehoiada appears again in a prominent role guiding Joash in the project. The collected money was given for the work of the “service” (Roth. - “labouring”) to such as “wrought” (Roth. - “fashioners”) iron and brass to *mend* (*chazaq* - repair) the house.

V.13 - **“and the work was perfected”** - *Perfected* is *alah arukah* - to ascend; to wholeness. Roth. - “the work of restoration went forward”.

“they set the house of God in his state, and strengthened it” - Roth. translates: “they caused the house of God to stand forth according to its due proportions, and made it strong”. The work of rebuilding and strengthening the Temple was typical of the strengthening of the ecclesia.

V.14 - **“to offer”** - Roth. translates this phrase: “bowls”. Other translations indicate that the term relates to vessels for offering up burnt offerings.

“all the days of Jehoiada” - Again it is emphasised that Jehoiada was the mainstay and the force behind Joash's reign and his dedication to repair the Temple.

2 Kings 12:4-16

The companion record in 2 Kings provides some additional detail:

V.4 - **“every one that passeth the account”** - Roth. - “one who transgresseth”. Several forms of collection from the people were to be taken up which amplifies what was meant by the term ‘tribute’ in 2 Chron. 24:6.

“the money that every man is set at” - Roth. - “the silver of their persons by the estimate of each one”. The reference here is to the half shekel of the sanctuary collected from every Israelite (Ex. 30:12-13 & Lev. 27:2).

“all the money that cometh into any man's heart to bring” - Lit. “come up upon his heart”; i.e. a free-will offering.

V.5 - **“every man of his acquaintance”** - Gray suggests the meaning of the word *acquaintance* is “assessor”, i.e. a trader: hence a Levitical Temple official who assisted the priests in assessing payments by the people.

“breaches” - *bedeq* - a gap or leak.

V.6 - **“in the three and twentieth year of king Jehoash”** - Joash was now 30, and Jehoiada extremely old; nearing 130. His motive in rebuking Jehoiada may have been an almost unconscious attempt to re-assert the authority of the king seeing that he had long time been subordinate to the high-priest.

V.15 - **“for they dealt faithfully”** - *Faithfully* is *emunah* - firmness; fig. security; morally, fidelity. The work of building up ‘the house of God’ is best done by those who deal faithfully and do not require to be “reckoned” with. Such was the case here.

V.16 - **“the trespass money”** - Money contributed for trespass and sin according to the Law (see Lev. 5:15) remained for the use of the priests.

JEHOIADA DIES - JOASH'S APOSTASY – 2 Chron. 24:15-22

V.15 - **“Jehoida waxed old and was full of days”** - *Full* is *sabea* - fill to satisfaction. Roth. - “and became satisfied with days”.

“an hundred and thirty years old when he died” - This means he must have been nearly 100 when Joash was born; calculated by subtracting from 130, 7 years to his accession (Athaliah’s reign = 6) and the 23 years mentioned in 2 Kings 12:6. As Jehoiada may have been the “teaching priest” of 2 Chron. 15:3 his career had spanned 100 years!

V.16 - **“they buried him...among the kings”** - Jehoiada had virtually been king for 30 years. He stands in the record as the typical “king-priest” being married to Ahaziah’s sister, a princess of Judah. A sharp contrast is made with Joash’s death and burial (verse 25).

“he had done good in Israel, both toward God and toward his house” - Jehoiada had as his primary motivation in all that he did the desire to please God. His priorities were right. God came first, and from this flowed dedication towards his family and the ecclesia in spiritual matters. This was a rare epitaph among the kings.

V.17 - **“Now after the death of Jehoiada”** - He was the one great obstacle to those who wished to liberalise their religion. While he lived no-one dared introduce idolatry.

“came the princes of Judah” - *Princes* is *sar* - a head person. These were men of authority and influence in the nation. The same class had supported Joash and Jehoiada in repairing the Temple (verse 10).

“made obeisance to the king” - *Obeisance* is *shachah* - to depress; prostrate. This was more than simple homage, for it had an ulterior motive and would have been accompanied by the kind of flattery which blinded the eyes. Joash succumbed to the pressure applied by these devious flatterers who sought to apostatise from the pure worship of Yahweh.

“The king hearkened unto them” - *Hearkened* is *shama* - to hear intelligently; give obedience. Its use in Deut. 6:4 is interesting in this context. The princes had correctly read the fickleness of Joash once the bastion of Jehoiada had been removed. They perceived him to be shallow and susceptible to flattery; and they were right.

V.18 - “**they left the house of the LORD**” - *Left* is *azab* - to loosen; i.e. to relinquish (used verse 25). This was a remarkable turn-around considering that the repairing of the house of God consumed nearly all of Joash’s early reign.

“**and served groves and idols**” - *Groves* is *asherah* - happy; from root to be straight. Refers to a pagan worship celebrating the generative organs as the source of life. The corrupt worship of idols introduced by Athaliah had left an indelible mark on these men; they could not leave it alone because of its attraction to the flesh. Incredibly they bowed down to *idols* (*atsab* - an idolatrous image) and committed a *trespass* (*ashmah* - guiltiness; a fault) for which Divine wrath soon fell upon them.

V.19 - “**He sent prophets...and they testified against them**” - *Testified* is *uwd* - to duplicate or repeat, by imp. to protest, testify (as by reiteration). Compare this entire context with Matt. 23:34-39 and Luke 11:49-51.

THE INTERPRETATION OF MATTHEW 23:35

The interpretation of Matt. 23:35 has always been a problem because of its apparent reference to this context in Chronicles, but its naming of “Zacharias son of Barachias”, and not Zechariah the son of Jehoiada of 2 Chron. 24:20.

The established facts are:

1. The only record in Scripture of a Zechariah being slain in the Temple is contained in 2 Chron. 24:20-22.
2. The parallel record in Luke 11:51 omits reference to “Barachias”.
3. Zechariah the son of Berechiah was the prophet Zechariah of whom nothing is recorded concerning his death.

Some of the suggested solutions are as follows:

1. Josephus records that Zechariah the prophet was slain in the manner described in Matt.23:35 according to Jewish tradition.
2. Some commentators suggest Christ’s words were a prophecy of the death in the Temple court of a prophet named Zechariah 34 years later in AD 68 (Josephus Wars IV,5,4).
3. Other commentators suggest that “Barachias” is an interpolation by scribes who thought it impossible that Christ could have meant Zechariah the son of Jehoiada who died some 800 years before his time, and who was succeeded by many prophets who were also killed by the Jews.
4. Still others suggest that “Barachias” was a second name for Jehoiada; it being a Jewish practice to have two names.

The writer of these notes holds the view that the Lord was referring primarily to Zechariah the son of Jehoiada and the account of his death in 2 Chron. 24 :20-22, but that allusions are made to both Zechariah the prophet and to Zechariah the son of Baruch slain in AD 68.

The following reasons are advanced in support of this view:

1. The omission of “Barachias” in the parallel record of Luke 11:51 lends some weight to the suggestion that it may be an interpolation in Matt. 23.

2. The Lord draws heavily upon the context of 2 Chron. 24 as a careful reading of that chapter, Matt. 23 and Luke 11 reveals.
3. Christ portrays Zechariah (the high-priest elect, and also a son of David through his mother) as a type of himself. There are some obvious similarities, such as: “the spirit of God came upon Zechariah”; and also the statement that Zechariah “stood above the people” can be compared with Matt. 23:37: “how often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings”.
4. The reference to “stoning” in Matt. 23:37 clearly lines up with 2 Chron. 24:21.
5. The most conclusive evidence however is found in the final words of Luke 11:51: “It shall be **required** of this generation”. This is an obvious reference to the last words of Zechariah, “Yahweh look upon it, and **require** it” (2 Chron. 24:22). In the light of this connection the names are very significant: Zechariah means “Yah hath remembered”, and Jehoiada means “Yahweh knoweth”.
6. Finally, the Syrian invasion in which Joash and the leaders of Judah were destroyed was an ample type of the judgements Christ was to bring upon his own murderers by the Roman Legions in AD 66-70.

The allusion to the prophet Zechariah may be seen in the statement of Matt. 23:32: “Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers”, which seems to be drawn from Zech. 5:5-9. The account of Josephus about the death of Zechariah the son of Baruch in AD 68 at the hand of the Jewish zealots seems almost too coincidental to be ignored, although there are some obvious differences. He records that this wealthy and influential man was falsely accused by the Zealots who set up a court hearing to condemn him, only to have their carefully chosen judges declare his innocence. Two of their number then fell upon Zechariah and slew him in “the midst of the Temple” where the trial had been convened. Josephus does not state the manner of his death, but presumably he was killed with daggers, and not stoned. It would also seem that he died in the middle court and not between the Temple and the altar. However, Josephus records that when it became obvious that the Zealots were determined to destroy him, Zechariah stood up and roundly condemned their evils and hypocrisy, systematically listing all their misdeeds. There were clearly loud echoes in that of the Lord’s words in Matt. 23.

V.20 - “**the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah**” - The only other one in the record of the kings of whom a similar thing is said was Azariah the prophet in the days of Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. 15:1). The phrase “came upon” is the one word *labesh* - to wrap around, by imp. to put on a garment or clothe oneself. Roth. translates: “clothed”, while the RSV says: “took possession”. Cp. Judges 6:34; 1 Chron. 12:18; Job 29:14; Isa. 59:17; Zech. 3:3,5.

“**which stood above the people**” - Roth. - “and he took his stand above the people”. Yng. - “standeth over against the people”. The idea is of taking a stand against the people with a view to calling them to himself. Compare Christ’s position (Matt. 23:37).

“**Why transgress ye the commandments of the LORD, that ye cannot prosper**” - RSV - “Why do ye transgress the commandments of the LORD, so that ye cannot prosper”. They could not hope for blessing or prosperity because of their deliberate apostasy. This was the principle of 2 Chron. 15:2 in manifestation.

“because ye have forsaken the LORD, he hath also forsaken you” - *Forsaken* is *azab* - to loosen, i.e. relinquish (it was used in V.18 translated “left”). The principle of 2 Chron. 15:2, and James 4:8 (in reverse) is obvious here. Cp. also the context of Matt. 23:37-38.

V.21 - “And they conspired against him” - *Conspired* is *qashar* - to tie (gird, compact) make a league. This language leads inevitably to a comparison with the Lord Jesus Christ against whom his enemies similarly conspired to put him to death (Mark 3:6; Luke 11:53-54).

“in the court of the house of the LORD” - Compare Luke 11:51 which adds the detail that he died between the Temple and the altar. There are some remarkable ironies in these events. Zechariah was the nearest blood relative of Joash. They were cousins. Joash slew Zechariah, with whom he had grown up, in the very place where he himself had been taken to escape being murdered by Athaliah!

V.22 - “Joash...remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada” - *Remembered* is *zachar* - to mark (so as to be recognised), i.e. to remember. There is a play on Zechariah’s name here, as *zachar* forms the basis of his name. The word *kindness* is *chesed* - favour, grace, mercy. Roth. translates: “lovingkindness”. It is the term used of God’s own primary characteristic (Ex. 34:6). Joash’s crime was all the more gross because he owed his life to Jehoiada and Jehoshabeath. He showed his ‘gratitude’ by murdering their son for doing what Jehoiada himself would have done. Surely such base ingratitude would be avenged accordingly, for as the name Jehoiada means, “Yahweh knoweth” these things, and as events were to prove “Yah had remembered” (the meaning of Zechariah).

“And when he died” - Roth. more graphically translates: “as he died”.

“The LORD look upon it, and require it” - *Look* is *ra’ah* - to see. Roth. & RSV - “see”. God’s avenger was appropriately named Hazeal (“God has seen”). The word *require* is *darash* - to tread or frequent; i.e. to follow (in pursuit). The RSV translates: “The LORD see and avenge”. There is an obvious connection here with Luke 11:51 (“It shall be required of this generation”). This context is a parable foreshadowing the raising up of God’s son and his subsequent murder, followed by Divine vengeance upon his murderers.

SYRIAN INVASION - DEATH OF JOASH – 2 Chron. 24:23-26

V.23 - “at the end of the year” - Roth. - “when the year had gone round”. It was not long before Divine vengeance fell upon Zechariah’s murderers.

“the host of Syria came” - This attack by Syria followed an earlier expedition in which Joash just managed to stave off Hazeal by denuding his kingdom of treasures (see 2 Kings 12:17-18). Such a display of weakness doubtless encouraged Hazeal to try again. Hazeal means “God has seen” (see note V.22).

“and destroyed all the princes” - *Destroyed* is *shachath* - to decay, ruin. Thus the princes who had corrupted Joash received a just reward for their part in the apostasy of Judah and the murder of Zechariah (V.17). Note the emphasis of vengeance upon the princes who were sought “from among the people”. These men were a type of the leaders of Israel in Christ’s day who were sought out and punished by God through the invasion of the Roman armies AD 66-70 (Refer *The Ways of Providence* pg. 220 by Bro. Robert Roberts).

V.24 - **“the Syrians came with a small company”** - Roth. - “although with a comparatively few men”. Only a small force was needed, for “Yahweh delivered a very great host into their hand”. So it is when men forsake their God. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb. 10:31).

“they executed judgement against Joash” - God is not averse to using the wicked as instruments to dispense His judgements when necessary (Isa. 13:3,17). Zechariah’s imprecation was coming to pass. ‘God had seen’ and had ‘remembered’ (V.22).

V.25 - **“for they left him in great diseases”** - RSV - “leaving him sorely wounded”. Joash was left helpless and entirely dependent on his servants. He might have been killed by Hazeel, but God had a different and much more poetic end in store for him.

“his own servants conspired against him” - This is the same word (*qashar*) that was used in verse 21. Divine poetic justice was stalking Joash for his conspiracy against his cousin.

“for the blood of the sons of Jehoiada” - This should read “son”. His own servants took vengeance on him for Zechariah’s murder. Curiously they were of gentile stock (V.26). A little reflection reveals that God’s vengeance was exquisitely poetic (see note V.26). Joash had begun his career in a bedroom with two women desperately trying to save his life from the hands of Athaliah (a foreign woman); now he is murdered by two men who are strangely described as the sons of two foreign women, who like Athaliah, had no right to be in Judah (Deut. 23:3).

“they buried him not in the sepulchres of the kings” - Jehoiada had taken his place (verse 16)! The people’s estimation of Joash was very low, and they showed this by refusing to place him alongside Jehoiada in death. Joash’s omission from the genealogy of Matt. 1 gives the Divine stamp of approval to their actions.

V.26 - **“Zabad the son of Shimeath an Ammonitess”** - Zabad means “Giver”, from the root - to confer. Shimeath means “annunciation”.

“Jehozabad the son of Shimrith a Moabite” - Jehozabad means “Yahweh-endowed”. Shimrith signifies: “female guard”, from a root meaning watchful. It is very unusual for the name of the mother to be substituted for the father’s name in genealogies. The reason here is that the Spirit wants us to know that these two men were an Ammonite and a Moabite. Moab and Ammon had their origin in the union of Lot with his two daughters in the wake of a disaster brought about by Divine judgement on Sodom. He was made helpless by wine and was totally dependent on his daughters. His problems could be traced back to forsaking his uncle, Abraham (his guide and mentor) to seek the easier life of the plains of Jordan. The connections with Joash are too obvious to be missed. Poetic justice was indeed meted out to him in exquisite and pervasive fashion.

THE EPILOGUE – 2 Chron. 24:27

V.27 - **“and the greatness of the burdens laid upon him”** - RSV - “the many oracles against him”. The reference is to the message of the prophets (V.19) and of Zechariah’s imprecation (V.22).

“repairing” - *yecowd* - a foundation (note AV mgn.).

“the story” - *midrash* - an investigation, i.e. by imp. a treatise or elaborate compilation.
RSV - “commentary”. It is a sobering fact that the lives of all God’s servants are similarly recorded in Divine records for future reference in a time of judgement.

AMAZIAH -

The Offensive Infidel

(JUDAH)

HEBREW - “Strength of Yah”. Root - to be alert.

FIRST MENTION - 2 Kings 12:21 **LAST MENTION** - 2 Chron. 26:4

LENGTH OF REIGN - 29 years from 795-767 BC

AGE AT ACCESSION - 25 years **AT DEATH** - 54

FATHER - Joash (“Yahweh-fired”)

MOTHER - Jehoadan (“Yahweh-pleased”)

CONTEMPORARY KINGS - Jehoash 796-781 BC; Jeroboam 781-754 BC

SIGNIFICANT FACT - Omitted from genealogy of Matt.1.

SUMMARY OF CHARACTER

The epithet, “The offensive infidel”, seems at first sight too severe an indictment of a king who is assessed by the Divine recorder with the words; “he did that which was right in the sight of Yahweh, but not with a perfect heart”. This Divine estimation of Amaziah relates to his early years in which he was content to walk in the ways of his father Joash, though not with the singleness and integrity of David. This early period of his reign was characterised by mediocrity, and it was clear that his true character had yet to be revealed. When the real Amaziah emerged he manifested himself with such incredible rashness, arrogance, and infidelity that God sought to destroy him.

A review of Amaziah’s life reveals two leading characteristics that shaped his destiny - infidelity and arrogance. Mediocrity in the Truth is not a sound basis for ultimate success. The man who is not fully committed to Yahweh will eventually be tested to see if the foundation of his life is firm. That test came to Amaziah in his war with Edom. In what is an incredible display of infidelity to his God, Amaziah defeated Edom with Divine help, and then turned and took their gods as his own. Surely, it must have occurred to him that the gods of Edom had proven powerless to save their devotees from his hand. Amazingly however, Amaziah rejected Yahweh who had given him the victory over Edom and chose to serve the impotent idols of the conquered! Such perfidy defies belief, but it happened.

Arrogance is a product of pride, and Amaziah is revealed as a very proud man. Although he was prepared to accept the advice of the first prophet sent to him with a warning of the dangers of hiring mercenaries from Israel; the second encounter after his victory over Edom is a classic demonstration of pride and arrogance. Even before the prophet of God could conclude his words, he was rudely, and abruptly, interrupted by Amaziah, who using his royal power and authority taunted and threatened the prophet in order to silence him. From that time on, God sought to destroy him; and significantly, used Amaziah’s own arrogance and pride to that end.

Confident after his victory over Edom, Amaziah challenged Jehoash of Israel to war, and in circumstances Divinely guided, was defeated and utterly humiliated. Disgraced in the eyes of his own people and reduced to powerlessness by Jehoash, Amaziah lived on for another 15 years until a conspiracy among the people gathered sufficient momentum, and he met an ignominious death at Lachish. This was a fitting end for a king who had by rashness and arrogance alienated himself from both his God, and his people.

Amaziah is distinguished among the kings through his remarkable ability to offend people. Thoughtlessness resulted in offence to the mercenaries of Israel; ruthlessness to the captives of Edom outraged the remnant of that nation; inexplicable perfidy and idolatry enraged Yahweh; arrogance and boastfulness evoked the wrath of Jehoash; and finally the ways and acts of Amaziah offended and alienated his own people.

HARMONY OF THE RECORDS OF AMAZIAH'S REIGN

	2 Kings	2 Chron.
Accession aged 25	12:21	24:27
Divine estimation of his reign	14:1-4	25:1-2
Takes vengeance on his father's murderers	14:5-6	25:3-4
Prepares army - hires soldiers from Israel		25:5-10
Violently defeats Edom	14:7	25:11-12
Soldiers of Israel take revenge		25:13
Foolishly serves Edom's gods		25:14-16
Challenges Jehoash - is rebuffed	14:8-10	25:17-19
Is defeated and humiliated by Jehoash	14:11-14	25:20-24
Is assassinated in Lachish and buried in Jerusalem	14:17-20	25:25-28

VERSE BY VERSE NOTES

ACCESSION AND DIVINE ESTIMATION – 2 Kings 14:1-4

V.1 - **“In the second year of Joash...king of Israel”** - This was Jehoash the 3rd ruler of Jehu's dynasty in Israel. The names Joash and Jehoash are used interchangeably for two separate kings of Israel and Judah making the task of differentiation more difficult.

V.2 - **“his mother's name was Jehoadan”** - She had been selected as a wife for Joash by Jehoiada (2 Chron. 24:3) and was probably a powerful influence for good on the young Amaziah.

V.3 - **“yet not like David”** - The Divine summary of Amaziah acknowledged him to be a man of principle, but not a man of God like David (see 1 Kings 15:3). He did “right”, but his heart was not “safe” with his God, as events were to prove. His fidelity was uncertain, and when tested gave way to apostasy. Like Joash his father he lacked David's legendary singleness of mind and integrity before God.

“as Joash his father did” - In his early days Amaziah emulated the earlier reign of his father. He observed Divine principles and did the ‘right’ thing, but his deep-seated and true character were as yet not revealed.

V.4 - **“the high places were not taken”** - These remained the great problem of Judah’s religious worship. Their use even for the worship of Yahweh had the effect of decentralising the nation’s worship and service to their God. Even some of Judah’s best kings did not appreciate the danger implicit in the law of Deut. 12:2-14.

2 Chron. 25:1-2

V.2 - **“but not with a perfect heart”** - *Perfect* is *shalem* - complete, from the root *shalam* - to be safe. Unlike David his fidelity towards God was doubtful. This is the meaning of this phrase. See notes on king Asa.

THE KINGDOM CONFIRMED - VENGEANCE TAKEN – 2 Chron. 25:3-4

V.3 - **“when the kingdom was established”** - *Established* is *chazaq* - fasten upon; seize. Roth. - “confirmed”. Such a statement implies that some turmoil followed Joash’s murder, and that Amaziah’s succession to the throne needed to be secured.

“he slew his servants that had killed the king” - The foreign servants (2 Chron. 24:25-26) who had assassinated Joash were dealt proper justice in terms of the Law (Deut. 19:11-13).

V.4 - **“but he slew not their children”** - Amaziah was a man of principle, though not completely a man of God. The record is at pains to emphasise that he consciously observed the law of Deut. 24:16. Amaziah is proof that it is possible to uphold Divine principles without having an abiding conviction in the existence of God.

THE ALLIANCE WITH ISRAEL’S ARMY – 2 Chron. 25:5-10

V.5 - **“Amaziah gathered Judah together”** - Amaziah showed a capacity for organisation in the gathering and strengthening of his army, but appears to have taken the initiative to go to war against Edom. He was to manifest an almost unquenchable desire for conflict that led him ultimately to disaster.

V.6 - **“He hired also...out of Israel”** - *Hired* is *cakar* - temporary purchase, to hire. The 100,000 men of Israel were mercenaries. Relations with Israel must, at this stage, have been good enough to permit such co-operation between their forces. But his move was rash and ill-conceived, and taken without seeking God’s counsel and help. This was the first recorded stumble by Amaziah. They were to become frequent.

V.7 - **“there came a man of God to him”** - This nameless prophet is called “a man of God” as a hint to the source of Amaziah’s problem. He was not a man of God. Entering into unprovoked warfare without seeking God’s counsel revealed this fact. And yet there is the extension of Divine mercy and help for Amaziah now, if only he would accept it.

“for the LORD is not with Israel” - For emphasis the record adds: “...with any of the sons of Ephraim” (Roth.). Yahweh had forsaken Israel because of their endemic apostasy. But this implies that He was with Judah. Mercenaries are a dangerous element at any time, but when the face of God is set against them they are an enormous liability.

V.8 - **“But if thou wilt go, do it, be strong for the battle”** - RSV - “But if you suppose that in this way you will be strong for war”. The tenor of this language suggests that Amaziah was inclined to proceed with his proposal. There were certainly uncomfortable decisions to be made involving massive loss of face and money.

“God shall make thee fall” - *Fall* is *kashal* - to totter or waver (through weakness of the legs); by implication to falter, stumble. Amaziah had already stumbled by his own folly. He had the choice to trust in God and recover or persist and fail through the withdrawal of Divine help. It was a severe test of the depth of his faith and character.

“for God hath power to help, and to cast down” - Roth. - “for there is strength in God...”. The word *help* is *azar* - to surround, i.e. to protect or aid. Amaziah lacked the understanding of Asa and Jehoshaphat (cp. 2 Chron. 14:11; 20:6).

V.9 - **“But what shall we do for the hundred talents which I have given”** - A talent was worth approximately \$30,000 in today’s currency; hence Amaziah had paid \$3,000,000 for the use of this army. The test was financially very painful! But no amount of money could be worth God’s help which he had failed to seek. Even in material terms God could restore his losses if he obeyed.

“the army of Israel” - *Army* is *geduwd* - a crowd (specifically of soldiers). A different word is used in verse 7. To Amaziah they were simply mercenaries augmenting his army; to God they were Israel’s army.

V.10 - **“to go home again”** - Roth. - “to depart unto their own place”.

“and they returned home in great anger” - RSV - “fierce anger”. Roth. - “a heat of anger”. Summarily *separated* (*badal* - to divide; separate or distinguish), and denied the spoils of war, the mercenaries of Israel departed in revengeful anger.

THE WAR AGAINST EDOM – 2 Chron. 25:11-12

V.11 - **“And Amaziah strengthened himself”** - Roth. - “took courage”. He had made the right decision, but still failed to fully commit himself to God in this venture.

“went to the valley of salt” - A ravine on the south western shore of the Dead Sea (2 Sam. 8:13; 1 Chron. 18:12) where Edom had met many previous disasters.

V.12 - **“And other ten thousand left alive”** - Roth. - “took captive ten thousand alive”.

“and cast them down from the top of the rock” - The word *rock* is *selah* - to be lofty, a craggy rock. Edom’s pride was in the lofty heights of its country (Obad. 3); and so Amaziah proceeded to break that pride in a cruel way.

“they all were broken in pieces” - Roth. - “torn asunder”; RSV - “dashed to pieces”. Had he simply killed these people in war it would have gone down in history as just another loss for Edom, but such a cruel slaughter only served to burn the spirit of revenge indelibly into Edom’s consciousness. It was typical of Amaziah that he did not know where to draw the line between discretion and outrage.

2 Kings 14:7

V.7 - **“and took Selah by war”** - This additional detail shows that the fortress of Edom was taken. Hence it seems also that the 10,000 thrown from the rock were cast down into their own city.

“called the name of it Joktheel” - The name means: “Veneration of God”. There is incredible irony in this, as Amaziah brought back Edom’s gods to worship!

THE REJECTED ISRAELITES TAKE REVENGE – 2 Chron. 25:13

V.13 - **“the soldiers of the army”** - *Soldiers* is *ben* - a son (builder of family name). Roth. - “the sons of the company”. Israel’s rejected mercenaries took vengeance for their wounded pride and the lost opportunities for material gain.

“fell upon the cities of Judah” - Roth. - “they spread themselves out against...”.

“unto Beth-horon” - “House of hollowness” - So Amaziah’s success in Edom was turned into a ‘hollow’ victory as his own land was scourged.

“and took much spoil” - Because they had been denied it by their rejection.

AMAZIAH SERVES EDM’S GODS – 2 Chron. 25:14-16

V.14 - **“he brought the gods of the children of Seir, and set them up to be his gods”** - This was truly incredible perfidy. It must have occurred to him that these same gods had been powerless to help Edom, and that his victory was actually Yahweh’s triumph over them.

“bowed down himself before them, and burned incense” - Incredibly, he *bowed down* (*shachah* - to prostrate) to impotent gods of stone, and offered “incense” (prayer - Psa. 141:2) before them. What could have motivated this perfidy? Could it have been reports of Israel’s mercenaries ravaging his land while he was absent? Perhaps this was Amaziah’s shallow mind seeking ‘revenge’ on Yahweh whose advice he had obeyed to send the mercenaries home. Perhaps it was his way of saying he should have ignored the counsel and gone ahead with his plan because it had cost him dearly.

V.15 - **“Wherefore the anger of the LORD was kindled”** - Amaziah had a remarkable facility for offending others through his rashness. Firstly he had angered the army of Israel, then Edom by his rapacity, and now Yahweh was greatly angered by his brazen and inexplicable idolatry.

“and he sent unto him a prophet” - The different description to the messenger of verse 7 will be noted. It is possible that the same man was sent on both occasions. God’s purpose now was to deliver an edict, not to advise and warn as before. The obvious question was asked however in the language of incredulity!

V.16 - **“as he talked with him, that the king said unto him”** - RSV - “as he was speaking, the king...”. Amaziah abruptly and impatiently interrupted God’s messenger. The arrogance which was to characterise Amaziah from now on shamelessly reared its head.

“Art thou made of the kings counsel” - RSV - “Have we made you a royal counsellor.” Amaziah’s sarcastic and supercilious taunt that the prophet had not been authorised to speak in his court reveals his pride and unwillingness to yield to rebuke (Prov. 29:1).

“forbear; why shouldest thou be smitten” - RSV - “Stop: why should you be put to death”. Amaziah now makes an open and shameless threat on the life of the prophet.

“Then the prophet forbore” - RSV - “so the prophet stopped.” But he had some final words of doom.

“I know that God hath determined to destroy thee” - *Determined* is *yaats* - to advise; resolve. Because Amaziah stubbornly resisted chastisement, there could only be one result

- Yahweh would set His face against him. Asa's precedent should have been a warning to him (2 Chron. 16:7-12), but men who turn their back on God do not remember precedent.

AMAZIAH REBUFFED BY JEHOASH – 2 Chron. 25:17-24

V.17 - **“Amaziah...took advice”** - *Advice* is *ya'ats* - to advise, resolve. But not from Yahweh! The advice of men was that the time was politically propitious to bring Israel to heel.

“and sent to Joash” - i.e. Jehoash (“Yahweh-fired”) the son of Jehoahaz (“Yahweh-seized”), the son of Jehu (“Yah is he”) the king of Israel who had previously agreed to provide 100,000 soldiers for Amaziah.

“Come, let us see one another in the face” - This was a blunt summons to engage in war. Amaziah was confident after his victory over Edom and probably sought revenge and reparation for the attack of verse 13.

V.18 - **“The thistle that was in Lebanon”** - *Thistle* is *chowach* - to pierce, a thorn. This artful reply by Jehoash employed an apt metaphor for Amaziah's character (cp. Judges 9:7-15). He was a prickly character with aspirations beyond his capacity to achieve.

“sent to the cedar” - The cedar represented Jehoash in the parable. The cedar was a symbol of perpetuity and regal power.

“Give thy daughter to my son” - Such a demand was for a form of submission or vassalage that was acknowledged by a marriage alliance.

“there passed by a wild beast...and trode down the thistle” - Jehoash took umbrage at Amaziah's arrogant demand and used a metaphor for impending judgement on Amaziah in which he represents himself as an enraged lion.

V.19 - **“Thou sayest, Lo, thou hast smitten the Edomites”** - The victory over Edom had emboldened Amaziah and he had grown boastful and arrogant. As Jehoash then noted; **“And your heart has lifted you up in boastfulness”** (RSV).

“why shouldest thou meddle to thine hurt” - Roth. - “Wherefore shouldest thou engage in strife with misfortune”. It was fair enough warning; but fruitless, because God purposed to use Amaziah's own folly and arrogance to punish him (V.20).

V.20 - **“because they sought after the gods of Edom”** - The use of “they” implies the people of Judah were culpable as well. Seemingly many had also turned to the gods of Edom along with their king.

V.21 - **“they saw one another in the face”** - RSV - “they faced one another in battle”. Armed confrontation was inevitable, and the battle was joined at Beth-shemesh (“House of the sun”) in Judah. This means that Jehoash took the initiative.

V.22 - **“put to the worse”** - Roth. and RSV both translate: “was defeated”.

V.23 - **“and brake down the wall of Jerusalem from the gate of Ephraim to the corner gate”** - A section of the wall facing Israel in the north. This was essentially a symbolic gesture underlining the humiliation of Amaziah and his power. Significantly, it was “the gate of Ephraim”, a gate near the north-western corner of the wall of Jerusalem, aptly selected by Jehoash to indicate the Amaziah had no defence against ‘Ephraim’ in the north.

V.24 - “**with Obed-edom**” - Jehoash looted the Temple treasury. Obed-edom’s family had charge of the Temple treasury (1 Chron. 26:15). Ironically ***Obed-edom*** means “servant of Edom”, which Amaziah had become by serving their gods.

“**the hostages also**” - *ta’arubah* - suretyship, i.e. a pledge. Roth. (margin) has: lit. “sons of security”. Jehoash took captive certain hostages to ensure Amaziah did not retaliate.

AMAZIAH’S DEATH AND BURIAL – 2 Chron. 25:25-28

V.27 - “**Now after the time that Amaziah did turn away from following the LORD**” - RSV - “from the time”. As Amaziah had turned to false gods just prior to his conflict with Jehoash, and in view of the fact he outlived Jehoash by 15 years (V.25), it would seem Judah was divided into two parties when Amaziah apostatised. Thereafter, his opposition sought opportunity to overthrow him, and conspired against him for 15 years.

“**he fled to Lachish**” - The name means “obstinate”, i.e. hard to be captured. It was the second strongest fortress city in Judah in the plain country 40 km (25 miles) s.w. of Jerusalem. That “they sent to Lachish” reveals the conspirators to be men of influence whose emissaries were admitted into the city and permitted to kill Amaziah, apparently without opposition. Amaziah had become an embarrassment to his people, and his removal had become a popular desire.

JEHOAHAZ -

The Oppressed Idolater

(ISRAEL)

HEBREW- “Yahweh seized”

FIRST MENTION - 2 Kings 10:35

LAST MENTION - 2 Chron. 25:25

LENGTH OF REIGN - 17 years from 813-797 BC

FATHER - Jehu (“Yah is he”)

CONTEMPORARY KING - Joash 835-796 BC.

SUMMARY OF CHARACTER

Little is recorded of the son of Jehu, Yahweh’s avenger, that enables a full character assessment to be made. Jehoahaz was content to walk in the idolatry of Jeroboam, as was his father who had been anointed by Elisha to destroy the vile Baal worship of Ahab and Jezebel. He was therefore of the same stamp as all the other kings of Israel who for the sake of political expediency promoted the idolatrous calf worship of Bethel and Dan.

The subservience of Israel to the surrounding nations which had commenced during the last years of Jehu grew more intense in the reign of Jehoahaz as God delivered them into the hands of Hazael and Benhadad of Syria in retribution for their stubborn idolatry and apostasy. In the extremity of his oppression by Syria, Jehoahaz was moved to seek Yahweh, and was heard by Him, because He had compassion on Israel which was rapidly declining towards total dissolution. It is recorded that Yahweh sent a saviour to Israel (2 Kings 13:5). There seems little doubt that the deliverer was the aged prophet Elisha. It is significant that Elisha’s prophecy of Israel’s deliverance through Jehoahaz’s successor Jehoash, was given on his deathbed. Like the son of God he delivered the ecclesia in his death. Furthermore, the remarkable revival of the dead man thrown into the grave of Elisha (2 Kings 13:21) foreshadowed the resurrection to justification of the saints.

SUMMARY OF THE REIGN OF JEHOAHAZ

2 Kings

Accession and Divine estimation	13:1-2
Delivered into the hands of kings of Syria	13:3
Seeks Divine help in oppression	13:4-7
Death and burial in Samaria	13:8-9

VERSE BY VERSE NOTES

ACCESSION AND DIVINE ESTIMATION – 2 Kings 13:1-2

V.2 - “**followed the sins of Jeroboam**” - *Followed* is *yalak achar* - to walk behind. These are the words used by Elijah to Israel in 1 Kings 18:21. Like his father Jehu he was content to continue the religion of Jeroboam to his destruction.

JEHOAHAZ OPPRESSED - RECEIVES DIVINE HELP – 2 Kings 13:3-7

V.3 - “**the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel**” - Yahweh’s *anger* (*aph* - the nose or nostril; hence redness of the face through rapid breathing) burnt against Israel because Jehu’s dynasty which had been raised up to eradicate Baal worship had simply reverted to Jeroboam’s apostasy. The only way to turn them now was to afflict them.

“**he delivered them into the hand of Hazael**” - His name means “God has seen”, and he was raised up for the purpose of afflicting both Joash of Judah (2 Kings 12:17-18) and Israel, whom Elisha knew would suffer dreadfully at his hands (2 Kings 8:7-13).

“**into the hand of Benhadad...all their days**” - This was a dynastic name adopted by a number of Syrian kings, meaning “Son of Hadad”, the god of thunder. The Syrians afflicted Israel “all their days” or “continually” (Roth.) during Jehoahaz’s reign.

V.4 - “**Jehoahaz besought the LORD**” - Driven by unrelenting oppression he *besought* (*chalah* - to stroke; in flattering, to entreat). Roth. - “appeased the face of Yahweh”.

“**he saw the oppression of Israel**” - This is the reason for Divine help, not the fact that they had turned to him (V.6). Cp. Ex. 3:7; Judges 10:15-16; Jer. 33:3.

V.5 - “**the LORD gave Israel a saviour**” - *Saviour* is *yasha* - to open, be free; by imp. to be safe; to free or succour. The identity of the saviour is disputed by commentators. Some suggest Elisha; others Jehoash, and yet others suggest king Adadnirari III (810-783) of Assyria who put Syria to tribute in 806 BC. Verses 22-25 of the chapter provide a clue. Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz defeated the Syrians three times in accordance with the final prophecy of Elisha (verses 14-19). This seems to suggest that the dying prophet was Israel’s saviour, true to his name (“The salvation of El”).

V.6 - “**there remained the grove**” - *Remained* is *amad* - to stand. The word *grove* is *asherah* - happy; and refers to the god of human fertility which had been introduced by Ahab (1 Kings 16:33).

V.7 - “**had destroyed them, and made them like the dust by threshing**” - Constant war with Syria had severely depleted Israel’s army in the days of Jehoahaz. The word for *destroyed* is *abad* - to wander away; i.e. lose ones self; by imp. to perish, and thence meaning to destroy. The affliction of Israel was so severe that the metaphor of threshing is employed: RSV - “made them like the dust at threshing”. For this a severe Divine punishment was reserved for Syria (Amos 1:3-4).

THE DEATH OF JEHOAHAZ 2 Kings 13:8-9

V.8 - “**are they not written**” - These chronicles have not been preserved in Scripture because of the barrenness and evil of Jehoahaz’s life. His reign marked one of the saddest periods of Israel’s history as they were continually ravaged by their enemies for their sins.

JEHOASH -

The Indifferent Deliverer

(ISRAEL)

HEBREW - “Yahweh-fired”

FIRST MENTION - 2 Kings 13:10

LAST MENTION - Amos 1:1

LENGTH OF REIGN - 16 years from 796-781 BC

FATHER - Jehoahaz

CONTEMPORARY KINGS - Joash 835-796 BC; Amaziah 795-767 BC

SUMMARY OF CHARACTER

The inspired record of Kings is concerned only with one incident during the reign of Jehoash, and that is the final prophecy of Elisha the prophet. The picture of Jehoash that emerges from a study of this incident is of a man conscious of Elisha's standing before Yahweh, but who could not bring himself to manifest Elisha's conviction in Him. At the bedside of the old prophet, Jehoash was moved to tearfully address him with the words used by Elisha himself at the departure of Elijah; “O, my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof”. Jehoash stood in awe of the great prophet and recognised his importance to the nation, but he just did not possess sufficient faith to make the most from the last prophecy of Israel's “saviour” (2 Kings 13:5) that Yahweh had sent.

Commanded to strike the ground with the “arrows of deliverance from Syria” he indifferently smote 3 times and stopped. Elisha was wroth, for he knew that the promised deliverance would be cut short because of the failure of Jehoash to fully enter into this enacted symbolism. It revealed him for what he really was: a man lacking conviction in God, and hence somewhat indifferent to a deliverance promised through an aged, sick and dying prophet.

HARMONY OF THE RECORDS OF THE REIGN OF JEHOASH

	2 Kings	2 Chron.
Accession and Divine estimation	13:10-11	
Visits the ailing prophet Elisha	13:14	
Elisha's last prophecy	13:15-19	
The death and burial of Elisha	13:20-21	
He defeats Syria thrice	13:22-25	
A challenge from Amaziah	14:8	25:17
Rebuffs Amaziah with a parable	14:9-10	25:18-19
Joins battle with and defeats Amaziah	14:11-14	25:20-24
Death and burial	14:15-16	

VERSE BY VERSE NOTES

ACCESSION, DIVINE ESTIMATION AND DEATH – 2 Kings 13:10-13

V.13 - **“And Joash slept with his fathers”** - There is a curious structure here as the record of his death is followed by an account of his dealings with Elisha. Jehoash is only secondary and incidental to what follows. The real interest centres upon Elisha as a type of the Messiah of Israel who ‘delivered’ God’s ecclesia in his death.

ELISHA’S LAST PROPHECY – 2 Kings 13:14-19

V.14 - **“wept over his face”** - Jehoash’s grief over Elisha reveals that Jehu’s sons were not entirely ignorant. They had an appreciation of Elisha’s elevated position in spiritual matters in Israel, but were unable to aspire to loftier things. They had special cause to lament Elisha’s death for he had anointed Jehu in order to establish his dynasty.

“O, my father, ...the chariot of Israel” - These words recall Elisha’s own declaration at Elijah’s removal (2 Kings 2:12). Because the horses and chariots which appeared at Elijah’s removal actually remained with Elisha, he had assumed Elijah’s position and role in the nation (2 Kings 6:17).

V.16 - **“Put thine hand upon the bow”** - RSV - “Draw the bow”. Interlinear Bible - “Make to ride your hand upon the bow” (as in AV mg.). In the Hebrew the word is *rakab* - to ride. This is clearly a play on the Jehoash’s reference to him as the rider of Israel’s chariot (*rekeb*). In effect Elisha was passing ‘control’ to the king, but he proved inadequate.

V.17 - **“The arrow of the LORD’S deliverance”** - Firing the arrow eastward towards Syria was a symbolic act based on an ancient custom of shooting an arrow or casting a spear into enemy territory before a military campaign (Josh. 8:18). The king having fired the arrow had to play his part in striking the ground to symbolise the number of victories to be won, but he did not enter fully into the spirit of Elisha’s enacted prophecy.

V.19 - **“wroth”** - *qatsaph* - to crack off; i.e. burst out in rage.

“Thou should have smitten five or six times” - Jehoash’s compliance with Elisha’s request was in the spirit of indifference. It was a sign that he did not share the dying prophet’s conviction, and hence he only half-heartedly entered into the enacted symbolism, to his, and Israel’s ultimate cost.

THE DEATH AND BURIAL OF ELISHA – 2 Kings 13:20-21

V.20 - **“And Elisha died, and they buried him”** - Elisha may have been buried in his home town Abel-Meholah in the Jordan valley, but it seems from the events that follow that his sepulchre could have been further south near one of the schools of the prophets in the area.

V.21 - **“and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha”** - Roth. & RSV - “as soon as the man touched the bones.” This is a unique event in the Old Testament and immediately draws the mind to the Lord Jesus Christ in whose death others came to life (Matt. 27:50-53). The picture of a dead man having been hastily dropped into Elisha’s grave, awakening, standing up, and presumably then fleeing from the approaching band with his brethren who had buried him, is surely one of the most graphic and amusing

scenes in Scripture. The profound effect this would have on all who heard of it was the Spirit's final epitaph to Elisha's standing in the sight of God.

“he revived, and stood up on his feet” - *Revived* is *chayah* - to live, to revive. Roth. translates: “he came to life again, and rose up on his feet”. This resurrection was similar in its purpose to that of Lazarus (John 11:44). The last miracle associated with Elisha, performed by Yahweh when he was dead, testified that he had been given a double portion of Elijah's spirit. Elisha performed 16 recorded miracles, whilst Elijah performed 8 (See note in *The Companion Bible*; page 491). Elisha's work prefigured that of the Lord Jesus Christ, the “salvation of God”.

JEHOASH DEFEATS SYRIA THRICE – 2 Kings 13:22-25

V.23 - **“the LORD was gracious unto them, and had compassion”** - *Gracious* is *chanan* - to bend or stoop in kindness, to favour. The word *compassion* is *racham* - to fondle, by implication, to love, esp. compassion. Here is an insight into Yahweh's mind towards His people. Though Israel had been apostate for 150 years He still sought to recover them as a father his children.

“had respect unto them, because of his covenant” - The word *respect* (*panah*) means to turn, by implication, to face, i.e. appear, look. There is a play on words with the use of the word *presence* (*pane*h - the face, the part that turns) later in the verse. Yahweh's faithfulness to His covenant with the fathers forestalled the judgements which Israel fully deserved (Rom. 11:28).

V.25 - **“Three times did Joash beat him”** - Elisha's last prophecy came to pass exactly as indicated (V.17-19). Significantly, the word *beat* is *nakah* - to strike, and thus alludes to striking the arrows on the ground.

“and recovered the cities of Israel” - The recovery of the cities lost during the reign of Jehoahaz by Jehoash suggests that he was the “saviour” given to Israel by God (V.5). In fact, these victories would not have been possible without the final prophecy of Elisha. He was Israel's saviour as “the salvation of God”.

JEROBOAM -

The Militant Restorer

(ISRAEL)

HEBREW - "The people will contend"

FIRST MENTION - 2 Kings 13:13 **LAST MENTION** - Amos 7:11

LENGTH OF REIGN - 41 years from 794 BC as co-regent and 781-754 as sole ruler

FATHER - Jehoash

CONTEMPORARY KINGS - Amaziah 795-767 BC; Uzziah 766-740 BC.

SUMMARY OF CHARACTER

The Divine historian has preserved only the military exploits of Jeroboam as he set about completing the work of his father in recovering the territory lost to Syria during the reigns of Jehu and Jehoahaz. The only other noteworthy thing recorded of him is that like all his predecessors he continued the idolatry of "Jeroboam the son of Nebat who made Israel to sin."

It is evident that Jeroboam was a capable and determined warrior and military tactician. His strength as a military leader was used by Yahweh to restore Israel to a measure of viability as a kingdom in what must have been a final attempt to recover His backsliding people from deeply ingrained apostasy. However, Jeroboam's military success only succeeded in producing a period of peace and prosperity for Israel which they used for materialistic and self-serving purposes. Amos vividly describes life in the time of Jeroboam as being characterised by licentiousness, drunkenness, and oppression (Amos 2:6-8; 4:1; 6:6). The wealthy and unscrupulous prospered (Amos 5:10-12; 8:6), while the king assiduously promoted idolatry at Bethel (Amos 7:13).

Archaeologists attribute the massive walls of Samaria which the Assyrians took 3 years to breach, and the splendid palace in Samaria to Jeroboam's era. He was a brilliant warrior and creative builder, but an abysmal spiritual leader. What he did not know is that the unusual length of his reign was only due to the faithfulness of Yahweh who had promised Jehu that his children would sit on the throne of Israel to the fourth generation (2 Kings 10:30).

SUMMARY OF THE REIGN OF JEROBOAM 11

2 Kings

Accession following death of Jehoash

13:13

Divine estimation of his reign

14:23-24

Successful military campaigns

14:25-27

Final summary and death

14:28-29

VERSE BY VERSE NOTES

ACCESSION AND SUCCESSFUL MILITARY CAMPAIGNS – 2 Kings 14:23-27

V.23 - “**In the fifteenth year of Amaziah**” - It is evident by a comparison of the various synchronisms (2 Kings 12:1; 13:10; 14:17) that Jeroboam was co-regent with his father for about 14 years from the fifteenth year of Amaziah of Judah.

V.24 - “**he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat**” - It is possible he was deliberately named after Jeroboam 1. Whether this is so or not, he certainly followed his namesake’s religious policies to the letter, promoting Bethel as the centre of Israel’s religion (Amos 7:13).

V.25 - “**He restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain**” - For the word *coast* Roth. translates: “boundary”. *Hamath* which means walled; from a root, to join; a wall of protection; was the vital strategic pass into Israel from the north. *Plain* is *arabah* - a desert; especially of the Jordan valley beyond the Dead Sea. Here it refers to the Jordan Valley north of the Dead Sea (Deut. 3:17). Jeroboam recovered the fringes of the land that Yahweh had “cut short” in the time of Jehu (2 Kings 10:32-33).

“**his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai**” - Jonah means “the dove”. His father’s name means “veracious”, from *emeth* - truth, stability. This prophecy does not appear in the book of Jonah and was obviously given under different circumstances to that recorded in Jonah, for he saw Israel’s protection lifted (Jonah 4:6-8).

“**the prophet of Gath-hepher**” - “Winepress of the well”. A town of Zebulun some 5 km (3 miles) from Nazareth in lower Galilee (Josh. 19:13). This fact is significant in view of John 7:52 and Matt. 16:4.

V.26 - “**the LORD saw the affliction of Israel, that it was very bitter**” - The word for *affliction* is *oniy* - depression, i.e. misery. Roth. translates it “humiliation.” The phrase *very bitter* is *marah* - to be bitter or unpleasant, and is mostly translated “rebellious” or similar in the O.T. Israel’s bitterness was truly the result of their rebellion.

“**any shut up, nor any left**” - RSV - “there was none left bond or free.” This fairly common saying is a euphemism for helplessness, as is implied by the following phrase; “nor any helper for Israel.”

V.27 - “**the LORD said not that he would blot out the name of Israel**” - RSV - “but the LORD had not said that he would..” Roth. - “neither had Yahweh spoken, to wipe out the name...” The phrase *blot out* is the word *macham* - to stroke or rub; to erase (Cp. Deut. 9:14). The time was not right for Israel to be removed so God provided Jeroboam as a ‘saviour’.

FINAL SUMMARY AND DEATH – 2 Kings 14:28-29

V.28 - “**how he warred**” - Jeroboam had a reputation as a mighty warrior who recovered much of the territory of David’s kingdom in the north. Tragically for God’s people his military prowess was not matched by enthusiasm for Yahweh and His truth (Jer. 9:3).

“**Damascus, and Hamath, which belonged to Judah**” - These had belonged to Judah once by David’s conquests (2 Sam. 8:6; 1 Chron. 18:6; 2 Chron. 8:3). Jeroboam must have revelled in his success but he did not realise that he was merely an instrument in God’s hand to punish Syria (Amos 1:3-5), and that his own nation was about to be similarly punished for the evils which his success encouraged (Amos 2:6-15).

(JUDAH)

HEBREW - “Strength of Yah”. Also known as Azariah - “Yah has helped”, from a root, to surround, protect.

FIRST MENTION - 2 Kings 14:21 **LAST MENTION** - (O.T.) Zech. 14:5

LENGTH OF REIGN - 52 years from 791 BC (as co-regent), 766-740 (as sole ruler)

AGE AT ACCESSION - (As co-regent) 16 **AT DEATH** - 68

FATHER - Amaziah - “Strength of Yah”

MOTHER - Jecoliah - “Yah will enable”

CONTEMPORARY KINGS - Jeroboam II 781-754 BC; Zechariah 754-753 BC; Shallum 753 BC; Menahem 753-742 BC; Pekaiiah 742-741 BC; Pekah 740-732/731 BC.

SIGNIFICANT REFERENCES - Hos. 1:1; Amos 1:1; Zech.14:5; Isa. 1:1, 6:1, 7:1.

SUMMARY OF CHARACTER

Uzziah is one of the most interesting, but also one of the most tragic figures of the period of the kings. Like his father Amaziah, and his grandfather Joash he began well, and the majority of his reign was attended by great achievements and success. Sadly though, the last years of his life were spent in abject misery as a result of one serious act of presumption against Yahweh for which he paid dearly.

From the very beginning Uzziah was a diligent and self-motivated man. He was industrious and totally dedicated in his efforts to establish the kingdom of Judah. He always had a project in hand, and throughout the early part of his reign was never idle in his attempts to build up the ‘ecclesia’ of God. With Divine help his achievements ranged from dramatic victories over the Philistines and Arabians in the south, to the establishment of an agricultural society in Judah, with formidable defences that attained international renown. The greatness of Uzziah’s achievements and fame is repeatedly emphasised in 2 Chron. 26:1-15, and the reason for it is provided in verse 5, and again in verse 15; “as long as he sought Yahweh, God made him to prosper”, and; “and his name spread far abroad; for he was marvellously helped, till he was strong”. As a young man Uzziah diligently sought Yahweh, and as a consequence his initiative and determination were rewarded with extraordinary Divine blessings that produced remarkable and unique results. There is a positive lesson in this for the servants of God in all ages. However, there is another important reason why the record is at pains to highlight the magnitude of Uzziah’s accomplishments.

Unmitigated success sometimes develops self-confidence and self-esteem. This was the effect it had upon Uzziah as is amply expressed in 2 Chron. 26:16; “But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction”. “Pride cometh before a fall,” and the fall of Uzziah was great indeed. For something close to 40 years he had enjoyed enormous

success in every project to which he had put his hand and was uniquely blessed by God so that his name was widely known and respected. At the height of his success and prosperity the prophet Isaiah commenced his ministry with the message of Isa.2; “And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into plow-shares, and their spears into pruning hooks”. Isaiah’s message was that “Judah and Jerusalem” should attain greatness and international respect through the success of Israel’s Messiah. Uzziah had conquered the surrounding nations; was internationally famous; and had built Judah into an agricultural society of considerable greatness in those days. In the midst of all this success the question that began to occupy the mind of Uzziah was; “when Messiah cometh, shall he do greater works than this man?” He after all, was the son of David who occupied the throne of God in Jerusalem. Truly he had been uniquely blessed by Yahweh and the kingdom of Judah was at rest enjoying the bounty of his agricultural programmes. Furthermore, his military campaigns had subdued the surrounding nations who now stood in awe of Judah’s strength. Might it not be conceivable that he, Uzziah, had fulfilled at least in good measure the prophecy of Isaiah concerning the work of Israel’s Messiah?

Only such a sense of self-importance could explain the boldness of Uzziah in entering the temple to offer incense upon the incense altar before the veil. He lacked only one element of ‘Messiahship’ and that was the high-priesthood. So he presumptuously and confidently grasped it. It is clear from the record of this act of presumption that he considered himself to be equal to the priests who challenged him because he disputed with them before the incense altar. So inflated had his opinion of himself become that he considered himself to be above the Divine stipulations concerning entry into the sanctuary. He was so completely confident of his personal standing before Yahweh that he saw no need for a mediator. It seems clear that Uzziah had begun to think that he was actually the “Messiah”.

Judgement upon his presumption was swift and unmistakable. Before Uzziah could vent his wrath upon the company of priests who had pursued him into the Temple, the dreaded scourge of leprosy shot forth in his forehead; a sign from God of the source of his problem. There was corruption in his thinking. So Uzziah lived out his days with leprosy in his forehead and was completely cut off from all contact with the Temple by virtue of his uncleanness. It is highly significant that as the would-be “Messiah” died in his corruption, Isaiah saw the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ (John 12:41 - Isa. 6 is cited in the context) and said of him; “I saw also the Lord (Yahweh) sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.”

In summary, the epithet “The Presumptuous Pragmatist” was coined to encapsulate the character of Uzziah because he was a man who believed that practical success justified claims clearly contradictory to Divine laws. It took some 40 years for his attitudes to be so clouded by self-esteem and for the grounds of humility to be removed, but in the end his true character was revealed and his last recorded “act” has probably sealed his eternal destiny. The would-be ‘Messiah’ was not to know that his life would prefigure the modern nation of Israel who regard themselves as “the Messiah”.

HARMONY OF THE RECORDS OF UZZIAH'S REIGN

	2 Kings	2 Chron.
Accession aged 16	14:21	26:1
Restores Elath to Judah	14:22	26:2
Divine estimation of his reign	15:1-4	26:3-4
Seeks God in the days of Zechariah		26:5
Conquers surrounding nations		26:6-8
Fortifies Jerusalem		26:9
Fortifies Judah and promotes agriculture		26:10
Greatly strengthens his armed forces		26:11-15
Presumptuously enters the Temple		26:16-18
Is smitten with leprosy in forehead		26:19-20
Jotham acts as co-regent	15:5	26:21
Death and burial	15:7	26:22-23

VERSE BY VERSE NOTES**ACCESSION AND GOOD EARLY REIGN – 2 Chron. 26:1-15**

V.1 - **“Then all the people of Judah took Uzziah”** - The people responsible for Amaziah's death and Uzziah's installation as king did so from a desire to be rid of an unpopular apostate (2 Chron. 25:27). The inference of this statement is that Uzziah's accession came after Amaziah's death. However, our adopted chronology has him becoming co-regent with his father up to 25 years earlier in order to meet the requirements of other synchronisms. There are problems either way, and this fact serves only to emphasise the difficulties of the chronology of this era.

V.2 - **“He built Eloth...after that the king slept with his fathers”** - *Eloth* means “trees” or “a grove”, ie palms. This is Elath on the Gulf of Aqaba. If Uzziah was only 16 years old when he took Eloth as is implied by this verse appearing before the summary of verse 3, then this reveals that he was a young man of action and initiative.

V.3 - **“he reigned fifty and two years”** - Uzziah's length of reign was only second to Manasseh (55). However his life and reign are given very little space in the record of 2 Kings, and only a chapter in 2 Chronicles. His achievements though were prodigious.

V.4 - **“according to all that...Amaziah did”** - This indicates that like Amaziah he was a man of principle. The focus is also on the early years of Amaziah's reign, for he turned to false gods towards the latter end.

V.5 - **“he sought God in the days of Zechariah”** - *Sought* is *darash* - to tread, frequent; follow. Roth. & RSV - “he set himself to seek God”. Herein lay the reason for his enormous success. The man Zechariah (“Yah hath remembered”) is unknown outside this record but was quite evidently a man of faith and wisdom who had great spiritual influence over the young Uzziah.

“who had understanding in the visions of God” - *Understanding* is *biyn* - to separate mentally (or distinguish) i.e. understand. It clearly speaks of spiritual discernment (Col.

1:9-10). The word *visions* is *ra'ah* - to see, hence Roth. translates: "in the seeing of God." Cp. Daniel 1:17.

"and as long as he sought the LORD, God made him to prosper" - Roth.- "and throughout the days of his seeking Yahweh." *Prosper* is *tsaleach* - to push forward. Here was the formula for success. He diligently sought Yahweh, and He sent Elohim to prosper all his activities (see verse 7).

V.6 - "and warred against the Philistines" - Uzziah pushed back the Philistine encroachment and broke down the wall of Gath ("Treading out grapes"; "a winepress"), the home of Goliath. A sharp contrast can be drawn with Amaziah who suffered the humiliation of having the wall of Jerusalem broken down (2 Chron. 25:23). To this he added victories at Jabneh ("a building") and Ashdod ("Ravager"), and proceeded to build cities "about Ashdod" where the sense is as the margin of AV - "in the region of Ashdod."

V.7 - "the Arabians that dwelt in Gur-baal" - The Arabians were last seen in 2 Chron. 21:16 in association with the Philistines. In order to open the way to Elath (V.2), the south would have to be cleared of Philistines and the Arabs who inhabited the desert region of Gur-baal ("Dwelling of Baal").

"and the Mehunims" - "A residence" - An inhabitant of Maon. A place in Mt. Seir near Petra.

V.8 - "the Ammonites gave gifts" - The Ammonites were last mentioned warring with Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. 20:1). To bring *gifts* (*minchah* - bestow tribute) was to acknowledge his supremacy.

"his name spread abroad" - *Spread* is *yalak* - to walk, i.e. to carry. Uzziah's growing reputation and strength was carried far and wide by wayfaring men.

"he strengthened himself exceedingly" - *Strengthened* is *chazaq* - to seize, to be strong, while *exceedingly* is *maal* - upward, above, overhead, from the top (see use 2 Chron. 17:12). The italicised word *himself* can be ignored as Roth. translates: "for he shewed exceeding great strength." The strength came from God (V.5).

V.9 - "built towers in Jerusalem" - Uzziah reversed Joash's desecration of the wall of Jerusalem (2 Chron. 25:23) by building *towers* (*migdal*) at the corner gate in the north west corner and the "valley gate" also on north western side of the wall. He also *fortified* (*chazaq* - to be strong) what is called "the turning of the wall" (*maqtssoah* - bending, an angle or recess - see Neh. 3:19-20).

V.10 - "he built towers in the desert" - The word *desert* is *midbar*- a pasture, i.e. open field and is translated "wilderness" by RSV and Roth.(margin). The purpose of providing defence in the wilderness was to promote agriculture in those areas.

"in the low country" - the Hebrew word is *shephelah* - lowland and refers to the low hills and plain on the western seaboard which he had captured (verses 6,7).

"husbandmen" - *ikkar* - to dig, a farmer.

"and in Carmel" - *Carmel* means "fruitful field" and it should be translated as Roth. and RSV: "fruitful lands", as it is not a reference to Mt. Carmel in Israel nor seemingly to the Carmel in the south of Judah (1 Sam. 25:2).

“**for he loved husbandry**” - *adamah* - soil (from its redness). Roth.: “a lover of the soil was he.”

V.11 - “**had an host of fighting men, that went out to war by bands**” - Roth. - “had a force ready for war, to go forth as a host in company.” This was a new concept in the organisation of Judah’s armed forces. It might perhaps be called today a rapid deployment force capable of quick response to attack. It was also unusual to see a scribe, Jeiel (“carried away of God”), and a **ruler** (*shoter* - to write, a scribe, by implication an official, superintendent) associated with an army. Maaseiah means “work of Yah” and perhaps the attachment of men whose primary task was in the Scriptures is a reflection of verse 5. They were under the control of “Hananiah” (“Yah has favoured”).

V.12 - “**the chief of the fathers**” - Roth.: “ancestral chiefs.” These were the officers drawn from principal families in Judah.

V.13 - “**an army**” - Roth. “force of a host”.

“**that made war with mighty power**” - **Mighty** is *chayil* - a force, and **power** is *kowach* - vigour. They constituted a formidable force in their time.

V.14- “**habergeons**” - *shiryonah* - a corslet (as if twisted), a breastplate or coat of mail.

V.15 - “**he made in Jerusalem engines**” – **Engines** is *chishshabown* - a contrivance (warlike machine). Roth.: “inventions.” Uzziah was also inventive and innovative.

“**bulwarks**” - *pinnah* - an angle, by implication a pinnacle.

“**And his name spread far abroad**” - **Spread** is *yatsa* - to go out. Roth. - “went forth afar.” He gained an international reputation, but tragically it went to his head and brought about his undoing.

“**for he was marvellously helped, till he was strong**” - **Marvellously** is *pala* - to separate, distinguish. Divine help for Uzziah was extraordinary and sustained for about 40 years. His name was completely fulfilled for it means “Yah hath strengthened”. His failure followed on the timeless principle of 1 Cor. 10:12 – “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall”. In this he shared his father’s mistake of manifesting confidence in his own strength (2 Chron. 25:19).

PRESUMPTION SMITTEN WITH LEPROSY – 2 Chron. 26:16-21

V.16 - “**But when he was strong**” - Uzziah’s pride and self confidence grew to a point over 40 years of unmixed success where he lost sight of the source and origin of his prosperity. This was a danger predicted for Israel (Deut. 8:12-14,17-18). Solomon had been aware of it (Prov. 16:18). It is a sign of a loss of faith (Hab. 2:4). The antidote to pride and presumption is to actively cultivate humility by service to others (Rom. 12:3-9).

“**his heart was lifted up to his destruction**” - **Lifted up** is *gabahh* - to soar, i.e. be lofty (fig. to be haughty). It occurs in 2 Chron. 17:8 but in contrast (see notes on Jehoshaphat). The word **destruction** is *shachath* - to decay, i.e. to ruin. Pride is undoubtedly the greatest enemy of the servants of God. Many great men have been ruined by it.

“**he transgressed**” - *ma’al* - to cover up; fig. to act covertly, i.e. treacherously. Roth. - “acted unfaithfully.”

“to burn incense upon the altar of incense” - In symbol he sought to offer ‘prayer’ (Psa. 141:2) but it was totally unacceptable to God. There was no Divinely appointed mediator. Uzziah had by-passed God’s chosen mediators. Nadab and Abihu; and Korah, Dathan and Abiram had attempted a similar presumption with disastrous results (Lev. 10 and Num. 16). Uzziah has the distinction of being the first non-priest to enter the holy place in defiance of Yahweh’s decree (Num. 4:19-20).

UZZIAH - THE WOULD-BE MESSIAH

The extraordinary presumption of Uzziah in seeking the high-priesthood in addition to the throne of Judah can be explained by a desire to attain all the qualifications of the Messiah of Israel. Forty years of astonishing achievement and success in building a powerful and flourishing agricultural society, of which the surrounding nations stood in awe, led king Uzziah to believe that he had achieved the military success and the prosperity that would distinguish Messiah’s reign. After all, he was “the son of David” and Yahweh had established his kingdom and mightily blessed every work to which he turned his hand. Only one thing was lacking; he was not the High-priest and mediator of his people, and it was this dual role of king-priest which he eagerly sought to crown his success and fulfil his mistaken ambitions.

An examination of the frustration of Uzziah’s presumptuous grasp for the high-priesthood and his subsequent punishment reveal him as the antithesis of the true Messiah whose position he desired to usurp. The following table is an analysis of 2 Chron. 26:16-21 and its relationship to the true Messiah, and should be considered together with the contexts of Lev. 13:42-46 and Isa. 6.

UZZIAH (2 Chron. 26)	CHRIST
<p>V.16 - Josephus records that it was on a special feast day that he entered the Temple to offer incense for the nation. He sought to mediate for the people of Judah.</p> <p>V.18 - He was forcefully reminded that the priesthood belonged “to the sons of Aaron.”</p>	<p>Heb. 9:24 - “For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself now to appear in the presence of God for us.”</p> <p>Heb. 7:14-17 - Christ was from Judah, “of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood” (note V.16).</p>

V.19 - Uzziah was struck with leprosy in the forehead - the symbol of corrupt **thinking**. This was a sign from God that his mediatorship for others was utterly rejected and that he would perish in his sin.

V.20 - Josephus records that “the earthquake in the days of Uzziah” occurred at this crisis. The walls of the Temple were split, allowing a ray of light to enter.

Smitten with leprosy Uzziah rushed from the Temple and in accordance with the law of Lev. 13:42-46 had most likely rent his garment and uncovered his head, crying out, “unclean, unclean” (twice = division). Note Lev. 21:10.

V.21 - He dwelt alone in a house apart for the remainder of his days; cut off from both the Temple and his people. Unable to rule, Jotham his son reigned over the land. Uzziah ended up neither king or priest!

Isa. 53:4,11 - Christ was “stricken (naga - same word as “smitten” in 2 Chron. 26:20), smitten of God and afflicted”, but overcame the consequences of Adamic condemnation (1 Cor.15:22) by a resurrection to life. “By his **knowledge** shall my righteous servant justify many.”

Matt. 27:51 & Heb.10:19-21 - Christ’s death was accompanied by an earthquake which split the veil of the Temple. His sacrifice opened the way into the “holiest” and his resurrection confirmed him as “high priest over the house of God.”

Isa. 6:1-8 (cp. John 12:39-41) - Christ appears in glory “sitting upon a throne (as king) and his train (Heb. - high priest’s garments) filled the Temple.” Surrounded by an immortalised priestly class (Seraphims - Rev. 4:8) he is praised: “Holy, holy, holy is Yahweh Tz’vaoth.” (The number 3 = fruit, seed, regeneration, sonship, completeness).

UZZIAH AS A TYPE OF MODERN ISRAEL

The life of Uzziah was one of great achievement through Divine blessing, and was only marred in the last ten years of his reign by one foolish act of presumption through which he lost everything. The king who had sought to become Israel’s Messiah, in the end became a remarkable type of modern Israel which believes that it is itself “the Messiah”.

It seems incredible that the nation of Israel could regard itself as the Messiah for which its people have so long looked (Acts 26:6-7), but this is the testimony of recent and contemporary history. “The Jewish people must be their own Messiah,” wrote the historian Heinrich Graetz in 1864. Barbara Tuchman in her book *Bible and Sword* wrote; “Not until they came to perceive, beginning in the 1860’s, that they would have to act as their own Messiah did the return to Israel actually become realizable.” In the early 1970’s a Christadelphian tour party in Jerusalem asked Rabbi Abrahams whether the Jews still awaited the appearance of their Messiah. His blunt reply was; “We are the Messiah.”

The following is a concise list of the achievements of Uzziah and the way in which they foreshadowed the success of the State of Israel in recent decades. The humbling of Uzziah is also clearly used in Scripture as a type of the humbling of the Jews by the events of Armageddon. The events of 2 Chron. 26 in chronological order are:

1. Uzziah captured and rebuilt Elath into a trading port. *So Israel did in 1956 - Elath today is a trading port of the utmost importance.*
2. He captured the Shephela and the Negev. *Israel captured these areas in 1948-49 and has held them ever since.*
3. He defeated both the Arabs and the peoples of modern Jordan. *In successive wars modern Israel has also defeated both peoples.*
4. He fortified Jerusalem against attack. *All new buildings in Jerusalem today are specially constructed to withstand modern warfare.*
5. He built a prosperous agricultural society. *The "miracle" of modern Israel's agricultural prosperity is world famous.*
6. Uzziah found water supplies in the wilderness. *Israel's innovative "Water Carrier" has brought water to barren land; e.g. Negev.*
7. Uzziah had an army of 300,000 trained in guerrilla warfare. *Israel's army is approximately 300,000 and are the world's best guerrilla fighters.*
8. Uzziah developed a unique missile capacity. *Israel is in the forefront of the development of missile systems in the world today.*
9. Uzziah was helped by God to achieve his military and economic success. *That modern Israel has been helped by God is indisputable.*
10. Uzziah attributed his success to his own strength and abilities. *Israel today believes its success is by its own strength.*
11. Uzziah was humbled by an earthquake. *Israel will be humbled by the events of Armageddon compared to the earthquake which occurred in the days of Uzziah - Zech.14:5.*
12. Smitten and humbled, Uzziah dwelt in a house apart to contemplate his sin. *So the remnant of Israel will dwell apart until they realise the extent of their iniquities and pride - Zech.12:12-14.*

V.17 - **"Azariah the priest"** - Curiously the high priest of the time was the namesake of the king (2 Kings 14:21). The name means "Yah hath helped."

"that were valiant men" - Roth. - "sons of valour" (mg. "able men"). They were "valiant for the truth" (Jer. 9:3), like Phinehas their forefather (Num. 25:10-13).

V.18 - **"and they withstood Uzziah"** - *Withstood* is *amad* - to stand. Roth. - "they took their stand." This is a dramatic scene as 80 priests crowd into the Holy Place to take a firm and united stand against the king.

"the priests the sons of Aaron that are consecrated" - *Consecrated* is *qadash* - to be (pronounce, make) clean. Yahweh determines the correct manner of approach to Himself, not man. To Aaron and his sons was reserved the responsibility to burn incense for the nation (Exod. 30:7-8).

"neither shall it be for thine honour from the LORD God" - RSV - "it will bring you no honour from Yahweh." The principle here is that of 1 Sam. 2:30.

V.19 - **"Then Uzziah was wrath"** - The king was disposed to stand his ground and argue, thus betraying a determined and proud heart not malleable to receive rebuke.

“and had a censer in his hand” - The scene is reminiscent of Num. 16:17-18. Twice it is stated he had the intention of burning incense (V.16). This demonstrates his firm intention was to usurp the role of the priests.

“the leprosy even rose up in his forehead” - The word for *leprosy* is *tsara'ath* - to scourge; i.e. be stricken with leprosy. It has ever been a symbol of mortality ('a living death'), and particularly its cause - sin (Rom. 5:12; 6:23). When seen in ugly manifestation it symbolised the presence of sin that separated a man from God, hence a leper's place was outside the camp. This was especially true of leprosy in the *forehead* (*metsach* - conspicuous, the forehead) which symbolised the mind (Lev. 13:42-46). Uzziah's problem was corruption of his thinking and so his judgement was poetic. The drama of the moment is heightened as the leprosy “rose up” or as Roth. translates, “shot forth” in his forehead. Standing opposite him was the high priest with the plate around his forehead with the words inscribed “Holiness to Yahweh” in direct contrast to the king.

“from beside the incense altar” - A more emphatic rejection of his mediation is hardly imaginable. Uzziah stood visibly corrupting beside the incense altar which spoke of fellowship with God through prayer.

V.20 - **“all the priests, looked upon him”** - *Looked* is *panah* - to turn the face, look. Roth. - “turned towards him”. The record implies that the priests had momentarily turned away from Uzziah, possibly to consult about what action should be taken in view of his refusal to leave. However their attention was soon drawn to Uzziah again as attention was drawn to the leprosy in his forehead. Perhaps Uzziah cried out, or if Josephus is correct the earthquake struck at this point and all eyes were on the king.

“they thrust him out from thence” - *Thrust...out* is *bahal* - to tremble inwardly (or palpitate), i.e. be alarmed or agitated, by implication to hasten. The alarm and agitation of the priests in these circumstances is obvious as they bundled the king out of the Temple. He needed no persuasion now, as Roth. translates the next phrase: “Yea, even he himself hurried to go out.”

“because the LORD had smitten him” - *Smitten* is *naga* - to touch, i.e. lay the hand upon. This word is translated “stricken” in Isa. 53:4.

V.21 - **“the king was a leper unto the day of his death”** - As such he had absolutely no access to the Temple or the priests. There was no way of return, particularly for this form of leprosy (Lev. 13:42-46). “In the year that king Uzziah died” is a very significant phrase in Isaiah 6:1 where a sharp contrast is drawn between the “would-be Messiah” and the true Messiah. The former died from his disease which resulted from a corrupt mind; the latter was glorified after resurrection to life because of the holiness of his mind.

“and dwelt in a several house” - *Several* is *chophshiyth* - prostration by sickness, from the root, to spread loose, free. Roth. - “a house apart”. Lev. 13:44-46 prescribes that a leper with the disease in his forehead was “utterly unclean” and had to “dwell alone”.

“Jotham his son was over the king's house” - Jotham reigned as co-regent for probably about 10 years.

THE DEATH OF UZZIAH – 2 Chron. 26:22-23

V.22 - “**did Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz, write**” - Isaiah’s name means “Yah hath saved” or “salvation of Yah”. His name served to underline the tragic state of the king in whose reign he began to prophesy (Isa. 1:1). The context of Isa. 1 (note verses 5,7,8,12,13) seems to make a number of allusions to Uzziah’s presumptuous sin and the events of 2 Chron. 26:16-23 are clearly the background to Isa. 6.

V.23 - “**they buried him...in the field of the burial**” - Like Jehoram before him (2 Chron. 21:20), and later Ahaz (2 Chron. 28:27), he was excluded from the sepulchres of the kings and buried in the field reserved for kings who “departed without being desired.”

WHY MATTHEW EXCLUDED FOUR RULERS

The genealogy of the Lord Jesus Christ is divided by Matthew into three divisions of fourteen generations (Matt. 1:17), but he has been accused of altering facts to provide for this arrangement. Four rulers have been excluded between Joram and Ozias (Uzziah) in verse 8, namely; Ahaziah, Athaliah, Joash and Amaziah. Was their omission an oversight or did Matthew deliberately exclude them for a reason?

The latter is clearly the answer to this question. Matthew was justified in omitting them from the lineage of David, for they were not truly of his house, but of the house of Ahab king of Israel. As a result of a foolish political alliance, Jehoshaphat, king of Judah brought into his house Athaliah the corrupt daughter of Ahab and Jezebel by contracting a marriage between her and his eldest son and heir to the throne, Jehoram (2 Chron. 18:1). The unhappy consequences of this alliance were soon manifested by the house of Ahab gaining complete control of the kingdom of Judah, and in the introduction of the vilest idolatries into the southern kingdom. The influence of Athaliah remained until the reign of Amaziah and all four rulers omitted by Matthew were responsible for introducing and promoting corrupt idolatries in Judah.

God pronounced the judgement of annihilation on the wicked house of Ahab (1 Kings 21:21-22; 2 Kings 10:10), and Athaliah and her posterity were included in that condemnation despite the fact that she had married into the line of David. At Sinai, Yahweh had declared that He would visit the iniquity of the rebellious unto the “third and fourth generation of them that hate me” (Exod. 34:7; cp. Deut. 5:9), and so on the basis of this principle the four rulers were excluded from the lineage of David because of their wickedness and hatred of Yahweh after the pattern of Ahab and Jezebel.

Matthew indicates in his genealogy that the true line of David was restored in Uzziah, testifying that God is not only just, but also merciful. The omission of four rulers is therefore not an oversight, nor an attempt by Matthew to alter facts to suit his genealogical arrangement, but on the contrary, a direct intervention by the Spirit of God to enshrine His judgement against Ahab’s house.

JOTHAM -

The Upright

(JUDAH)

HEBREW- “Yahweh is perfect” or “upright”

FIRST MENTION - 2 Kings 15:5 **LAST MENTION** - Mic. 1:1

LENGTH OF REIGN - 16 years from 750 BC (as co-regent); 739-734 (sole king)

AGE AT ACCESSION - 25 years **AT DEATH** - 41 years

FATHER - Uzziah - “Strength of Yah”

MOTHER - Jerushah - “Possessed” (by a husband)

CONTEMPORARY KINGS - Menahem 753-742 BC; Pekaiah 742-741 BC; Pekah 740-732/1 BC.

SIGNIFICANT REFERENCES - Isa. 1:1; Hos. 1:1; Mic. 1:1.

SUMMARY OF CHARACTER

The reign of Jotham was relatively short but enormously successful. He came to the throne as a co-regent with his father Uzziah who was forced out of public life by the leprosy he contracted in the Temple as a result of his presumption. It seems Jotham’s sole reign lasted only about 6 years, but throughout his short reign he followed the example of his father’s early years and sought Yahweh who in turn abundantly blessed him.

The history of Jotham’s reign is very brief, but sufficient is recorded to clearly indicate that he was one of Judah’s best kings, although not a great spiritual reformer. Like his father he was successful at home and abroad. His military campaigns and internal projects to fortify Judah were all Divinely blessed until he “became mighty.” The only deficiency of his reign was that his personal dedication to God was not shared by the majority of the people of Judah. After the Divine estimation of Jotham the record concludes ominously; “And the people did yet corruptly.” Jotham’s personal integrity was beyond question but he appears to have been unaware of the desperate need for a reformation in the ‘ecclesia’. This had to wait until the reign of Hezekiah his grandson.

The most important feature of Jotham’s life to emerge from the record is the fact that his success was directly related to his godliness. The account is explicit; “So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared (established or fixed) his ways before Yahweh his God”. The grounds upon which present and ultimate success are predicated have never changed: “To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word” (Isa. 66:2), and Jotham found this to be true.

HARMONY OF THE RECORDS OF JOTHAM'S REIGN

	2 Kings	2 Chron.
Becomes co-regent with his father	15:5	26:21
Divine estimation of his reign	15:32-34	27:1-2
Builds fortifications in Judah	15:35	27:3-4
Defeats the Ammonites and prospers		27:5-6
Final summary and death	15:36-38	27:7-9

VERSE BY VERSE NOTES

DIVINE ESTIMATION AND PROSPERITY – 2 Chron. 27:1-4

V. 1 - **“he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem”** - Approximately 10 years of Jotham’s reign was as co-regent with Uzziah who was sidelined with leprosy (2 Chron. 26:21).

“Jerushah, the daughter of Zadok” - *Zadok* means “just” or “right”. The father’s name is not always appended to the name of the king’s mother. Perhaps there is a hint here. Jotham was an upright man (see the meaning of his name), and his mother’s role in this fact was probably substantial.

V.2 - **“according to all that his father Uzziah did”** - Jotham upheld the principles that governed Uzziah’s early years and avoided his father’s error. Because of his personal righteousness he also enjoyed Uzziah’s enormous success. But there was a problem.

“And the people did yet corruptly” - *Corruptly* is *shachath* - to decay, ruin. 2 Kings 15:35 adds that the high places were still in use. Uzziah’s great achievements had not engendered a spirit of dedication to Yahweh in his people. The focus seems to have been on agricultural and military success and not on spiritual education such as characterised Jehoshaphat’s rule. The result, seen in the fullness of its manifestation in Jotham’s reign, was apathy and private corruption among the people. Jotham was a man who maintained his own relationship with God very well, but was not successful in influencing his people to do the same.

V.3 - **“He built the high gate of the house of the LORD”** - For “high gate” Roth. translates: “upper gate”. Like Uzziah he always had building projects in hand, even some like this one in the Temple, but this was not what the nation required at the time. Spiritual renewal was the most urgent need.

“on the wall of Ophel” - *Ophel* signifies a mound, i.e. a fortress. It was a fortified section of the eastern wall of Jerusalem.

V.4 - **“he built castles in the mountains of Judah”** - *Castles* is *migdalah* - a tower. In this he followed his father’s policies of strong defences to protect the ecclesia from attack (2 Chron. 26:9-10).

JOTHAM DEFEATS THE AMMONITES – 2 Chron. 27:5-6

V.5 - **“the Ammonites”** - They had given tribute to Uzziah (2 Chron. 26:8), but probably saw his demise as an opportunity to revolt against Judah. Jotham restored the payment of even more substantial tribute by his campaign.

V.6 - **“So Jotham became mighty because he prepared his ways before the LORD his God”** - *Mighty* is *chazaq* - seize, to be strong. The word *prepared* is *kuwn* - to be erect, to set up, establish, fix. Roth. translates the phrase: “he fixed his ways”. This was the key to his success. Personal integrity before God and steadfastness in his ways culminated in Divine blessings that saw him rise to great strength. Sadly, Jotham was unable to translate his personal example into strong spiritual leadership for his people.

DEATH AND BURIAL – 2 Chron. 27:7-9

V.7 - **“and all his wars”** - Clearly Jotham was a man of action in defending the boundaries of Judah. He was always prepared to fight the battles that were necessary to secure a quiet and peaceable life for his people. However, as in the case of Jeroboam II of Israel, military success and peace only seemed to encourage apathy, materialism, and corruption among the people of Judah.

V.9 - **“they buried him in the city of David”** - For his uprightness Jotham secured a place among the kings, unlike his father. He died at the age of 41 (V.8), enormously successful, but leaving only a limited legacy, which was soon to be demolished by his son and successor, Ahaz.

AHAZ -

The Perfidious Idolater

(JUDAH)

HEBREW - “Possessor” - from root meaning “to seize”

FIRST MENTION - 2 Kings 15:38

LAST MENTION - Mic. 1:1

LENGTH OF REIGN - 16 years from 734 BC (possibly as co-regent); 732-715 (sole rule)

AGE AT ACCESSION - 20 years (LXX 25 years)

AT DEATH - 36 (LXX 41)

FATHER - Jotham - “Yahweh is perfect”

MOTHER - Not named - the only one in the historical records of the kings of Judah.

CONTEMPORARY KINGS - Pekah 740-732/1 BC; Hoshea 731-723 BC.

SIGNIFICANT REFERENCES - Isa. 7:1-12; 14:28; 38:8; Hos. 1:1, Mic. 1:1.

SUMMARY OF CHARACTER

Ahaz must be rated among the worst of Judah’s rulers. He was the complete antithesis of his father Jotham and was so perfidious throughout his reign that there are times when the Divine chronicler appears almost incredulous at the extent of his apostasy. The exclamation, “This is that king Ahaz” (2 Chron. 28:22), fully illustrates how far Ahaz went in frustrating and antagonising Yahweh. In all his ways he was utterly obnoxious to his God. Not only was Ahaz distinguished by such exclamations concerning his personal faithlessness, but perhaps more importantly, he was memorialised as the great defiler of God’s ecclesia; “For Yahweh brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel; for he made Judah naked and transgressed sore against Yahweh” (2 Chron. 28:19). This statement is most illuminating because of its reference to Ahaz as “king of Israel”, which of course he was not. It is clear that the Spirit guided God’s chronicler to refer to Ahaz in this way to reveal that Ahaz had reduced Judah to the level of Israel in his sight. Ahaz was no better, and in many ways was more corrupt, than the wicked kings of Israel. Under his leadership Judah was indistinguishable from Israel which was in its last stages of decay and dissolution.

The phrase “he made Judah naked” provides the key to Ahaz’s character. Rotherham translates; “for he had given the rein in Judah.” Where there is no faith the flesh completely dominates human life. Ahaz was totally devoid of faith and so gave himself over to the most corrupt forms of idolatry in order to satisfy fleshly lusts. In doing this he opened the flood-gates for the corruption that simmered beneath the surface during his father’s reign (2 Chron. 27:2). He gave the people what they sought; open “religion” with no restraints and no fear of redress.

The effect of this wholesale idolatry was to shut the doors upon eternal life for an entire generation, and this was symbolised by his act of shutting the doors of the house of God and curtailing the activities of the Levitical priesthood. Judah’s legitimate worship ceased

and was replaced by Ahaz's own abhorrent system adopted from Syria. Not only did he shut the Temple doors, but he also ransacked it for the holy vessels in order to induce Tiglath-pileser of Assyria to assist him against Syria and Israel. Following reverses in his conflict with the latter and his failure to secure Assyria's help, he sent to Damascus to obtain the design of Syrian altars so that he could establish an altar in Jerusalem to worship Syria's gods! He removed and repositioned the laver and the altar of burnt offering in the Temple court and set up his Syrian altar in their place. His reasoning was that if the gods of Syria had helped them in defeating Judah, they would help him if he worshipped them. Such was the incredible perfidy of Ahaz.

Before these developments however, the faithlessness of Ahaz in its incipient form was revealed in his encounter with the prophet Isaiah at the Virgin's fountain, described in Isaiah chapter 7. Yahweh sought to convert Ahaz and to encourage him to manifest faith in Him. It was God's intention to protect and defend Judah and no better grounds for faith could have been offered than the Divine assurances of help against Pekah and Rezin. Ahaz was encouraged to seek a sign from Yahweh to confirm His intention to defend Judah, but Ahaz hypocritically declined the invitation. His rejoinder; "I will not ask, neither will I tempt Yahweh" is not a manifestation of humility, but rather of unbelief. Ahaz simply did not believe in Yahweh, and to ask a sign would have been to acknowledge the claims of a God whose existence and power he doubted. The final words of Isaiah's prophecy concerning Pekah and Rezin had foreshadowed such a denouement; "If you trust not, surely you cannot be trusted". This is a Scriptural principle - the trusting can be trusted; the faithful can be relied upon. The subsequent years were to reveal the truth of this principle.

HARMONY OF THE RECORDS OF AHAZ'S REIGN

	2 Kings	2 Chron.
Accession at age 20	15:38	27:9
His evil reign and idolatry	16:1-4	28:1-4
Invaded by Syria and Israel	16:5-6	28:5
Is confronted by Isaiah the prophet		Isa. 7:1-25
Pekah's great victory over him		28:6-8
Pekah's captives returned		28:9-15
He seeks help from Assyria	16:7-9	28:16-21
Worships the gods of Syria		28:22-23
Builds Syrian altars in Jerusalem	16:10-16	28:24-25
Desecrates the Temple	16:17-18	
Death and burial	16:19-20	28:26-27

VERSE BY VERSE NOTES

ACCESSION - AHAZ'S EVIL REIGN AND JUDGEMENT – 2 Chron. 28:1-5

V.2 - "**he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel**" - Ahaz plunged Judah back into the apostasy of the house of Ahab. In doing this he had the support of many of the people (2 Chron. 27:2). This reference to the kings of Israel is a most significant phrase in view of verse 19 where Ahaz is referred to as the "king of Israel."

“and made also molten images for Baalim” - No other king of Judah had stooped to the worship of Baal after the pattern of Ahab before Ahaz. It was a breathtaking leap into idolatry and showed a complete lack of faith in Yahweh. Baalim is plural and signifies that he multiplied the strange gods he sought to worship.

V.3 - “Moreover he burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom” - Ahaz offered his “prayers” to Molech the bloodthirsty god of the Ammonites who was worshipped by the sacrifice of children. Some commentators say the name Hinnom means “moaning”, from the moans of the children burnt to Molech in the valley or ravine on the south side of Jerusalem.

“and burnt his children in the fire” - The companion record of 2 Kings 16:3 says that “He made his son to pass through the fire.” It may be that Ahaz offered some of his children as human sacrifices to Molech and that the son spoken of as “passing through” was Hezekiah. It has been suggested that the statement concerning Christ that “his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men” (Isa. 52:14) is based on the real life experience of Hezekiah who was disfigured by passing through the fire on the arms of Molech. This may be so, but the important lesson from this must not be missed. Ahaz was typical of parents who place their children in the ‘arms’ of the world by encouraging them in pursuits that are likely to defile and corrupt their minds and leave permanent ‘scars’ and moral disfigurement. There are many educational, vocational, and recreational pursuits in the modern world that may become “Molechs” if approached carelessly and with the wrong motivation.

V.4 - “and on the hills, and under every green tree” - Heights were regarded by the Canaanites as places to worship their gods, usually in a licentious way. So it was with every prominent tree. The effect was to pervade every walk of life with gross and licentious practices and images not dissimilar to those which abound in the modern world. Isaiah and later Jeremiah specially condemned the practises indulged in these places (Isa. 57:5; Jer. 2:20,3:6,13). Ezekiel likewise condemned them (Ezek. 6:13).

V.5 - “Wherefore the LORD his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria” - The record in 2 Kings 16 provides details of the Syrian and Israeli invasion of Judah (see following notes). The point to be made here is that these invasions were arranged by God (called “his God”) to turn Ahaz from his perfidy. So devoid was he of faith in Yahweh that they had the opposite effect!

REZIN AND PEKAH INVADE JUDAH – 2 Kings 16:5-9

V.5 - “Then Rezin king of Syria” - His name means “delight”, from a root signifying to be pleased with. Rezin ruled Syria for about 30 years from 750 to 720 BC.

“Pekah the son of Remaliah king of Israel” - Pekah means “watch”, from the root to open (the eyes). Remaliah sig. “Yah has bedecked”. In Isaiah’s prophecy to Ahaz he is contemptuously referred to as “the son of Remaliah” (Isa. 7:4,5,9). A military man, he rose to power by assassinating his master and was motivated purely by greed and lust for power.

“came up to Jerusalem to war, and they besieged Ahaz” - An alliance had been forged between Israel and Syria with the purpose of annexing Judah and ousting the Davidic line.

They proposed to install “the son of Tabeal” (“pleasing to El”) on the throne, but Yahweh determined to frustrate their purpose as Isaiah informed Ahaz (Isa. 7:1-9).

V.6 - **“Rezin king of Syria recovered Elath to Syria”** - Thus reversing Uzziah’s work to restore it to Judah (2 Chron. 26:2).

V.7 - **“So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglathpileser”** - In spite of Isaiah’s prophecy (Isa. 7:1-9) Ahaz placed his trust in the help of a power he could see. He sent to procure the help of Tiglathpileser (“My trust is in the son of Esharra”, i.e. the god Ninib) the Assyrian king. He was also known as Pul and reigned from 745-727 BC. He was a mighty conqueror of the surrounding nations and introduced the Assyrian system of deportation and relocation of conquered peoples to ensure long term subjugation.

“I am thy servant and thy son” - Ahaz’s total rejection of Yahweh is implicit in these words addressed to Tiglath-pileser. He chose to be the servant of a Gentile monarch while refusing the offer of a sign from God that help was available from above (Isa. 7:10-13).

V.9 - **“the king of Assyria went up against Damascus”** - But not immediately, as testified both by history and 2 Chron. 28:21. Tiglath-pileser first by-passed Damascus until he had swept through Israel, then he turned and attacked it in accordance with his own plans.

“and carried the people of it captive to Kir” - Kir means “fortress”. This invasion and captivity fulfilled the prophecy of Amos 1:5.

ISAIAH CONFRONTS AHAZ - Isa. 7:1-25

V.2 - **“And it was told the house of David”** - The promise to David was all that preserved Ahaz, for he was not worthy of preservation. As might be expected, Ahaz placed no value on his descent from David (2 Kings 16:7).

“Syria is confederate with Ephraim”- *Confederate* is *nuwach* - to rest, i.e. settle down. The AV margin has “resteth on Ephraim”.

“his heart was moved” - *Moved* is *nuwa* - to waver. Ahaz was a weak, unstable, and faithless character blown about by every change of circumstances and the exigencies of the moment (Jude 13).

V.3 - **“Isaiah”** - “Yah is salvation”. The name of the prophet was a sign in itself that help was at hand. Isaiah and his sons were men of sign to Ahaz if he was able to perceive it (Isa. 8:18).

“and Shear-jashub thy son” - The name means significantly, “the remnant shall return”. This was a promise from God that a remnant would be preserved through all the difficulties that then, and in the future would come upon the house of David. A remnant did return from the captives taken by Pekah (2 Chron. 28:6-15).

“at the end of the conduit of the upper pool” - *Conduit* is *te’alah* - a channel. This was the virgin’s fountain at Gihon which Hezekiah later sealed up (2 Chron. 32:30).

V.4 - **“Take heed and be quiet”** - The word *quiet* is *shaqat* - to repose. This is in direct contrast to his wavering and fear (V.2). To accept this exhortation and remain calm required faith and Ahaz did not possess any.

“the two tails of these smoking firebrands” - The *firebrand* (*uwd*) is a poker for turning embers. Roth. translates: “these two fag-ends of smoking firebrands.” God was utterly contemptuous of the grab for political power by these two weak and “burnt out” kings.

V.6 - **“and vex it, and let us make a breach therein”** - *Vex* is *quwts* - to clip off (severing). The term *breach* is *baqa* - to cleave, to rend, rip open. They proposed to end the dynasty of David and make Judah a vassal power ruled by their own nominee.

V.8 - **“within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not a people”** - Yahweh sees the long term whereas man looks more at the present. Ahaz had no faith in God, leave alone a prophecy that would not be fulfilled in his lifetime. Faith brings a largeness of view that gives perspective to the troubles of the present.

V.9 - **“If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established”** - The AV margin offers the alternative: “Do ye not believe? it is because ye are not stable.” Roth. translates: “If ye trust not, surely ye cannot be trusted.” This is a Divine principle with universal application. The trusting can be trusted, and one can have faith in men of faith, but the distrustful can never be relied upon.

V.11 - **“ask it either in the depth or in the height above”** - Roth. - “go down deep for a request, or ascend on high.” The ideas here are drawn from Deut. 30:11-14 and are expanded by Paul in Rom. 10:6-8. Ahaz could have sought a sign either in the earth or in the heavens and it would have been forthcoming. Such Divine grace extended to a faithless and idolatrous king could only be with a desire to save his people from the dreadful events that were soon to follow.

V.12 - **“But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the LORD”** - This is a breathtaking response. Ahaz’s false display of humility reveals complete faithlessness. The truth was he simply did not believe in Yahweh (Heb. 11:6). How could he confess to His existence by asking a sign of Him?

V.13 - **“Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also?”** - This rejoinder is characteristic of Isaiah. He believed implicitly in Yahweh and made the clear distinction between God and men. Ahaz however brought Yahweh down to the level of man, and then rejected Him in favour of Tiglath-pileser.

PEKAH’S CAPTIVES RETURNED – 2 Chron. 28:6-15

V.6 - **“because they had forsaken the LORD God of their fathers”** - The result of Ahaz’s persistent idolatry and his refusal to seek help from Yahweh was the mass slaughter of 120,000 of his army in just one day. Added to this disaster was the carrying away captive of 200,000 men, women, and children (V.8).

V.7 - A mighty warrior of Ephraim named Zichri (“memorable”) slew Maaseiah (“work of Yah”) heir to the throne, and Azrikam (“help of an enemy”) the governor of the royal household, and also Elkanah (“God has obtained”) the chief minister of state who was “next in authority to the king” (RSV), so that Ahaz was deprived of all the principal rulers of his kingdom with one blow.

V. 9 - **“ye have slain them in a rage that reacheth up to heaven”** - *Rage* is *za’aph* - anger, from the root, to boil up. Roth. - “until to the heavens it hath reached.” A prophet in Israel

named Oded (“reiteration”) intervened to warn the victors that they had overstepped the mark. The violence of their anger had incurred the wrath of God. They were themselves worthy of similar judgements.

V.10 - **“And now ye purpose to keep under”** - The word *purpose* is *amir* - to say. The RSV has “intend”. The phrase **keep under** is one word *kabash* - to tread down, to disregard; for which Roth. translates: “tread down”. They intended to make slaves out of their brethren.

“but are there not with you...sins against the LORD your God” - Roth. - “Ye yourselves are altogether guilty against Yahweh.” Hypocrisy is detestable to Yahweh. The wicked are often used as His sword but invariably carry their mission too far.

V.11 - **“the fierce wrath of the LORD is upon you”** - *Fierce* is *charown* - a burning of anger. Roth. - “the glow of the anger of Yahweh is over you”. In verse 9 **wrath** is *chema* - heat, anger. Yahweh was angry with Judah, but fiercely angry with Israel because of their longstanding idolatry.

V.12 - **“Then certain of the heads of the children of Ephraim”** - Wiser heads prevailed in Israel to prevent the captives being brought home. The men are named as Azariah (“Yah hath helped”) the son of Johanan (“Yahweh-favoured”); Berechiah (“blessing of Yah”) the son of Meshillemoth (“reconciliations”); Jehizkiah (“strengthened of Yah”) the son of Shallum (“a requital”, i.e. secure retribution); and Amasa (“burden”) the son of Hadlai (“idle”).

V.13 - **“for our trespass is great”** - This uncommon confession from Israel saved Israel from disaster that day and relieved the affliction of the captives. There was still some fibre left in Israel despite the long years of apostasy. Oded’s words had taken effect and they admitted they had **offended** (*ashmah* - guiltiness, a fault). Sadly though, no true repentance followed, and Israel’s judgement was made certain.

“there is fierce wrath against Israel” - This wrath is the subject of a number of the Prophets. Isaiah 1 seems to have its roots in this context and should be compared carefully with it.

V.15 - **“the men expressed by name rose up”** - This emphasises that the four ‘Samaritans’ of verse 12 were wholly responsible for this action. What they did seems to be the basis of the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37).

“carried all the feeble of them upon asses” - *Feeble* is *kashal* - to totter, waver. Roth. translates: “exhausted”. There are echoes of the description of the captives in this verse with Isa.1:5-7 which seems to be based on this incident.

“and brought them to Jericho” - This strange destination for their act of kindness had its counterpart in the work of the Good Samaritan of the parable.

AHAZ SEEKS HELP FROM ASSYRIA – 2 Chron. 28:16-21

V.16 - **“At that time did king Ahaz send unto the kings of Assyria to help him”** - This statement helps clarify the timing of 2 Kings 16:7. It was after the disastrous loss of 120,000 men and the captives that he sought Assyria’s **help** (*azar* - to surround, i.e. protect or aid).

V.17 - **“For again the Edomites had come”** - The Edomites who had recovered from Amaziah’s victory (2 Chron. 25:11-12) were encouraged by Ahaz’s weakness to rise against him.

V.18 - **“The Philistines had also invaded the cities of the low country”** - The Philistines had recovered from Uzziah’s victory (2 Chron. 26:6-7) and took the opportunity to wrest back the Shephelah (2 Chron. 26:10), the western seaboard of the land. They captured Bethshemesh (“house of the sun”); Ajalon (“deer field”); Gederoth (“inclosure”, for flocks); Shocho (“to entwine”, i.e. shut in); Timnah (“a portion assigned”); and Gimzo (of uncertain derivation).

V.19 - **“For the LORD brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel”** - *Low* is *kana* - to bend the knee, humiliate (the root of Canaan). Ahaz was not of course the king of Israel, but the king of Judah. However he was as evil and faithless as any king of Israel and had reduced Judah to the same level, so he is described as “king of Israel” (note verses 23 & 27).

“for he made Judah naked” - *Naked* is *para* - to loosen, by implication, to expose. Roth. - “for he had given the rein in Judah”. RSV - “dealt wantonly”. Such a statement is reminiscent of Jeroboam’s Divinely chosen epithet (2 Kings 3:3).

“transgressed sore” - Roth. - “grievously unfaithful”.

V.20 - **“Tiglathpileser king of Assyria...distressed him, but strengthened him not”** - *Distressed* is *tsuwr* - to cramp, i.e. confine. The record of 2 Kings 16:9 indicates there was a serious delay in help coming from Assyria. Tiglath-pileser took his time and marched his own road to fulfil his own political ambitions in the region. When he did arrive at Jerusalem it was as a conqueror, not a redeemer.

AHAZ WORSHIPS THE GODS OF SYRIA – 2 Chron. 28:22-25

V.22 - **“in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more”** - *Distress* is *tsarar* - to cramp. Not even Assyria’s failure to help him moved Ahaz to distrust human help and seek Yahweh. Amazingly he “acted unfaithfully” (Roth.) even more than before.

“this is that king Ahaz” - Roth. - “he king Ahaz”. RSV - “this is that same king Ahaz”. This is a rare Divine exclamation at what was a truly incredible apostasy. The chronicler appears almost incredulous that such perfidy was possible in a ruler of God’s people.

V.23 - **“Damascus”** - see note v.5. Syria was the beginning of his problems.

“gods of the kings of Syria” - He reasoned that initially his troubles came through Syria’s success against him. The incredible thing was that Damascus was now in the hands of Assyria and Rezin was dead - 2 Kings 16:9-10.

“ruin” - *kashal* - to cause to stumble - see v15.

“of all Israel” - Cp. v.19. Judah and Israel were virtually reunited under Ahaz. He was indistinguishable from the wicked kings of Israel, and his worship of Syria’s gods was indeed the ruin of all Israel. Yahweh’s judgement came through the power of Assyria which eventually destroyed Israel, and later in the Babylonian phase of its empire carried away Judah.

V.24 - **“cut in pieces the vessels”** - Roth. “brake away the fittings of the house of God”.

“shut up the doors” – This was the first time a king of Judah had done this. Amazingly he abolished the appointed worship of Yahweh.

“made him altars in every corner” - These altars were of foreign design to worship Syria’s gods (2 Kings 16:10-16). See also the reference to Ahaz’s work (2 Kings 23:12).

V.25 - **“every several city”** - RSV has, “in every city of Judah”.

“to burn incense” - Ahaz would not ask for a sign from Yahweh but he was prepared to offer “prayer” unto other gods (Psa. 141:2).

“provoked to anger” – This is one word *kalac* - to trouble, by implication, to grieve, rage. Apart from Manasseh after him, there was no king of Judah who did more to infuriate Yahweh by his perfidy.

AHAZ BUILDS SYRIAN ALTARS – 2 Kings 16:10-16

V.10 - **“went to Damascus”** - Apparently after the events of 2 Chron. 28:20 when he had been humiliated by the Assyrian king from whom he sought help.

“Urijah” - “flame of Yah”. Ironically the altar of burnt offering in Jerusalem had been fired by the flame of Yahweh in the past (Lev. 9:24; 2 Chron. 7:1).

“fashion” - *demuwth* - resemblance. Roth. - “likeness”. This apostate altar was to be fashioned by “workmanship”, the antithesis to the Law concerning the construction of altars separate to the brazen altar (Exod. 20:25).

V.12 - **“the king approached to the altar”** - He became his own priest at his own altar to his own gods.

V. 13 - **“burnt offering”** – This was always a symbol of dedication – mentally, morally and physically (Lev. 1:8-9).

“meat offering, and poured his drink offering” - Meal and drink offerings were symbolic of a man’s works based upon his dedication to God. It was a complete paradox and utter hypocrisy to offer Mosaic sacrifices on this foreign altar.

“blood of his peace offerings” - See the Law concerning the treatment of the blood (Lev. 3:1-2). It symbolised fellowship with Yahweh through atonement. But there was no fellowship with Israel’s God for king Ahaz who so brazenly acknowledged false gods who could not save.

V.14 - **“brazen altar which was before the LORD”** - The altar of burnt offering was moved from its original site to a position north of Ahaz’s new altar thus placing the new altar in front of the temple with only the laver between. It was a case of dispensing with the significance of God’s altar and relegating it to a position of non-importance.

V. 15 - **“great altar”** -The following instructions given by Ahaz to offer morning and evening sacrifices here saw this altar replace the brazen altar in every respect.

“brazen altar” - Its purpose had been to provide atonement for Israel and to be the place where they signified their intention to serve Yahweh.

“**enquire**” - *baqar* - to plough, or break forth, i.e. in a figure, to inspect, admire, care for. Gray suggests that the Syrian practice was to watch movements in the entrails of newly slain sacrifices for “signs” that could be interpreted.

DESECRATION OF THE TEMPLE – 2 Kings 16:17-18

V.17 - “**borders of the bases**” – RSV - “frames of the stands”. Roth. - “the side walls of the stands”. These were the bases or stands spoken of in 1 Kings 7:23-30.

“**laver**” – The laver was a symbol of washing by the water of the word (Eph. 5:26). Ahaz removed it to an inconspicuous place. The word of God played no part in his life.

“**pavement of stones**” - Ahaz probably appropriated the bronze for other purposes and set the laver, probably in some other position; in a pavement of stones. There is doubt that it was used at all for its original purpose.

V.18 - “**covert for the sabbath**” - *Covert* is *meycak* - a portico (as covered). Roth. - “the covered walk”. RSV - “covered way”.

“**king’s entry**” - The gate through which the king entered on the Sabbath (cp. Ezek. 46:1-2).

“**turned he from the house**” - Roth. - “he changed in the house”. That is, he changed the customary use.

“**for the king of Assyria**” - Either to abide by a command to abolish such a privilege for the king of Judah thus reducing him to a mere vassal; or because he wished to ingratiate himself with Tiglath-pileser.

DEATH AND BURIAL – 2 Chron. 28:26-27

V.27 - “**they brought him not into the sepulchres of the kings**” – This was a clear sign that Ahaz was not loved or respected by his people. They could not place him among kings that they did respect and honour.

ZACHARIAH -

The Unfortunate

(ISRAEL)

HEBREW - “Yah hath remembered”.

FIRST MENTION - 2 Kings 14:29

LAST MENTION - 2 Kings 15:11

LENGTH OF REIGN - 6 months (754)

FATHER - Jeroboam II

CONTEMPORARY KING - Uzziah (791)766-740 BC.

SUMMARY OF CHARACTER

The dynasty of Jehu lasted nearly 100 years in accordance with the promise that his sons would reign in Israel to the fourth generation. Zachariah the son of Jeroboam II came to the throne and within 6 months was assassinated by Shallum. He was no more and no less deserving of Divine punishment than his fathers, for all had been evil kings who “departed not from the sins of Jeroboam”. The only reason they had been preserved was that Yahweh faithfully fulfilled his promise to Jehu.

Zachariah died justly because of his sins and apostasy; it was simply his misfortune that he was the fourth generation from Jehu. His predecessors who were equally worthy of a similar death were fortunate to arrive on the scene earlier than he.

SUMMARY OF THE REIGN OF ZACHARIAH 2 Kings

Accession upon the death of Jeroboam II	14:29
Divine estimation of his reign	15:8-9
Assassinated by Shallum	15:10
Fulfilment of the promise to Jehu	15:11-12

VERSE BY VERSE NOTES

HIS WICKED REIGN AND ASSASSINATION – 2 Kings 15:8-12

V.10 - “smote him before the people” - RSV - “struck him down at Ibleam”. Roth. retains the AV while Gray says Ibleam, and this would be poetic justice as Jehu slew Ahaziah there (2 Kings 9:27; cp. Hos. 1:4).

V.11 - The other record has not been preserved by Yahweh - a testimony to his insignificance.

V.12 - “**This was the word of the LORD**” - Zachariah was no better and no worse than his fathers but unfortunately he was the fourth generation after Jehu and was thus doomed - 2 Kings 10:50; Amos 7:9.

SHALLUM -

The Ephemeral

(ISRAEL)

HEBREW - “A requital” i.e. (secure) retribution.

FIRST MENTION - 2 Kings 15:10

LAST MENTION - 2 Kings 15:15

LENGTH OF REIGN - 1 month during 753 BC

FATHER - Jabesh - “Dry”, from root; to be ashamed, confused.

CONTEMPORARY KING - Uzziah (791)766-740 BC.

SUMMARY OF CHARACTER

Shallum is one of the many figures to emerge in the record as Israel entered the turbulent period of its final years as a kingdom. The death throes of this once great nation as portrayed in Kings is truly a tragic spectacle. Israel was torn to pieces by political feuding as ambitious and cruel men strove together to obtain supreme power. Most who achieved their aim met violent deaths at the hands of other aspirants to the throne.

Shallum was no exception. He was assassinated after one month and the only thing highlighted in the record is the brevity of his reign. Nothing is said concerning his character or his brief reign but we may assume from the account of his conspiracy and assassination of Zachariah that he was an ambitious, cold-blooded murderer who sought power for its own sake.

SUMMARY OF THE REIGN OF SHALLUM

	2 Kings	2 Chron.
Assassinates and succeeds Zachariah	15:10	
Reigns for one month	15:13	
Assassinated by Menahem	15:14	
Final summary	15:15	

VERSE BY VERSE NOTES

ASSASSINATION BY MENAHEM – 2 Kings 15:13-15

V.13 - “**a full month**” - Heb. - a month of days.

V.14 - “**Tirzah**” - “delightful”. It was the old capital. Gray comments that the Syrian records of the period suggest that because Shallum was “the son of a nobody” he was removed.

V.15 - Again no other record has been preserved.

MENAHEM -

The Rapacious Exactor

(ISRAEL)

HEBREW - “Comforter”.

FIRST MENTION - 2 Kings 15:14

LAST MENTION - 2 Kings 15:23

LENGTH OF REIGN - 10 years from 753-742 BC.

FATHER - Gadi - “fortunate”.

CONTEMPORARY KING - Uzziah 791-740 BC, Jotham (as co-regent) 750-734 BC.

SUMMARY OF CHARACTER

The account of Menahem’s reign is brief but adequate to reveal him as a brutal murderer and a harsh exactor. He assassinated Shallum and then cruelly disposed of his followers in his hometown of Tiphseh. In accomplishing this task he distinguished himself by becoming the only king of Israel or Judah to adopt the Assyrian practise of “ripping up” women carrying children. He committed this abominable crime in the revengeful spirit of a frustrated tyrant “because they opened not to him”.

Apart from his adherence to Jeroboam’s idolatry the other important thing recorded of him is that under the burden of a heavy tribute placed upon him by Tiglath-pileser, he exacted the required sum from the wealthy men of Israel in order to establish himself in power.

SUMMARY OF THE REIGN OF MENAHEM	2 Kings	2 Chron.
Assassinates Shallum and succeeds him	15:14	
Massacres Shallum’s followers	15:16	
Divine estimation of his reign	15:17-18	
Bribes the king of Assyria	15:19-20	
Death and final summary	15:21-22	

VERSE BY VERSE NOTES

HIS ACCESSION AND EVIL REIGN – 2 Kings 15:16-18

V.16 - “**Tiphseh**” - “ford”. This was the name of a town in Mesopotamia near the Euphrates on the extreme outer fringe of Solomon’s old empire. It was probably not a Jewish city, however it could refer to another town in Israel near to Tirzah. Gray says it was Tappuah, 22 km (14 miles) s.s.w. of Tirzah, the home of Shallum.

“**ripped up**” - This was an Assyrian practise and was also used by Syria (2 Kings 8:12) and Ammon (Amos 1:13). This savage treatment was used on Shallum’s followers out of vengeance and to discourage further rebellion against Menahem’s rule.

ASSYRIA BRIBED TO RETURN – 2 Kings 15:19-20

V.19 - “**Pul**” – Otherwise known as Tiglath-pileser III (743 - 726).

“**thousand talents of silver**” - approx. \$1,430,000. (appendix RSV - 1970)

“**to confirm the kingdom**” – *Confirm* is *chazaq* - to seize. Evidently Menahem had difficulties subduing his own people and the entrance of Assyria posed another threat to his rule.

V.20 - “**exacted**” - *yatsa* - to go (with a wide meaning). Note the margin: “caused to go forth”.

THE KINGS OF ASSYRIA

Ashurnasirpal II	883 - 859
Shalmaneser III	858 - 824
Shamsi-Adad V	823 - 811
Adad-Nirari III	810 - 783
Shalmaneser IV	782 - 773
Ashur-Dan III	772 - 755
Ashur-Nivari V	754 - 745
Tiglathpileser III	744 - 725
Shalmaneser V	726 - 722
Sargon II	721 - 705
Sennacherib	704 - 681
Esarhaddon	680 - 669
Ashurbanipal	668 - 626
Ashur-Etil-Ilani	625 - ?
Sin-Shum-Lishir	? - 622
Sin-Shar-Ishkun	621 - 612

Nineveh overthrown

612

PEKAHIAH -

The Obscure

(ISRAEL)

HEBREW - “Yah has observed” - from root, to open (the senses or eyes).

FIRST MENTION- 2 Kings 15:22

LAST MENTION- 2 Kings 15:25

LENGTH OF REIGN - 2 years from 742-741 BC.

FATHER - Menahem - “comforter”.

CONTEMPORARY KINGS - Uzziah 791-740 BC; Jotham 750-734 BC.

SUMMARY OF CHARACTER

Obscurity shrouds the brief reign of the son and successor of Menahem. Little is recorded of him except that he, like all his predecessors, persisted in the idolatry of Jeroboam.

The absence of any account of his acts may indicate that he was an inactive and colourless man who achieved nothing noteworthy during his short tenancy of Israel’s throne. His assassination by Pekah in the palace of Samaria and his unawareness of a conspiracy against him lend weight to this view. Only one thing is certain—Pekahiah will always be obscure because of his evils against Yahweh.

SUMMARY OF THE REIGN OF PEKAHIAH	2 Kings	2 Chron.
Accession upon death of Menahem	15:22	
Divine estimation of his reign	15:23-24	
Assassinated by Pekah	15:25	
Final summary	15:26	

VERSE BY VERSE NOTES

EVIL REIGN AND ASSASSINATION – 2 Kings 15:23-26

V.25 - “**a captain of his**” – *Captain* is *shalosh* - a triple - (a General of the third rank upward, i.e. the highest). Roth. translates “a hero of his”. Pekahiah was assassinated by Pekah one of his own army officers.

“**with Argob**” – The name means “stony”. He was a fellow conspirator with another man called “**Arieh**” signifying “lion”. These were hard and wild men like Pekah.

“**Gileadites**” - Pekah was evidently a Gileadite. Gilead produced hardened frontier men who knew how to fight (1 Chron. 5:18).

PEKAH -

The Contemptible

(ISRAEL)

HEBREW - “Watch” - from the root, to open (the senses or eyes).

FIRST MENTION - 2 Kings 15:25

LAST MENTION - Isa. 7:1

LENGTH OF REIGN - 20 years from 740-732/1 BC.

FATHER - Remaliah - “Yah has bedecked”.

CONTEMPORARY KINGS - Jotham 750-734 BC; Ahaz 734-715 BC.

SUMMARY OF CHARACTER

An insight into Pekah’s character comes not from the record of Kings but from the prophecy of Isaiah to Ahaz king of Judah in Isa. 7. Isaiah’s prophecy relates to the invasion of Judah by Rezin of Syria and Pekah of Israel, and the most noticeable thing about it is the contempt shown for the two confederate kings by Yahweh; “Fear not... for the two tails of these smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria, and of the son of Remaliah”. Not once does Yahweh mention the name of Pekah, but calls him “the son of Remaliah”. It is clear that Pekah was a hateful man; an ambitious ruler of a severely weakened kingdom who abandoned all principles in order to confederate with an equally weakened Syria for the sake of political survival. His bitter hatred of “the house of David” was known by Yahweh who determined to defend Judah and destroy Pekah.

SUMMARY OF THE REIGN OF PEKAH

2 Kings

2 Chron.

Assassinates and succeeds Pekaiah

15:25

Divine estimation of his reign

15:27-28

Makes an alliance with Syria

Isa. 7:1-9

Campaign against Ahaz successful

28:5-8

His captives sent back

28:9-15

Attacked by Tiglathpileser of Assyria

15:29

Assassinated by Hoshea

15:30

Final summary

15:31

VERSE BY VERSE NOTES

EVIL REIGN AND ASSASSINATION – 2 Kings 15:27-31

V.27 - “**two and fiftieth year of Azariah**” – This was the year that king Uzziah died (Isa. 6:1).

V.29 - “**came Tiglathpileser**” - During 734 BC. This invasion came in Pekah’s third to last year and he was soon afterwards murdered by Hoshea. Tiglath-pileser wrote in his annals, “they overthrew their king Peqaha and I placed Ausi (Hoshea) as king over them”.

“**ljon**” - Meaning “ruin” was in the extreme north of Israel.

“**Abel-beth-maachah**” - “meadow of the house of depression”.

“**Janoah**”- “quiet” - from the root to deposit.

“**Kedesh**” - “a sanctum”- from the root to be clean. This was the home of Barak in former days (Judges 4:6).

“**Hazor**” - “village”. This town had once been the headquarters of a dynasty of kings titled “Jabin” who sorely oppressed Israel in the time of the judges (Josh.11:1; Judges 4:1).

“**Gilead**” - “heap of witness”.

“**Galilee**” - “a circle”.

“**all the land of Naphtali**” - An area north from a line drawn from the southern point of Lake Galilee to Mt. Carmel. This captivity virtually removed effective control of 1/3 of Israel’s territory from Pekah - it was the beginning of the end which was now only 9 years away.

“**captive to Assyria**” - The policy of removing and resettling inhabitants of conquered lands was pursued by Assyria in order to minimise unrest and revolt among captive peoples.

PEKAH’S SUCCESSFUL WAR WITH JUDAH – 2 Chron. 28:5-6

See notes on “Ahaz” on pages 195 and 196.

PEKAH’S ALLIANCE WITH REZIN – Isa. 7:1-9

V.1 - This was either to forcibly secure Judah’s agreement to a tri-partite pact against Assyria or at least to neutralise Judah thus clearing Israel and Syria’s rear in their conflict with Assyria.

Note the term of contempt, “son of Remaliah” to describe Pekah, Vv. 4,5 & 9.

HOSHEA -

The Treacherous

(ISRAEL)

HEBREW- “Deliverer”

FIRST MENTION - 2 Kings 15:30

LAST MENTION - 2 Kings 18:10

LENGTH OF REIGN - 9 years from 731-723 BC.

FATHER - Elah - “an oak”.

CONTEMPORARY KING - Ahaz 734-715 BC, Hezekiah 729-686 BC.

SUMMARY OF CHARACTER

Hoshea the last king of Israel is distinguished both by his name and his attitude to Jeroboam’s idolatry. It is significant that a Hoshea (or Joshua - an Ephraimite, Num. 13:16) led Israel into the land and another Hoshea led them out of it. It is also ironical that at the end of Israel’s polity a king should finally emerge who rejected the idols of Jeroboam, when all preceding kings had assiduously pursued it for the same reasons as Jeroboam - political survival, yet Hoshea was the king who presided over the dissolution of Israel.

Nevertheless, Hoshea was worthy of the judgement which fell upon his kingdom. While he may not have pursued Jeroboam’s idolatry he was an unrighteous and evil man, not at all disposed to manifest faith in Yahweh. Perhaps his lack of interest in Jeroboam’s calf worship was due to the fact that it was now of little consequence in preserving his kingdom from the effect of Israelites going up to Jerusalem to worship. Of far greater import now was the ominous presence of the super-power Assyria to the north which threatened to swallow up the emaciated kingdom of Israel.

As a vassal of Shalmaneser king of Assyria, the only observable characteristic of Hoshea to emerge in the record is his treachery. Having submitted himself to Shalmaneser he undertook covert negotiations with the king of Egypt in an attempt to toss off the Assyrian yoke. The conspiracy was exposed and Hoshea was incarcerated in an Assyrian prison, never to be heard of again.

SUMMARY OF THE REIGN OF HOSHEA

	2 Kings	2 Chron.
Assassinates and succeeds Pekah	15:30	
Divine estimation of his reign	17:1-2	
Becomes the vassal of Assyria	17:3	
Imprisoned for conspiracy against Assyria	17:4	
Samaria besieged by the King of Assyria	17:5 & 18:9	
Israel goes into captivity	17:6 & 18:10-12	

VERSE BY VERSE NOTES

ACCESSION AND EVIL REIGN – 2 Kings. 17:1-2

V.2 - His evil was not as bad as his predecessors. Perhaps he had little interest in Jeroboam's idolatry. It is ironical that the last king of Israel should be unique in not following the idolatry of Jeroboam which all his predecessors had done.

VASSAL AND PRISONER OF ASSYRIA – 2 Kings 17:3-4

V.3 - “**Shalmaneser**” – He reigned from 727-722 BC. His name means, “Sulman is exalted”. This military expedition probably occurred around 725 BC.

“**servant**” - *ebed* - a servant.

“**gave him presents**” - *minchah* - tribute. Roth. Translates, “rendered him a present”.

V.4 - “**found conspiracy**” – RSV translates, “found treachery”. This was the only noteworthy characteristic of Hoshea identified by the Spirit.

“**So king of Egypt**” – This king is unknown in secular history. As Egypt and Assyria were to become mortal enemies in a struggle for world supremacy So was perceived to be the best hope for a faithless man like Hoshea. Once again Egypt proved to be a broken reed to Israel.

“**shut him up**” - It seems that he was captured when in the process of negotiating with So. In prison he could not lead Israel in war. The kingdom of Israel was now ‘king-less’!

THE SIEGE OF SAMARIA – 2 Kings 17:5

V.5 - “**three years**” – i.e. from late 725 BC to 723-722 BC.

THE CAPTIVITY AND THE REASON FOR IT – 2 Kings 17:6-23

V.6 - “**ninth year**” – The 9th year of Hoshea equates with the 6th year of Hezekiah.

“**Halah**” – The captives of Israel were resettled on the banks of the river Khabour, near Gozan in Assyria. History records that there were less than 30,000 remaining in the land at the time of captivity.

“**Habor**” – The name signifies “united”. It is a river of Mesopotamia identified with the modern Khabur. It flows south through Gozan into the Euphrates. Here they joined the captives of Tiglath-pileser's earlier campaign (1 Chron. 5:26).

“**Gozan**” – Signifying “a quarry”. Gozan was a province of Assyria.

“**Medes**” – The land of the Medes was further east of Gozan. Roth. translates the phrase *cities of the Medes*, “mountains of Media”.

V.7 - “**under the hand of Pharaoh**” – God had redeemed Israel out of Egypt. It was tragic that Egypt had been the source of Jeroboam's apostasy which was perpetuated throughout Israel's history and now brought about their destruction.

V.9 - “**secretly**” - *chapha* - to cover, to act covertly. Like their last king, Israel had throughout their history covertly conspired against Yahweh.

“**tower of the watchman**” - They practised their idolatry in the open fields as well as in their cities.

THE MIXED WORSHIP OF THE SAMARITANS – 2 Kings 17:24-41

V.24 - “**Cuthah**” – This was a province in Babylon.

“**Ava**”- Signifying “overthrow”. This was another region in Assyria.

“**Hamath**” – Means “walked”, and was north of Israel in Syria.

“**Sepharvaim**” – A region near Hamath in the far north.

V.28 - “**Bethel**” – There was irony in a priest of Jeroboam’s apostasy returning to Bethel to teach the gentiles brought into the land. This was the very home of Jeroboam’s apostasy. Now it was to again become the centre of education for Jeroboam’s misconception of Yahweh and that could only lead to further disasters.

V.30 - “**Succoth - Benoth**”- This means, “booths of the daughters”, i.e. brothels. Such was the nature of the worship of the strangers brought into the land of Israel.

V.31 - “**Adrammelech**” – The name signifies, “splendour of the king”.

V.32 - “**lowest**”- *qatsah* - an extremity, i.e. from the whole range of the people. The same word is used of Jeroboam choice of priests (1 Kings 12:31; 13:33). Israel was gone, but Jeroboam’s approach to religion remained.

THE RULERS OF BABYLON

Merodach Baladan	BC	721 - 703
(Babylon destroyed by Sennacherib of Assyria - 703 BC)		
Nabopolassar (founder of Chaldean empire)		625 - 605
Nebuchadnezzar		605 - 562
Amel-Marduk		562 - 560
Neriglissar		560 - 556
Nabonidus		555 - 539
(Belshazzar his son co-regent during 539 BC)		

HEZEKIAH -

Yahweh's Trusting Servant

(JUDAH)

HEBREW - "Strengthened of Yah".

FIRST MENTION - 2 Kings 16:20

LAST MENTION - Zeph. 1:1

LENGTH OF REIGN - 29 years from (729)714-686 BC

AGE AT ACCESSION - 25

AT DEATH - 54

FATHER - Ahaz - "Possessor"; from root, to seize.

MOTHER - Abijah - "Yah his father".

CONTEMPORARY KINGS - Hoshea 731-723 BC.

SUMMARY OF CHARACTER

Hezekiah was the greatest king of Judah and Israel since David the beloved of Yahweh had occupied the throne of Israel 270 years earlier. The fact that he was the son of Ahaz and came to the throne while Judah was steeped in idolatry and moral corruption only serves to emphasise his greatness. Hezekiah is unique among the kings of the divided kingdom and the Divine chronicler provided a full account of his reign and achievements. In the greater part of the three accounts of his reign he is presented as a wonderful type of the Lord Jesus Christ, the suffering servant of Yahweh.

The singular most important characteristic of Hezekiah that made him stand out from all his predecessors except David was his implicit trust in Yahweh: "He trusted in Yahweh God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him." This indomitable faith in Yahweh carried Hezekiah through many great and severe trials and preserved his integrity to the end of his life. "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God", hence it is not surprising to find affixed to the statement concerning his faith quoted above, the following words; "For he clave to Yahweh and departed not from following Him, but kept His commandments, which Yahweh commanded Moses." The word of God was the source of Hezekiah's faith and it is clear that he had turned to it in spite of the corrupt practices of his father Ahaz.

Hezekiah patterned his life upon his father David and waited eagerly for the time when he would have the power to set about reversing Ahaz's apostasy and re-establishing the Temple services and the worship of Yahweh as it existed in the days of David. He utterly repudiated the policies of Ahaz and it is not without significance that his mother's name was Abijah - "Yah his father".

The first thing that Hezekiah did upon ascending the throne, evidently on the first day of his reign was to open the doors of the house of God which Ahaz had shut up. This was an act that symbolised the character of his entire reign. He opened the doors of the ecclesia to all who would enter upon the basis of faith and truth. Hezekiah set out to recover Judah from apostasy and in doing so involved both the stranger and the remnant of Israel in the

north. He desired to see all who were willing to respond, brought into fellowship with God and enjoying the benefits of “peace and truth in his days.”

Following his accession near the turn of the year Hezekiah immediately assembled and sanctified the priests and Levites in a desperate bid to cleanse and repair the Temple in preparation for the Passover on the 14th of Abib. They had two weeks to perform all the necessary tasks but because of the filthy condition of the Temple and the extent of the damage inflicted upon it by Ahaz, the work was not completed until the 16th of Abib. Too late for the Passover! Undaunted, however, Hezekiah resorted to the provisions of Num. 9:10-14 and planned for a “second Passover” and prepared the people of Judah for it by holding a special service of rededication to Yahweh which resulted in such fervour and zeal on the part of the people that the priesthood proved inadequate to handle the volume of offerings made by them. Spontaneous rejoicing in the things of the Truth gripped the nation “and Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people, that God had prepared the people: for the thing was done suddenly”.

Hezekiah immediately sent messengers to “all Israel and Judah” inviting them to attend the Passover to be kept in the second month. The response from Judah was overwhelming and many from Israel also “humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem”. The Passover that followed has gone down in history as the greatest since the time of Solomon for one important reason: the entire nation responded from the heart with gladness that they had rediscovered “Yahweh Elohim of their fathers”, and eagerly craved “the good knowledge of Yahweh” taught by the Levites encouraged and instructed by Hezekiah himself. The unity of mind and national zeal produced by Hezekiah’s reformation was never seen again after his death. It was one of those rare occasions when the Truth had deeply penetrated the hearts and minds of the people of Judah.

Eradication of idolatry throughout the land and even in Israel by the people themselves quickly followed, while Hezekiah thoroughly reorganised the priesthood, the Temple and its services on the pattern established by David and Solomon. Hezekiah was highly commended for this work and for his uprightness and integrity as he carefully sought to observe every commandment of his God. He was mightily blessed because “in every work that he began in the service of the house of God...he did it with all his heart and prospered.” This is a wonderful example to all who work in the service of the “House of God” today.

The great test of Hezekiah’s faith came in his fourteenth year. Sennacherib descended upon the land from the north and captured 46 cities of Judah. In this extremity Hezekiah reversed his previous policy towards Assyria and attempted to appease Sennacherib with the treasures of the Palace and Temple. He quickly realised the folly of this policy and diligently set about preparing for a siege while encouraging the people to put their trust in God. The beautiful words of 2 Chron. 32:7-8 stand as a testimony to Hezekiah’s faith and complete trust in Yahweh. After receiving the blasphemous ultimatum of Rabshakeh, Hezekiah went up to the house of God and then sent messengers to Isaiah seeking his intercession. Yahweh quickly answered through Isaiah with an encouraging message of support. When Sennacherib sent a letter to Hezekiah warning him not to trust in Yahweh he went up to the Temple and laid it before Yahweh and offered a truly wonderful prayer of faith and confidence in his God.

It was at the height of this crisis that Hezekiah was stricken with a form of leprosy and was informed by Isaiah that it would be fatal. More adverse circumstances can scarcely be imagined—Judah was in the middle of an invasion by the world’s most powerful monarch who was about to march on Jerusalem the last stronghold of the nation; the king whose unswerving faith had sustained the nation in the face of this threat was now about to die, and moreover the house of David was on the brink of extinction because Hezekiah had no son who could carry on the Davidic line. In the face of this overwhelming adversity Hezekiah, lying stricken upon his death-bed, turned to the only source of help that he knew could reverse the situation. The spontaneity and intensity of his supplication to Yahweh and the complete genuineness of his words and his bitter tears were only subsequently matched by the last words of the Lord upon the cross. Yahweh immediately responded to Hezekiah’s prayer because His suffering servant had revealed absolute integrity and complete trust in Him under the severest trial.

Hezekiah recovered, the Assyrians were overthrown and Hezekiah amassed great wealth and was internationally celebrated as a result of these dramatic developments. Yahweh had done “great things”, for Hezekiah “whereof he was glad”. “But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him and upon Judah and Jerusalem”. What a wonderful God is Yahweh—His treatment of His servants is predicated upon their response to Him. Hezekiah’s plaintive cry for help produced magnificent blessings, but his pride brought Yahweh’s wrath upon him and the nation. Hezekiah soon recovered from this lapse into self-reliance and humbled himself so that the wrath came not upon them in his days. He died as he had begun—a man full of faith and trust in Yahweh.

HARMONY OF THE RECORDS OF THE REIGN OF HEZEKIAH

	2 Chron.	2 Kings	Isaiah
Began to reign at 25	29:1-2	18:1-3	
Commands to cleanse the Temple	29:5-11		
Levites cleanse themselves first	29:12-15		
Temple cleansed in 16 days	29:16-19		
Seven-fold sacrifices offered	29:20-30		
People make personal offerings	29:31-36		
Hezekiah invites all Israel to Passover	30:1-12		
The land cleansed of idolatry	31:1	18:4	
Establishes course of Priesthood	31:2-4		
People bring tithes	31:5-10		
Officers to dispose of tithes	31:11-19		
Yahweh well pleased with Hezekiah	31:20-21	18:5-6	
He rebels against Assyria		18:7	
He attacks Philistia		18:8	14:28-32
4th year Shalmaneser besieged Samaria		18:9	
6th year Sargon takes Samaria		18:10-12	
Assyria threatens Judah			10:27-34
She sweeps south to Ashdod & Philistia			20:1
Judah suggests turning to Egypt			20:2-6,30

Isaiah rebukes them for lack of faith			22:1-7
Some rested in their own strength			22:8-14
	2 Chron.	2 Kings	Isaiah
Also a self-righteous Shebna class			22:15-19
Also a faithful Eliakim class			22:20-25
46 cities of Judah fall to Sennacherib		18:13	36:1
Hezekiah agrees to pay tribute		18:14	
He strips gold from the Temple		18:15-16	
He prepares to defend Jerusalem	32:1		
He strengthens the defences of the city	32:2-8		
Sennacherib sends Rabshakeh	32:9	18:17-18	36:2
Rabshakeh's blasphemous speech	32:10-16	18:19-25	36:3-22
Hezekiah approaches Yahweh		19:1	37:1
He sends messengers to Isaiah		19:2-5	37:2-5
Yahweh's comforting reply		19:6-7	37:6-7
Rabshakeh returns to Lachish		19:8	37:8
Rumour concerning Tirhakah		19:9	37:9
Second message to Hezekiah	32:17-19	19:10-13	37:10-13
Hezekiah prays for deliverance	32:20	19:14-19	37:14-20
Isaiah's comforting reply		19:20-34	37:21-35
Hezekiah stricken with illness	32:24	20:1	38:1
He prays to be healed	32:24	20:2-3	38:2-3
15 year extension of life granted	32:24	20:4-11	38:4-8
Hezekiah's recovery & psalm of praise			38:9-22
Sennacherib and his army destroyed	32:21-23	19:35-37	37:36-38
Merodach-Baladan's embassy	32:25-31	20:12-18	39:1-7
Peace and truth in his days		20:19	39:8

VERSE BY VERSE NOTES

ACCESSION AND DIVINE ESTIMATION – 2 Kings 18:1-3

V.1 – **“the third year of Hoshea”** – The kingdom of Israel in the north had just six years to go before the final Assyrian captivity. The times were urgent both in Judah and in Israel and in His mercy God provided a man for the season.

V.2 – **“Zachariah”** – The name means, “Yah hath remembered”. It was indicative perhaps that God remembered His people in the provision of this great king.

V.3 – **“David his father”** - Hezekiah is compared with David for he was like him in many respects; chiefly in his absolute sincerity and integrity before God. Note the exclusion of the apostate Ahaz in this Divine summary of his heritage. It is also highly significant that Hezekiah's mother was named Abijah - “Yah his father”.

SUMMARY OF HIS EARLY REIGN – 2 Kings 18:4-8

V.4 – **“images”** - a column, an idol. Roth. Translates, “pillars”.

“**groves**” - *asherah* - was one of the pagan fertility gods. Such ‘worship’ strongly appeals to the baser instincts of the flesh and is never far removed from apostasy.

“**the brazen serpent**” - See the account of Num. 21:8-9 (cp. John 3:14-15). The brazen serpent was a symbol of the flesh of Christ crucified. There is no reference here to the “pole” on which it was suspended as recorded in Numbers. Hence this is symbolic of the flesh uncrucified. This was truly Judah’s spiritual state under Ahaz. The serpent of brass possessed no intrinsic power in itself, but Judah now worshipped it as an idol—not for its past connotations so much as its visible presence. The principle here is expressed by Paul who had “determined not to know anything....save Jesus Christ, and him **crucified**” (1 Cor.1:2).

“**Nehushtan**” - i.e. something made of copper. Roth. in his margin says, “a bronze thing”. The idea being that it was powerless to save, just like the flesh it symbolised.

V.5 - “**trusted**” - *batach* - to make haste for refuge, hence to trust. This is highlighted as being the outstanding quality of Hezekiah’s character.

“**among all the kings of Judah**” - i.e. from Rehoboam down. Compare Josiah who was similarly unique, but in following the Law (2 Kings 23:25). Hezekiah had no peer when it came to implicit child-like faith in God. The narrative of his life which follows amply illustrates this fact.

V.6 - “**clave**”- *dabaq* - to impinge, i.e. cling or adhere. RSV has, “held fast”.

“**from following**” – The Hebrew reads, “from after him”.

V.7 - “**prospered**” - *sakal* - to be circumspect and hence intelligent. The prospering came from his circumspection and intelligence in Divine things.

“**Assyria**” - Unlike Ahaz his father he committed his future into Yahweh’s hands, and repudiated Assyrian interference in Judah’s affairs.

V.8 - “**smote the Philistines**” – The Philistines had attacked Ahaz and taken some territory in the Shephelah (2 Chron. 28:18). Hezekiah now restored this to Judah.

“**Gaza**” - *azzah* - “strong”. Hezekiah was “strengthened of Yahweh” (the meaning of his name) in his battle against the Philistines and took their stronghold.

“**tower of the watchman**” - i.e. from the open fields (where towers were built) to the cities.

THE TEMPLE OPENED - THE LEVITES INSTRUCTED – 2 Chron. 29:3-11

V.3 - “**first month**” - Whether this is the month Abib or the first month of his reign is not clear. What is certain is that the events described occurred almost immediately Hezekiah came to the throne. It seems that Hezekiah’s accession occurred just prior to the end of a calendar year.

“**opened the doors**” - Ahaz had closed them (2 Chron. 28:24). This was the first thing Hezekiah did in defiance of his father’s policy.

“**repaired**” - *chazaq* - to be strong. Making strong the ‘doors’ of God’s ‘house’ is a fundamental principle for success in ecclesial life.

V.4 - “**east street**” - Roth., “in the Broadway on the east”. RSV, “in the square on the east”.

V.5 - “**sanctify**” - *qadash* - to be clean. This was required because of the defilements left by Ahaz’s total neglect of the Temple.

“**filthiness**” - *niddah* - rejection by impl. impurity, especially personal (menstruation) or moral (idolatry, etc). Roth. translates, “take forth the impure thing”. RSV, “the filth”.

V.6 - “**turned away their faces**” - Lit. “turned round their faces”. Judah had looked away from God’s “habitation”, distracted by idols. Hezekiah’s faithful view was that the temple was God’s dwelling place.

“**turned their backs**” - Roth. translates, “have offered their backs”. *backs* is *oreph* - signifying the nape or back of the neck. It is translated often as “stiffnecked” (2 Chron. 30:8) and is a symbol of resistance to Divine impressions, of stubbornness and immalleability (Prov. 29:1).

V.7 - “**porch**” - *ulam* - vestibule. The closing of the temple doors shut off access to God by His people. Putting out the lamps (causing cessation of the combustion of the oil to produce light) left Judah in darkness. Cessation of offerings of dedication left them aimless. All reveal the path of decline introduced by Ahaz. Separation from God and failure to study the Word produce a failure of faith and dedication.

V.8 - This verse describes Yahweh’s **wrath** (*qetseph* - a splinter as chipped off; figuratively, rage or strife) manifested against Judah because of Ahaz. It led to **trouble** (*za’avah* - agitation, maltreatment) and **astonishment** (*shammah* - ruin, by implication consternation) and **hissing** (*shereqah* - a derision). Hezekiah clearly based his words upon Deut. 28 – the monumental chapter predicting such calamities for apostasy.

“**with your eyes**” - Roth. translates, “even as you can see with your own eyes”.

V.9 – This is evidently a reference to Ahaz’s defeats at the hands of his enemies.

V.10 - “**Now it is in mine heart**” - Roth., “Now it is near my heart”.

“**fierce wrath**” - Roth. translates the phrase, “may turn from him the glow of his anger”.

V.11 - “**be not now negligent**” – *negligent* is *shalah* - to mislead. Roth. has, “now, do not be faulty”; i.e. as Ahaz had caused them to be.

THE LEVITES CLEANSE THE TEMPLE – 2 Chron. 29:12-19

V.12 – The meanings of the names of the Levites as given by Strong are:

“**Mahath**” - “erasure”, 1 Chron. 6:35. “**Amasai**” - “Yah has loaded”. “**Joel**” - “Yahweh is God”. “**Azariah**” - “Yah hath helped”. “**Kish**” - “a bow”. “**Abdi**” - “serviceable”. “**Jehalelel**” - “praising God”. “**Joah**” - “Yahweh-brothered”. “**Zimma**” - “a plan” (a bad one). “**Eden**” - “pleasure”.

V.13 - “**Elizaphan**” - “God of treasure”. “**Shimri**” - “watchful”. “**Jeiel**” - “carried away of God”. “**Asaph**” - “collector”. “**Zechariah**” - “Yah hath remembered”. “**Mattaniah**” - “gift of Yah”.

V.14 - “**Heman**” - “faithful”. “**Jehiel**” - “God will live”. “**Shimei**” - “famous”. “**Jeduthun**” - “laudatory”. “**Shemaiah**” - “Yah has heard”. “**Uzziel**” - “strength of God”.

V.15 - “**sanctified**” - Roth., “hallowed”. Separation from defilement is fundamental to the successful operation of ministers in God’s house.

“**by the words of the LORD**” - Roth. more correctly translates, “in the things of Yahweh”.

V.16 - “**all the uncleanness**” - Roth. has, “every unclean thing”.

“**Kidron**” - See 2 Chron. 15:16, 30:14; 2 Kings 23:4-12. The Kidron valley was often used as a place of desecration for idols. The name means “dusky” from the root meaning a dark place. Hence it was a place to hide the unseemly.

V.17 - “**sixteenth day of the first month**” - This was too late for keeping the Passover by two days (Ex.12:1-6).

V.19 - “**all the vessels**” - Cp. 2 Chron. 28:24 where Ahaz is said to have systematically destroyed or discarded these vessels.

SACRIFICES OF REDEDICATION OFFERED – 2 Chron. 29:20-36

V.21 - “**seven**” - The Law prescribed one bullock for the sins of the High Priest; one for the people, and one he-goat for the Prince, but Hezekiah saw that Judah’s (i.e. Ahaz’s) apostasy was so great that additional sacrifice was required.

V.25 - “**set Levites**” – This was a deliberate return to David’s appointments - 1 Chron. 15:16-22; 16:4-6,42.

V.27 - The use of music to offer worship and to give meaning to the principle of sacrifice is taken up by Paul in his writings - Cp. Eph. 5:19-20; Col. 3:16.

V.28 - Roth. translates the first phrase of this verse, “And all the convocation were bowing themselves in prostration”. There was genuine humility here.

V.29 - “**present**” - *matsa* - to come forth, appear or exist. The margin of the AV has “found”. There was a sense in which those who participated had truly been “found”.

V.31 - “**consecrated**” - *mala yad* - to fill the hand; i.e. with responsibility for service.

“**free heart**” - *nadiyb* - voluntary, ie generous. RSV, “willing”. Yahweh “loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7). He seeks volunteers, not conscripts.

V.34 - “**did help them**” - Roth., “strengthened them”.

V.36 - “**rejoiced**” - *samach* - to brighten up, i.e. be blithe or gleesome. There was much cause for joy in the response of the people to this sudden change of direction.

“**prepared the people**” – *Prepared* is *kuwn* - to be erect, to set up, fix, establish. The RSV translates, “because of what God had done for the people”, and Roth., “because God had established it for the people”.

“**suddenly**” – RSV, “for the thing came about suddenly”. Sudden change is not always deep or lasting, but the spirit of the people was so obviously genuine that it gave great encouragement and joy to Hezekiah for he recognised it as a work of God.

THE PASSOVER PROCLAIMED – 2 Chron. 30:1-12

V.1 “**all Israel**” - Connect and contrast 2 Chron. 28:19,27. Hezekiah’s campaign extended to the northern tribes - Israel was about to disappear Hoshea was weak and a vassal of Assyria. This was a desperate bid by Hezekiah to save a remnant from Israel.

“**to Ephraim and Manasseh**” - On the eve of Israel’s dissolution these were the principal tribes - cp. Gen. 48:15-22.

V.2 - “**counsel**” - *ya’ats* - to advise, to deliberate, resolve. This Passover was a cooperative effort in contrast to Josiah’s years later which was driven by his zeal (2 Chron. 35:1).

“**second month**” - Hezekiah’s reading of Judah’s position in regard to the Law was soundly based. They had been unclean by reason of their contact with idolatry and were unfit for the Passover in the first month (Num. 9:10-14).

V.3 - “**sufficiently**” - Roth. translates, “in sufficient numbers”.

V.4 - “**pleased**” - *yashar ayin* - Literally the Hebrew means “straight (in his) eyes”.

V.5 - “**established**” - *amad* - made to stand. The people understood the need for definitive and purposeful action to correct the apostasy of Ahaz and the neglect of many years.

“**not done it**” - Roth. has, “for not for a long time had they kept it as written”.

V.6 - “**posts**” - *ruwts* - to run (to rush). Roth. has, “runners”. These were the men charged with delivering the message.

“**he will return to the remnant**” - *return* is *shuwb* and *remnant* is *sha’ar*. These two Hebrew words are used in connection with the graphic parable involving Isaiah’s son Shear-jashub of only a few years before (Isa. 7:3).

“**escaped**” - Roth. translates the phrase, “that which is left to you”.

V.7 - “**desolation**” - *shammah* - ruin, by implication consternation.

V.8 - “**be ye not stiffnecked**” - Two Hebrew words are used here for *stiff-necked*. They are *qashah oreph* meaning to be dense, or tough; referring to the nape or back of the neck. Roth. translates, “now do not stiffen your neck”. This was a perennial problem in Israel (Deut. 10:16).

“**yield yourselves**” - *nathan yad* - to give the hand (an open one - indicating power, means, direction). Roth. says, “stretch forth the hand”, and in his margin adds “in pledge”. Willingness to yield is fundamental to any return from apostasy and idolatry.

V.9 - This verse enunciates a timeless principle where the people of God are concerned - cp. Ps. 106:46; Jer. 29:12-14.

“**gracious**” - The word is *channuwn*, from the root *chanan* - to bend or stoop in kindness to an inferior, hence to favour. This is a primary characteristic of Yahweh (Ex.34:6-7).

“**merciful**” - *rachuwn* - compassionate, from the root *racham* - to fondle, by implication to love.

V.10 - “**laugh**” - *sachaq* - to laugh, by implication to play. Given that only about 30,000 remained in the kingdom of Israel (according to the Assyrian inscription) and that they

were on the verge of dissolution, this is a remarkable outcome, but perfectly in harmony with the way flesh reacts in such circumstances. Over 200 years of apostasy had eroded all concepts of truth.

“mocked” - *la’ag* - to deride, by implication (as if imitating a foreigner) to speak unintelligibly. They mimicked the messengers and derided them thus repudiating their message.

V.11 - **“divers”** – The word here is *enowsh* signifying a weak mortal man (rt. to be frail, feeble).

V.12 - Roth. translates, “And also upon Judah came the hand of God to give them one heart”. The response of the people was a work of God through the power of His word and the providential guidance of the events.

HEZEKIAH’S GREAT PASSOVER – 2 Chron. 30:13-27

V.14 - **“altars”** – This is a reference to the false altars of Ahaz (2 Kings 16:10-16).

V. 15 - **“ashamed”** - *kalam* - to wound. Roth. and RSV have “were put to shame”. The zeal of the people put the nation’s spiritual leaders to shame at this time.

“sanctified”- Roth. translates, “hallowed”. Goaded by the enthusiasm of the people the priests and Levies took steps to prepare themselves for duty.

V.16 - **“stood in their place”** – RSV has, “they took their accustomed posts”.

V.18 - **“Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun”** – These tribes inhabited Galilee, later the home of Christ’s disciples.

“cleansed” - *taher* - to be bright, i.e. to be pure (uncontaminated). Many were unclean according to the Law and should have been disqualified from participation.

“otherwise than it was written” – Their participation was permissible only because of the spirit that pervaded them. Purity is essential in approach to Yahweh. The Law was inflexible on this point, but Yahweh accepted the remnant of Israel because they were moved by a genuine desire to return to Him.

“Hezekiah prayed” - His intercessory prayer reveals the only grounds upon which there could be a relaxation of the stipulations of the Law.

V.19 - **“prepareth”** - *kuwn* - to be erect, to fix, establish, set up. To fix the heart on restoration of one’s relationship to God is the major requirement in reformation.

“seek” - *darash* - to tread or frequent, to follow. This requires effort and a journey to be undertaken to secure recovery of a lost relationship.

“though he be not cleansed” - Roth. translates, “though not according to the purification of the sanctuary”. Much may be forgiven if only the heart is right. The removal of competitors for our service and love of Yahweh is the first essential step.

V.20 - **“healed”** - *rapha* - to mend, to cure. Yahweh’s healing was forgiveness. He overlooked their ritual uncleanness and looked on the heart.

V.21 - **“great gladness”** - *simchah* - glee. Roth. has, “great rejoicing”.

“**loud instruments**” - Roth. translates the phrase in his margin, “instruments of strength”. The RSV has, “with all their might” (See 1 Chron. 13:8).

V.22 - “**comfortably**” - *al leb* - upon, above, the heart. Roth. has, “spoke unto the heart” (Mgn. mind). The RSV translates, “spoke encouragingly”. Hezekiah knew he was dealing with a bruised and chastened people. He sought to encourage and edify.

“**taught the good knowledge**” - Roth. translates here, “who were giving good instruction respecting Yahweh”. The RSV has, “who shewed good skill in the service of Yahweh”. The imparting of knowledge is indispensable if reformation is to be sustained.

“**making confession**” - Roth. has, “offering praise” and the RSV, “giving thanks”.

V.23 - “**took counsel**” - RSV has, “agreed together”. Usually the effort of one week would be enough, but such was the spirit of the reformed ecclesia that they agreed unanimously to another week of learning, rededication and worship.

“**gladness**” - *simcah* - glee. Roth. has, “rejoicing”; i.e. there was genuineness here.

V.24 - “**did give**” - Roth. has, “presented” and the RSV, “gave”. The margin of the AV indicates there was purpose in the offering of Hezekiah and the princes. They were willing to sacrifice much to promote consolidation of this amazing reformation.

V.25 - “**strangers**” - *geyr* - a guest, by implication a foreigner. Hezekiah’s Passover incorporated Jews and Gentiles in a common faith and love of God and prefigured Christ’s work among Jew and Gentile.

“**rejoiced**” - *samach* - to brighten up, be gleesome. Again there is emphasis on the genuineness of this reformation.

V.26 - “**great joy**” - Roth. has, “great rejoicing”.

“**the time of Solomon**” - 175 years before. Solomon’s great festivals early in his reign were again matched in spirit and fervour. It had been a long “drought”.

V.27 - “**to his holy dwelling place**” - *ma’on* - an abode. RSV has, “holy habitation”. This is the language of Solomon’s day – see 2 Chron. 6:21,30,33,39 and note the context.

THE PEOPLE DESTROY IDOLATRY – 2 Chron 31:1

V.1 - “**images**” - *matstsebah* - a column, pillar. This combined ‘special effort’ in Jerusalem resulted in a return to their home “ecclesias” with a new-found zeal to eradicate idolatry.

“**groves**” - *asherah* - happy (masc.). Where standards are relaxed and worship discouraged, the world’s idolatry takes over and immorality gains ground swiftly.

“**high places**” - Finally these were removed by the people themselves and this is always the best way. Legislation of righteousness seldom lasts long.

“**in Ephraim**” - Israel as a nation was still in existence, therefore this task of removing idolatry would not be easy. It reveals the extent of their zeal as many would meet opposition to change in their home “ecclesias”.

“until they had utterly destroyed” - Roth. has, “until they had made an end”. The work was accomplished with the help of each other. Cooperation between like-minded members of different ecclesial communities was the secret to achieving an unlikely outcome.

THE TEMPLE SERVICES ARRANGED – 2 Chron. 31:2-4

V.2 - **“the courses”** - A return to David’s arrangements (1 Chron. 29:13, 21).

“gates of the tents” - *machaneh* - An encampment, hence an army (the word can be used of sacred courts, and this appears to be the case here). Roth. has, “camps”.

V.3 - **“set feasts”** - Roth. has, “appointed feasts”. This is a reference to the three major feasts in the nation’s spiritual calendar (Lev. 23).

V.4 - **“commanded”** - *amar* - to say (the word is used with great latitude). This is the word used throughout Hezekiah’s life for “commanded”. It differs from the common word for *command* in the O.T. *tsavah* which signifies to constitute, enjoin. This fact reveals the spirit of Hezekiah’s reign. It was a call to cooperation through willingness, not commandment and legislation. Roth. translates the word, “bade”.

“that they might be encouraged” – *Encouraged* is *chazaq* - to seize, to be strong. Roth. has, “persevere” and the RSV, “give themselves”. There is an important principle expressed here – cp. 1 Tim. 5:17-18; 1 Thess. 5:12-13.

THE PEOPLE’S OFFERINGS AND TITHES – 2 Chron. 31:5-10

V.5 - **“commandment”** - *dabar* - a word. Use of this Hebrew word confirms the comment on verse 4. Roth. translates the phrase, “as soon as the thing spread abroad”.

“children of Israel” - Note that “Judah” is not mentioned but rather “Israel”. There was a measure of reunification now through Hezekiah’s reformation.

“firstfruits” - *re’shiyth* - the first (translated elsewhere, “principal thing”). The law of firstfruits (Exod. 34:26; Deut. 18:3-5) taught Israel that Yahweh required the first and best of their labours. The response of the people indicated they had been imbued with the spirit of the principles of the Law. Four special crops are mentioned. The number 4 indicates “new creation” and is also the Scriptural number of righteousness.

V.6 - **“children of Israel and Judah”** – The differentiation between Judah and Israel here reveals that many of Israel had joined themselves to Judah and emigrated from their own land. This ensured their survival when Assyria took the rest of Israel into captivity just a few years later.

“by heaps” - Roth. translates the phrase, “did bring in and pile up heaps, heaps”.

V.7 - **“third month”** - All the events recorded thus far occurred in the first 3 months of Hezekiah’s reign. It was well into harvest time now.

“lay the foundation of the heaps” - Roth. has, “in the third month began they the heaps at the foundation and in the seventh they finished”.

“seventh month” – The seventh month was the end of harvest and the time of the feast of Tabernacles (or ingathering).

V.9 - **“questioned”** – The word here is *darash* meaning to seek or ask.

V.10 - “**Azariah**” - “Yah hath helped”. He may have been the same high-priest as recorded in 2 Chron. 26:17 some 32 years before.

“**house of Zadok**” – *Zadok* means righteousness. The line of Zadok succeeded that of Abiathar in the days of Solomon because of their loyalty to the “beloved”. There are perhaps some reflections here of the Melchizedek priesthood yet to be established.

“**this great store**” - Roth. has, “this great plenty”. A lesson is observable in the results of genuine zeal and sincerity coupled with determination to achieve results. Divine blessing brought fruitfulness in order to produce more fruit.

THE PRIESTHOOD ORGANISED – 2 Chron. 31:11-19

V.11 - “**commanded**” – Here again the word is *amar* - to say. Roth. has, “gave the word”.

“**chambers**” - *lishkah* - room of a building. The AV margin suggests they were storehouses.

V.12 - “**faithfully**” - *emunah* – literally the word signifies firmness; figuratively it has the idea of security. The counsel of Hezekiah was to store the excess for later needs. Cp. the principle of 1 Tim. 6:19.

“**Cononiah**” – This Levite’s name means, “Yah has sustained”. He was the *ruler* (*nagid* - a commander - as occupying the front) while his brother *Shimei* has a name that means “famous”.

V.13 – Faithful Levites kept the gifts of the people. The meaning of their names is: “**Jehiel**” - “God will live”, (29:14); “**Azaziah**” - “Yah has strengthened”; “**Jerimoth**” - “elevations”; “**Nahath**” - “quiet”; “**Asahel**” - “God has made”; “**Jozabad**” - “Yahweh - endowed”; “**Eliel**” - “God of (his) God”; “**Ismachiah**” - “Yah will sustain”; “**Mahath**” - “erasure”, 29:12; “**Benaiah**” - “Yah has built”.

“**overseers**” - *paqiya* - a superintendent.

“**under the hand**” - Roth. has, “at the direction of”.

“**commandment**” - Roth. translates, “by the appointment”.

V. 14 - “**Kore**” - “crier”. His role as keeper of the gate was important for he controlled access and therefore distribution of the freewill offerings of the people.

“**Imnah**” - “prosperity” (as betokened by the right hand).

V.15 - “**next him**” - Roth. has, “under his direction”. This list of Levites were under the direction of Kore the chief door keeper. The meaning of their names is:

“**Eden**” - “pleasure” (29:12); “**Miniamin**” - “from the right hand”; “**Jeshua**” - “He will save”; “**Shemaiah**” - “Yah has heard” (29:14); “**Amariah**” - “Yah has said”; “**Shecaniah**” - “Yah has dwelt”.

“**set office**” – This is one word in Hebrew *emunah* signifying literally firmness, and figuratively security. The RSV translates, “were faithfully assisting” and Roth. has, “in trust”. See verse 12 where it is stated they dealt faithfully.

V.16 - “**genealogy**” - *yachas* – refers to a pedigree or family list. Roth. renders the phrase, “besides registering them by males”.

“**charges**” – The Hebrew *mishmereth* signifies a watch, i.e. the sentry. So Roth. translates, “watches”.

V.18 - “**sanctified themselves**” – The RSV renders this phrase, “for they were faithful in keeping themselves holy”.

V.19 - “**reckoned**” - *yachas* - from the root to sprout, to enrol by pedigree.

HEZEKIAH'S ZEAL AND SINCERITY – 2 Chron. 31:20-21

V.20 - “**right**”- *yashar* - straight. This emphasises the essential integrity of Hezekiah's character. He could assert this later without fear of contradiction (2 Kings 20:3).

“**truth**” - *emeth* - stability, certainty, trustworthiness. The word describing the most fundamental Divine characteristic of truth (Exod. 34:6). Hezekiah was a manifestation of Yahweh's character in both its aspects (see notes on 2 Chron. 32:32).

THE SIEGE OF JERUSALEM - FROM SENNACHERIB'S CYLINDER

Recording his campaigns - now in the British Museum

In my third campaign I marched against Hatti. The awful splendour of my lordship overwhelmed Luli, king of Sidon, and he fled far off over the sea and died (an infamous death). The fearsome nature of the weapon of the god Ashur, my lord, overwhelmed Great Sidon, Little Sidon, Bit-Zitti, Zariptu, Mahalliba, Ushu, Akzib (and) Akku, his strong walled cities, places where there were food and drinking facilities for his garrisons, and they bowed in submission at my feet. Tuba'alu (Ethba'al) I sat on the throne to be the king and imposed upon him tribute, due to my lordship, (to be rendered) annually without ceasing.

In the course of my campaign, I surrounded, captured and carried off the spoil of Beth-Dagon, Joppa, Banaiabarqa, Asuru, cities belonging to Sidqa, who did not bow in submission at my feet quickly. The officials, nobles and people of Ekron, who had thrown Padi, their king, into iron fetters as one loyal to the treaty obligations of (imposed on him by) Assyria, had given him up to Hezekiah, the Jew, as an enemy.

On account of the offence they had committed, their heart took fright and they implored (help from) the kings of Egypt, (and) bowmen, chariots of the kings of Ethiopia (Meluhha), and innumerable host, and, indeed, they came to help them. In the plain of Eltekeh, their battle array being drawn up over against me, they prepared their weapons. On (the oracular promise of) the help of Ashur, my lord, I clashed and effected their defeat. Amid the battle, my own hands captured alive the Egyptian charioteers and princes, together with charioteers belonging to the Ethiopian king. I besieged and captured the town of Eltekeh and Timnah and carried off spoil from them. I drew near to Ekron and slew the officials and nobles who had committed the crime and hung their bodies on posts around the city. I counted as prisoners of war the citizens who had done hostile and abusive things. I ordered the release of the rest of them, who were not convicted of any crime or misbehaviour, against whom there was no charge. I caused Padi, their king to come out of Jerusalem and sat him on the throne as lord over them, fixing upon him (the payment of) tribute to my lordship.

But as for Hezekiah, the Jew, who did not bow in submission to my yoke, forty-six of his strong walled towns and innumerable smaller villages in their neighbourhood I besieged and conquered by stamping down earth-ramps and then by bringing up battering rams, by the assault of foot-soldiers, by breaches, tunnelling and sapper operations. I made to come out from them 200,150 people, young and old, male and female, innumerable horses, mules, donkeys, camels, large and small cattle, and counted them as the spoils of war. He himself I shut up like a caged bird within Jerusalem, his royal city. I put watch posts strictly around it and turned back to his disaster any who went out of its city gate. His towns which I had despoiled I cut off from his land, giving them to Mitinti, king of Ashdod, Padi, king of Ekron, and Sillibel, king of Gaza, and so reduced his land. Moreover, I fixed upon him an increase in the amount to be given as katre-presents for my lordship, in addition to the former tribute, to be given annually. As for Hezekiah, the awful splendour of my lordship overwhelmed him, and the irregular and regular troops which he had brought in to strengthen Jerusalem, his royal city, and had obtained for his protection, together with 30 talents of gold, 300 talent: of silver, precious stones, antimony, large blocks of red stone, ivory (inlaid) couches, ivory am-chairs, elephant hide, elephant tusks, ebony wood, box-wood, all kinds of valuable treasures, as well as his daughters, concubines, male and female musicians he sent me later to Nineveh, my lordly city. He sent a personal messenger to deliver the tribute and make a slavish obeisance.

(British Museum No. 91032) Taken from the book “*Documents from Old Testament Times*”.

V.21 - “**every work**” - His approach to work in the Truth was not half-hearted but determined and resolute. He believed in the maxim that if something was worth doing it was worth doing well.

“**seek**” - *darash* - to follow, to seek. Hezekiah was deliberate and determined in seeking to do all that God required of him. In this he was rare among the kings of Israel and Judah.

“**all his heart**” – Hezekiah was a living example to his people of Deut. 6:4-5.

“**prospered**” - *tsaleach* - to push forward. His progress in spiritual things was obvious to all (1 Tim. 4:15).

4th to 6th YEARS - THE CAPTIVITY OF ISRAEL – 2 Kings 18:9-12

V.9 - “**fourth year of king Hezekiah**” – This was the year 725 BC. Assyria invaded Israel and the 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ year siege of Samaria began leading to the final captivity of Israel.

SENNACHERIB'S GLORY AND DEATH

“Sennacherib was the eldest son of Sargon, and succeeded his father in the summer of 705 BC. Born in the purple, and bred up as crown prince, his primary characteristic was an overweening pride and arrogance which shows itself in all his inscriptions. He calls himself ‘the great king, the powerful king, the king of the Assyrians, of the nations, of the four regions, the diligent ruler, the favourite of the great gods, the observer of sworn faith,

the guardian of law, the establisher of monuments, the noble hero, the strong warrior, the first of kings, the punisher of unbelievers, the destroyer of wicked men’.

He was mighty both in war and in peace. His warlike glories are attested by Herodotus, by other historians, and by his own annals. His peaceful triumphs are witnessed to by the great palace which he erected at Nineveh, and the magnificent series of sculptured slabs with which he adorned it, by his canals and aqueducts, his gate-towers and embankments his Bavian sculpture and his stele at the Nahr-el-kelb. He was a worthy successor of his father Sargon, and of the second Tiglathpileser, active in his military enterprises, indefatigable, persevering, full of resource. No more energetic soldier ever found himself at the head of a huge army eager for battle; no more vigorous administrator ever commanded the resources of a vast empire.”

So writes the historian Rawlinson, of Sennacherib. He was the Gogue of the ancient world! The Babylonish inscriptions record the death of Sennacherib:

“On the 20th of the month Tebet, his son killed Sennacherib, king of Assyria, during a rebellion. For 23 years Sennacherib had exercised kingship over Assyria. The rebellion continued from the 20th Tebet to the 2nd month of Adar. On the 18th month of Adar, Esarhaddon, his son, sat on the throne in Assyria.”

“**Shalmaneser**” – His name means, “The god Shulman is chief”. He was the successor of Tiglath-pileser III and was known in history as Shalmaneser V and reigned from 727-722 BC.

V.10 - “**three years**” - i.e. it was nearly 3 years from late 725 to early 722.

V.11 - “**Halah**” – Halah was a district in Assyria on the banks of the river Khabour.

“**Gozan**” – Meaning “a quarry”, Gozan was a province of Assyria.

SENNACHERIB INVADES JUDAH – 2 Kings 18:13-16

V.13 - “**fourteenth year**” - Hezekiah was now 39 years of age. This was also the year of his sickness unto death (see 2 Kings 20:1; 2 Chron. 32:24; Isa. 38:1 and cp. 2 Kings 20:6 and 18:2).

“**Sennacherib**” – His name means, “Sin (i.e. the moon god) has multiplied the brothers”. He was the son of Sargon (see previous boxed sections on Sennacherib).

“**fenced cities**” – According to Assyrian inscriptions he took 46 cities in all (Isa. 36:1).

V.14 - “**Lachish**” – Lachish had been a royal Canaanite city and was one of the chief fortresses of Judah some 48 km (30 miles) s.w. of Jerusalem and 15 miles west of Hebron. It had a double wall and triple gate and was of immense strategic importance.

“**I have offended**” – The RSV translates the phrase, “I have done wrong, withdraw from me”, and Roth. has, “I have sinned”. In his extremity Hezekiah initially capitulated to Sennacherib but it proved to be to no avail.

“**three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold**” - This was a considerable sum and required the desecration of parts of the Temple to secure.

V.15 – This enforced desecration of the Temple which Hezekiah had spent so much time and effort preparing and re-establishing must have been a distasteful task causing him to pause and consider his direction.

V.16 - “**cut off the gold from the doors**” - In his extremity Hezekiah was forced into unacceptable things such as Ahaz had indulged in for other reasons (2 Chron. 28:24). This was somewhat of a reversal of his early work, and he soon realised the folly of trying to buy Sennacherib’s clemency. Yahweh was the only One who could be trusted.

HEZEKIAH’S PREPARATION OF DEFENCES & PEOPLE – 2 Chron. 32:1-8

V.1 - “**establishment**” - *emeth* - stability (this is the word used in chap. 31:20 of Hezekiah’s character). Roth. translates, “After these things done in faithfulness”, and the RSV supports this translation. The reference is to contents of 2 Chron. 29 to 31 recording the reformation of Hezekiah’s first year. The events of chapter 32 are some 14 years later.

“**thought to win them**” - Roth. has, “and thought to break into them”.

V.2 - “**he was purposed**” - Roth. translates, “that his face was to war”. It was clear to Hezekiah that Sennacherib intended to capture Jerusalem. As a type of the future Russian Gog in Scripture this was a necessary element of his part in the drama (Isa. 10:5-6; Mic. 5:5).

V.3 - “**princes and his mighty men**” - Roth. has, “captains and his heroes”. These were Judah’s military leaders and advisors who were powerless in the face of the Assyrian challenge.

“**stop the waters of the fountains**” - Chiefly the virgin’s fountain which he had channelled by means of a conduit beneath the wall and into the pool of Siloam and then concealed it from view (2 Kings 20:20; Isa. 7:3).

V.4 - “**gathered much people**” - There were however some faithless detractors (Isa. 22:15-19), and some who relied upon Egypt (Isa. 20:2-6, 22:1-7), and some who rested upon their own strength (Isa. 22:8-14).

“**brook that ran**” - Roth. has, “and the torrent that flowed”, which probably refers to the brook Kedron though this was mainly a winter torrent.

HEZEKIAH'S CONDUIT

His Preparations for the Defence of the City

Hezekiah's aqueduct is one of the archaeological mysteries of the city of Jerusalem. It was laboriously dug out of rock, and follows an "S" shape for 1,700 feet, linking the spring of Gihon with the Pool of Siloam (2 Chron. 32:3-4) which was then surrounded by a wall so closing it off from outside contact (Isa. 22:9-11 - the word "ditch" signifies "reservoir"). Why this aqueduct followed the "S" shape is not known, for if it travelled in a straight line, some 700 feet of difficult digging would have been avoided. The record says that "many people were gathered together" for the purpose of digging (2 Chron. 32:4). Perhaps in the panic and confusion mistakes were made and thus the curious shape of the aqueduct came into being. The construction of the aqueduct was apparently mooted when the Assyrians marched south and fear dominated Jerusalem (Isa. 22:9-11), but only constructed or completed when it was obvious that Sennacherib was going to attack Jerusalem (2 Chron. 32:1). The aqueduct stopped the water of Jerusalem from flowing into the Kidron Valley, and therefore being available to any invading enemy.

The story of the digging is told on an inscription in stone found on the spot of the aqueduct in 1880 and today exhibited in Istanbul Museum, it makes interesting reading:-

"The boring through is completed. And this is the story of the boring; while yet they plied the pick, each towards his fellow, and while yet there were three cubits to be bored through, there was heard the voice of one calling to the other that there was a hole in the rock on the right hand and on the left hand. And on the day of the boring through the workers in the tunnel struck each to meet his fellow, pick upon pick. Then the water poured from the source to the pool 1,200 cubits, and a hundred cubits was the height of the rock above the heads of the workers in the tunnel."

V.5 - "**strengthened**" - *chazaq* - to seize, be strong. The RSV has, "he set to the work resolutely". Hezekiah's name means "Strengthened of Yah", but he knew that diligent action was required of him if God was to deliver them from this crisis.

"**raised up to the towers**" - Roth. translates, "and carried up thereon towers" and the RSV adds, "raised towers upon it". The wall was strengthened and fortified with towers.

"**repaired Millo**" - *Repaired* is *chazaq* - to be strong. Millo was the bulwark between the Temple and the king's palace (1 Kings 11:27).

"**darts**" - *shelach* - a missile of attack, i.e. a spear.

V.6 - "**street**" - Roth. has, "broadway". This refers to an open space near the main gate of the city where the soldiers could congregate.

"**spake comfortably**" - *Comfortably* is *al lebab* signifying upon the heart. Roth. has, "spake unto their heart", and the RSV, "spoke encouragingly".

V.7 - "**Be strong**" - *chazaq* - to seize, to be strong. See its use in v.5.

“**courageous**” - *amats* - to be alert. Roth. has, “bold”.

“**dismayed**” - *chathath* - to prostrate, hence break down.

“**for there be more with us**” – The RSV and Roth. have, “for there is one greater with us than with him” (Isa. 7:8-9). Cp. Elisha’s words in 2 Kings 6:16. This was an exhortation of great faith and confidence in Yahweh’s ability to save them from overwhelming odds.

V.8 - “**With him is an arm of flesh**” – See Jer. 17:5 and Job 40:9. Hezekiah’s trust in Yahweh and distrust of the flesh was unsurpassed by any before or after him.

“**fight our battles**” - Cp. 2 Chron. 20:15 and Deut. 20:1-4.

“**rested**” - *camak* - to prop, to lean upon or take hold. Roth. translates the phrase, “and the people leaned upon the words of Hezekiah”.

RABSHAKEH’S ULTIMATUM – 2 Kings 18:17-37

V.17 - “**Tartan**” – He was the commander in chief of the army (Isa. 20:1).

“**Rab-saris**” – The title signifies, “chief chamberlain”; i.e. a senior military officer.

“**Rabshakeh**” – This title curiously means, “chief butler”. It is perhaps significant that this was the man who delivered the intoxicating words of Sennacherib to the Jews on the wall of Jerusalem.

“**Lachish**” – Under siege Lachish was made the headquarters of Sennacherib’s campaign.

“**a great host**” – *Great* is *kabed* - heavy (hence numerous). Roth. has, “a heavy force”.

“**by the conduit**” – This was a significant place. See the context of Isa. 7, and Isaiah’s message to Ahaz in this place promising deliverance from Yahweh. Now the virgin’s fountain had been concealed and little did Rabshakeh know that the waters of Shiloah ran softly beneath his feet sustaining the city.

V.18 - “**Eliakim**” – Strong has the meaning of his name as “God of raising”, and Ges. “Whom God has set”. He was a faithful man in contrast to Shebna the scribe and for this reason was chosen as a type of Christ in Isa. 22:20-25.

“**Hilkiah**” – His name means, “portion of Yah”.

“**Shebna**” – Meaning, “to grow”, but this is a misnomer for he was static. He evidently held a higher position than Eliakim, for he was to be replaced by him (Isa. 22:15-19). He was a faithless man who by his faithless example weakened the resolve of the people.

“**scribe**” - *caphar* - to score, i.e. inscribe. It would seem Shebna’s scribing was not related to the Scriptures, for he lacked faith.

“**Joah**” – The name means, “Yahweh-brothered”. His father was *Asaph* - “collector”.

“**recorder**” - *zakar* - to mark i.e. to remember. This was a prominent administrative position in the kingdom (1 Kings 4:3).

V.19 - “**What confidence is this wherein thou trustest**” – *Confidence* is *bittachown* signifying trust, and *trustest* is *batach* - to hasten to refuge (is the root of *bittachown*).

V.20 - “**Thou sayest**” - Roth. translates the sentence, “Thou hast said - they are only words of the lips: - counsel and might have I for war”.

“**counsel**” - *etsah* – advice, by implication a plan. Hezekiah did have a plan but it did not depend on military strategy. Rather it depended on trust in Yahweh.

V.21 - “**thou trustest upon the staff of this bruised reed**” - Roth. translates, “Now lo!: thou dost trust thyself on the support of this bruised cane”.

“**bruised**” - *ratsats* - to crack. A reed bent and bruised has absolutely no strength for support (cp. Ezek. 29:6).

“**reed**” - *qaneh* - a reed, rod, shaft, tube, stem, etc. Rabshakeh accuses Hezekiah of having his father Ahaz’s faithlessness in seeking help from gentile monarchs.

“**it will go into his hand, and pierce it**” - Roth. has, “it will enter his hand and lay it open”. The unreliability of Egypt in times of crisis was proverbial among the nations.

V.22 - “**high places and altars**” – These were Ahaz’s work. Ahaz in Assyria’s eyes was the rule by which Hezekiah was to be measured, for apostasy was so widespread and common in Judah that it became accepted as normal. The world cannot understand the demands of the Truth. Hezekiah and those like him must stand alone and be accused of wrong-doing when doing right in the sight of God (1 Pet. 2:19-20).

V.23 - “**pledges**” - *arab* - to braid, i.e. inter-mix, hence to give security. The RSV translates the phrase, “Come now make a wager with my master”. The offer of 2,000 horses and the sarcastic jibe about finding sufficient men to ride them are part of Rabshakeh’s scheme to break Hezekiah and the people down by psychological means and weaken their resolve to trust in Yahweh.

V.24 - “**captain**” - *pasha* – a prefect (a minor official). This was a calculated insult.

“**and put thy trust**” - Roth. has for the phrase, “or hast thou on thy part trusted to Egypt for chariots”. What Sennacherib did not know is that Hezekiah was not like Ahaz his father. There was none like Hezekiah who trusted in Yahweh alone to deliver him (v.5).

V.25 - “**Am I now come up without the LORD**” - Roth. and the RSV have, “Now is it without Yahweh?” Such a claim revealed the astonishing pretension of Sennacherib but was to prove his undoing.

“**the LORD said to me**” - This was a lie, but Isaiah’s prophecy of an Assyrian invasion had been made (Isa. 8:6-8) previously. Perhaps Sennacherib had heard of this.

V.26 - “**Syrian language**” – Such a reaction reveals that Rabshakeh’s words had had the desired effect on Hezekiah’s men. They were afraid and they dreaded the effect upon the people overhearing from the wall.

V.29 - “**deceive**” - *nasha* - to lead astray, i.e. to delude. The subtle aim of Rabshakeh is to isolate Hezekiah from his people by undermining their confidence in him.

V.31 - “**make an agreement**” – The RSV has, “make your peace with me”, and Roth., “deal with me thankfully” (Roth. mgn. adds, “get a blessing out of my coming”).

“**of his own vine**” - This appears to be a cunning quotation of Mic. 4:4 prophesied by Micah only a few years earlier. He presented himself as the one who would fulfil this prophecy.

V.32 – Here is another cunning ploy based this time upon Deut. 8:7-8 (note 6 things are mentioned – the number of the flesh).

“**persuadeth**” - *cuwth* - to prick, by implication to seduce. See the use of this word in 2 Chron. 18:2,31.

V.34 - The peoples mentioned were transported to Samaria by Shalmaneser. It was true their gods could not save them either in their own land or in the land of Israel (2 Kings 17:24-26).

V.36 - “**held their peace**” – The RSV has, “were silent”. This was a real test of faith for the men of Judah. Some of their leaders failed the test miserably (Isa.22:15-16).

V.37 - “**clothes rent**” – Always a sign of grief and distress when men are in despair.

MESSENGERS SENT TO ISAIAH – 2 Kings 19:1-5

V.1 - “**sackcloth**” - *saq* - a mesh, i.e. coarse loose cloth or sacking. It was worn to signify distress or self-imposed affliction (Isa. 58:5).

V.2 - “**Isaiah**” - “Yah is salvation”. “**Amoz**” - “strong”. The appearance of Isaiah is significant. To him came two men (Eliakim and Shebna) who were to be the subject of a far reaching prophecy concerning Christ as future king (Isa. 22), but not before he had been the suffering servant of Yahweh as foreshadowed by Hezekiah. The meaning of names is important here too. In his extremity Hezekiah was “strengthened of Yah” (the meaning of his name) because Yahweh brought salvation (Isaiah) through His strength (Amoz).

V.3 - “**trouble, and rebuke**” – *Trouble* is *tsarah* - tightness (i.e. fig. trouble) and *rebuke* is *towkachath* signifying chastisement, refutement. The greatest crisis of Hezekiah’s life was upon him. Never had he been tested like this before.

“**blasphemy**” - *neatsah* - scorn. Hezekiah perceived that Yahweh had been scorned.

“**children are come to the birth**” - i.e. at a critical time when strength was needed it had been expended (Isa. 26:17-18, 66:9). There was portent in these words too for the royal family of which Hezekiah was the head had no heir, for he had not married! This was to become the most critical issue of all when he fell sick unto death in the midst of the crisis.

V.4 - “**reproach**” - *charaph* – fig. to carp at, i.e. defame. Blasphemy and reproach against Yahweh was to Hezekiah the most important issue.

“**the living God**” – This statement under intense pressure stands as a shining testimony to Hezekiah’s faith and conviction in Yahweh.

“**will reprove the words**” – *Reprove* is *yakach* meaning to correct, to argue, convict. Hezekiah looked to Yahweh to provide the conclusive response to Assyrian blasphemy.

ISAIAH’S ENCOURAGING REPLY – 2 Kings 19:6-7

V.6 - “**have blasphemed me**” – *Blasphemed* is *gadaph* signifying to hack (with words) i.e. revile. Yahweh agreed with Hezekiah’s assessment that Israel’s god had been blasphemed.

V.7 - **"Behold, I will send a blast upon him"** – *Blast* is *ruach* - wind. Roth. translates the phrase, "Behold me: About to let go against him a blast". Yahweh destroys with the breath of his mouth (see the language used of the Assyrian of the future – Isa. 30:27-31).

"rumour" - *shemuwah* - something heard, an announcement. Compare Dan. 11:44 which indicates the king of the north will also be led to his destruction by an announcement.

"I will cause him to fall" - There was to be Divine providential intervention in the end of "the Assyrian". So it will be for the Russian Gog (Isa. 31:8-9).

SENNACHERIB'S BLASPHEMOUS LETTER – 2 Kings 19:8-13

V.8 - **"Libnah"** – The name means, "whiteness", some sort of whitish tree. A strongly fortified city near Lachish in southern Judah.

V.9 - **"Tirhakah king of Ethiopia"** - He was the son of Shabaka an Ethiopian who was ruling Egypt at the time. Tirhakah was his supreme military commander.

"Behold he is come" - This was probably the 'rumour' of v.7.

V.10 - **"deceive"** - *nasha* - to lead astray, i.e. to delude (this was the word used in chap. 18:29 of Hezekiah). Sennacherib now fatally uses the word of Yahweh. For this blasphemy he paid dearly, and poetically (v.37).

V.12 & 13 - Reveal that this form of words was a rehearsed and common approach by Sennacherib (cp. Rabshakeh's words in 2 Kings 18:33-34).

HEZEKIAH'S PRAYER FOR DELIVERANCE – 2 Kings 19:14-19

V.14 - **"went up into the house"** - RSV & Roth. both have, "went up to the house".

"spread it before the LORD" – *Spread* is *paras* - to break apart, disperse, i.e. lay before.

V.15 - **"dwellest"** - *yashab* - to sit, implies to dwell, remain. Though unseen to Hezekiah's eyes, he had implicit trust that Yahweh's presence remained above the Ark.

"between the cherubims" - Roth. has, "inhabiting the cherubim" and the RSV, "who art enthroned above the cherubim". Contrast Hezekiah's faith in God's existence with Ahaz's disbelief. This is a classic prayer - note the praise to Yahweh first (cp. Matt. 6:9-10).

V.16 - **"bow down"** – *Bow* is *natah* - to stretch, by implication to bend towards. The word is used throughout the Psalms of the cries of the faithful desiring to be heard (e.g. Ps. 17:6, 31:2, 45:10, 71:2, 86:1, 88:2, 102:2).

"open LORD thine eyes, and see" - Not that Yahweh does not see always. But He does desire His servants to approach Him with this attitude for it is glorifying to Him (Psa. 50:15).

V. 17 - **"destroyed"** - Roth. has, "devoted to destruction".

V.19 - **"thou only"** - This was the real issue. Sennacherib challenged Yahweh's existence. The gods of other nations were no gods, hence they were destroyed. Yahweh could not refuse Hezekiah his request, but in saving him he demonstrated His methods by placing him under extreme pressure and at last helping him, thus testing Hezekiah to the full.

ISAIAH'S PROPHECY AGAINST ASSYRIA – 2 Kings 19:20-34

V.20 - “**I have heard**” - i.e. Yahweh would answer favourably. Hezekiah was to hear these words again (2 Kings 20:5).

V.21 - “**the virgin daughter of Zion**” – The phrase is used by the prophets to describe Judah and Israel (Jer. 14:17, 18:13,31:4). See Micah's prophecy at the same time (Mic. 4:8-10, 5:1-3).

“**despised**” - *bazah* - disesteem. Roth. has, “mocketh”. The Assyrian's mocking would be turned back upon him by those he had despised.

“**shaken her head**” – Both Roth. and RSV have, “wags her head”. A well known gesture of contempt and derision in Scripture (Psa. 22:7; Job 16:4).

V.22 - “**reproached**” - *charaph* - to expose, to defame. The RSV has, “mocked”.

“**exalted thy voice**” – *Exalted* is *ruwn* - to be high, to rise or raise. The RSV has, “raised” and Roth., “lifted high”. The pride of the Assyrian came before his fall (Prov. 16:18).

“**lifted up thine eyes on high**” - Roth. translates, “hast proudly raised thine eyes” and the RSV, “haughtily lifted your eyes”.

V.23 - “**sides**” – The RSV translates, “far recesses” and Roth., “recesses”; i.e. he boasted he would possess all of Lebanon.

“**cut down the tall cedars...the choice fir trees**” – The RSV has, “I felled its tallest cedars...and its choicest cypresses”. These prized trees were symbols of the kings and powers overcome by Assyria (cp. Ezek. 31).

“**I will enter**” – Both the RSV and Roth. put this in the past tense, “and have entered”.

“**lodgings of his borders**” - *Lodgings* is *malown* - a lodgement, encampment, while *borders* is *qets* - an extremity, and so the RSV translates the phrase, “farthest retreat”.

“**the forest of his Carmel**” – The RSV has, “its densest forest”, and Roth., “its thick garden forests”. This is not a reference to Mt Carmel but the fertile forests of the far north.

V.24 - “**strange**” – Both the RSV & Roth. translate this word, “foreign”; i.e. not his own.

“**besieged places**” – *Besieged* is *matsowr* - hemming in (i.e. limiting). Refers to the cities besieged by Sennacherib and denied the water of streams flowing through them.

V.25 - “**Hast thou not heard**” - Yahweh now turns to rebuke Assyria for his ignorance and temerity. Roth. translates, “Hast thou not heard - that long ago that is what I appointed” and the RSV, “that I determined it long ago”.

“**of ancient times that I have formed it**” - *Formed* is *yatsar* - to press, hence to mould in a form (squeeze into shape). Roth. has, “devised” and the RSV translates the phrase, “I planned from days of old”. Clearly Yahweh had a purpose with Assyria from the beginning and intended to set forth in him the future work of the Russian Gog (Isa. 10:5-6, 24-27).

V.26 - “**of small power**” – In the Hebrew this means “short of hand”.

“**blasted**” - Roth. has, “withered” and the RSV, “blighted”.

V.27 - “**abode**” - *yashab* - to sit by implication to dwell, remain. Interestingly, this is the word used by Hezekiah of Yahweh’s “dwelling” between the Cherubim (v.15).

“**rage**” - *ragaz* - to quiver (with violent emotion). For so it had been – a contest between gods – one false, the other true.

V.28 - “**tumult**” - *sha’anan* - secure (bad sense - haughty). The RSV has, “arrogance” and Roth., “thy contempt”.

“**put my hook in the nose**” - This is the language of Ezek. 38:4 which speaks of the latter day “Assyrian”. There is evidence that Sennacherib left Lachish (v.8) and went into Egypt and then returned as will Gog (Dan.11:42-43). His army was destroyed outside Jerusalem (the type of Russia in the latter days). Incidentally, the practice of putting hooks in captives jaws or nose was of Assyrian origin.

“**bridle**” – Both Roth. and the RSV have, “bit”. This was an eastern method of controlling camels.

V.29 - “**a sign**” - *owth* - a signal (as a flag, beacon etc). This sign was given to Hezekiah as an assurance that redemption would surely come.

“**grow of themselves**” – The reference is to unsown crops such as vines, olives, a species of corn etc. (Lev. 25:5).

“**plant vineyards**” – Such an assurance negates Rabshakeh’s dubious promise of 2 Kings 18:31-32.

V.30 - “**the remnant that is escaped**” – The RSV has, “surviving remnant”. An allusion to Isaiah’s prophecy concerning Shear-Jashub is possible (Isa. 7:3).

“**take root downward**” - Compare the symbol of the vine in Psa. 80 (especially v.9) and note the context of v.1. See also Isa. 27:6 and Rev. 22:16.

V.31 - “**they that escape out of mount Zion**” – The RSV has, “And out of Mt. Zion a band of survivors”.

“**the zeal of the LORD of hosts**” – *Zeal* is *qinah* - jealousy or envy, from the root to be zealous. The phrase is characteristic of Isaiah’s Emmanuel prophecies (Isa. 9:7).

V.32 - “**cast a bank**” – The RSV translates, “cast up a siege mound”.

V.34 - “**defend**” - *ganan* - to hedge about, i.e. protect (Cp. 2 Kings 20:6).

“**for mine own sake**” - Cp. v.16-19. Here was the primary reason for deliverance.

“**for my servants David’s sake**” - i.e. his covenants to David. See also the connection with Ezek. 37:24-25.

HEZEKIAH’S SICKNESS UNTO DEATH – 2 Kings 20:1-7

V.1 - “**In those days**” - i.e. before the destruction of the Assyrian army (Cp. 2 Kings 20:6 with 19:34). It appears that he was struck down during the siege in the midst of his troubles with Sennacherib.

“**set thine house in order**” – This commandment highlighted to Hezekiah an area of neglect in his life for it is apparent that up to this stage he had no children (cp. 2 Kings 20:6 with

21:1). The need for a son to continue the Davidic line appears to be the background to Psa. 127 which is among the Songs of Degrees assembled by Hezekiah (Psa. 120 – 134).

“not live” – Both the RSV & Roth. have, “not recover”. While the disease is not named v.7 provides a clue. Some kind of “boil” was evident.

V.2 - **“turned his face to the wall”** – Hezekiah with singular purpose and without forethought makes an immediate and spontaneous response to Yahweh’s message. His was a genuine heart in tune with God and to Him he turns in his extremity.

V.3 - **“I beseech thee”** – The phrase could be literally rendered, “Oh, now”. It is always used as a cry of anguish from men in distress and occurs 13 times (Exod. 32:31; Neh. 1:5&11; Psa. 116:4&16; 118:25; Dan. 9:4; John 1:14,42).

“remember” - Like Nehemiah he had done things which he knew pleased Yahweh (Neh. 5:19) and could seek for mercy on that basis.

“in truth” – The word is *emeth* - stability, figuratively certainty, trustworthiness. Is used of the Divine characteristic of justice, but here of uprightness and integrity.

“perfect heart” – *Perfect* is *shalem* – complete, from the root, to be safe. Hezekiah is the only king who claimed this of himself without fear of contradiction for he knew he had served Yahweh with all his heart.

“wept sore” – *Sore* is *gadol* - great. RSV has, “bitterly” and Roth., “wept aloud”. (Roth. mgn. “wept with a great weeping”).

V.4 - **“middle court”** - Roth. says in his margin, “written city, read court. In some codex both written and read city”. Gray states it was the court between the temple and the palace. Isaiah only had time to pass out of the king’s palace and into the open court before the temple and the word of Yahweh came to him.

V.5 - **“captain”** - *nagid* - a commander. The RSV has, “prince”.

“third day” – Hezekiah’s healing is clearly a typical resurrection on the third day pointing forward to the greater suffering servant of Yahweh (cp. Luke 13:32).

V.7 - **“lump of figs”** – *Lump* is *debelah* - to press together, i.e. a cake of pressed figs. Roth. and the RSV have, “a cake of figs”. Secular history attests to the use of figs to draw septic ulcers (e.g. Pliny).

“boil” - *shechiyn* - to burn, inflammation, i.e. an ulcer. Boils can be of different kinds. In Job’s case masses of boils erupted (Job 2:7) with an angry inflammation surrounding gangrenous skin and open oozing sores. However in Hezekiah’s case there appears to have been only one boil, probably a carbuncle. This is a very large boil with a number of openings and with large amounts of dead tissue and discharge which being septic led to blood poisoning, etc. There seems to be little support for the theory that the disease was elephantiasis. Only one ancient version translates Job 2:7 that way. The same word is used in relation to leprosy in Lev. 13 and Hezekiah’s sickness was doubtless a form of leprosy given the use of the word *naga* in Isa.53:4 which has its basis in these events.

THE SIGN OF HIS HEALING – 2 Kings 20:8-11

V.8 - “**sign**” - Unlike Ahaz his father who being offered a sign refused it, Hezekiah shows his faithfulness by seeking an assurance (cp. Judges 6:36-40).

V.9 - “**degrees**” - *maalah* - elevation (lit. a step or grade mark). See the 15 Songs of Degrees (Psa. 120-134) compiled by Hezekiah, apparently one for each year of his extension of life.

V.10 - “**light thing**” – The RSV has, “easy thing”. It was “easy” because it was the order of nature for the sun to “go down” (the RSV has, “to lengthen” and Roth. “decline”).

V.11 - “**dial**” - *maalah* – this is the same word as “degrees” v.9.

“**of Ahaz**” - That Ahaz should be connected with this sign is noteworthy for Hezekiah is revealed as his exact opposite. Isaiah had offered Ahaz a sign in the “heights” (Isa. 7:11).

HIS RECOVERY AND PSALM OF PRAISE – Isa. 38:9-22

Hezekiah is portrayed as the suffering servant of Yahweh; is ‘raised’ after 3 days; marries Hephzibah (“my delight is in her”); and bears the seed to “declare his generation”. Compare this Psalm with the language of Isa. 53 concerning Christ.

V.10 - “**cutting off**” – Both the RSV and Roth. translate, “noontide”. This Psalm reveals Hezekiah’s thoughts during the bleak days of his sickness.

V.11 - “**land of the living**” - Cp. Isa. 53:8.

V.12 - “**Mine age is departed**” – *Age* is *dor* - a revolution of time, i.e. an age or generation; and also a dwelling. So the RSV has, “my dwelling is plucked up and removed from me”.

“**shepherds tent**” - i.e. something easily dismantled, and hence disappears quickly.

“**with pining sickness**” - Roth. and the RSV both have, “from the loom doth he cut me off”.

V. 13 - “**I reckoned till morning**” – The RSV translates, “I cry for help until morning”.

V.14 - “**undertake**” – The RSV has, “be thou my security”.

V.15 - “**I shall go softly**” – RSV translates the passage, “All my sleep has fled because of the bitterness of my soul”.

V.17 - “**for peace I had great bitterness**” - Roth. has, “Lo for well being I had bitterness” (cp. Isa. 53:5 of Christ’s experience).

“**thou hast in love**” - “but thou hast held back my life”.

“**for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back**” – Yahweh would do this because of the work of Christ foreshadowed in Hezekiah (cp. Isa. 53:6).

THE SONGS OF DEGREES

The Songs of the Degrees are 15 in number (120-134). They are very suitable to the circumstances of Hezekiah's life, and it is suggested that they were arranged by him, 10 of them having been actually written by him. Dr. J.W. Thirtle and the *Companion Bible* make comments of interest:-

"They (the songs of the Degrees) correspond in number with the 15 years added to Hezekiah's life. Ten are by Hezekiah (corresponding with the number of the "degrees" by which the shadow of the sun went backward on the sun-dial of Ahaz - 2 Kings 20:8-11). Five are by others (4 by David and 1 by Solomon). Solomon's Psalm occupies the centre (127); and, of the 7 on either side, 2 in each 7 are by David; and 5 in each 7 by Hezekiah.

The 15 Psalms are arranged in 5 groups of 3 each. In each group, the subject of the first is Distress; the second is Trust in Yahweh; the third speaks of Blessing and Peace in Zion.

They are here in fulfilment of Hezekiah's promises recorded in Isa. 38:20."

The Psalms are set out in five Groups as follows:-

Group 1 - Psalms 120 to 122

This group of psalms appears to have its basis in Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem.

- Psa. 120 - DISTRESS at Rabshakeh's blasphemous words
- Psa. 121 - TRUST that Yahweh will save Jerusalem
- Psa. 122 - DELIVERANCE and blessings for Jerusalem.

Group 2 - Psalms 123 to 125

The basis of this group appears to be more particularly in the conference between Rabshakeh and the Jews at the time when he stood on the Virgin's fountain (Isa. 36:2).

- Psa. 123 - DISTRESS at Rabshakeh's scorning words
- Psa. 124 - TRUST in Yahweh to deliver from the spoiler
- Psa. 125 - DELIVERANCE and peace in Zion.

Group 3 - Psalms 126 to 128

This group could be based on Hezekiah's sorrow for Jerusalem at the time of the siege and his desire for an heir.

- Psa. 126 - DISTRESS at the straitness of the siege.
- Psa. 127 - TRUST that Yahweh would provide a heritage
- Psa. 128 - DELIVERANCE and blessing as his prayer is heard.

Group 4 - Psalms 129 to 131

This group appears to be based in the crisis that faced Hezekiah when Jerusalem was encircled with armies and Isaiah came to him with the message telling him of his impending death.

- Psa. 129 - DISTRESS at the impending crisis

Psa. 130	-	TRUST that Yahweh would heal and redeem
Psa. 131	-	DELIVERANCE and hope in Yahweh.

Group 5 - Psalms 132 to 134

The basis of this group appears to be Hezekiah's concern for the Temple, its restoration, and future glory, together with true worshippers.

Psa. 132	-	DISTRESS for fulfilment of the Davidic promise
Psa. 133	-	TRUST that true unity will one day be revealed
Psa. 134	-	DELIVERANCE and blessing out of Zion.

V.19 - **“the father to the children”** - Hezekiah had no children but realised how important that role was to the purpose of God now (cp. Isa. 53:8,10).

V.21 - **“plaister”** - *marach* - to soften by rubbing or pressure, hence to apply as an emollient.

THE OVERTHROW OF SENNACHERIB'S ARMY – 2 Kings 19:35-37

V.35 - **“that night”** - Sennacherib's army had returned to lay siege against Jerusalem but even before preparations were made, disaster struck on the first night!

“when they arose” - Roth. translates, “when men arose”; i.e. when the men of Judah arose.

V.37 - **“Adrammelech”** – His name means, “splendour of the king”.

“smote him with the sword” – This was a fulfilment of 2 Kings 19:7.

“Armenia” - Roth. has, “Ararat”.

“Esarhaddon” – His name means, “Ashur has given a brother”. He reigned from 680-669 BC and was Sennacherib's favourite son and army commander. His ascendancy may have provided the motive for Adrammelech and Sharezer to murder their father.

SENNACHERIB'S ASSASSINATION & HEZEKIAH'S SUCCESS – 2 Chron. 32:21-23

V.22 - **“guided”** - *nahal* - to run with a sparkle, i.e. flow. Hence to conduct, and by inference to protect, sustain. The dramatic events surrounding the overthrow of the Assyrian army surely demonstrated that Yahweh's guidance had been with Hezekiah and his people.

V.23 - **“gifts”** - *minchah* - to apportion, i.e. bestow, tribute. The word is used of offerings of acknowledgement.

“presents” - *migdanah* - preciousness, i.e. a gem. Sadly these were to contribute to his failure in the matter of the Babylonian embassy.

“magnified” - *nacah* - to lift. Roth. has, “exalted”. Hezekiah's exaltation was also a test.

HEZEKIAH'S PRIDE AFTER HEALING – 2 Chron. 32:24-26

V.25 - **“Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him”** – The RSV has, “did not make return” for the phrase “rendered not again”. This is a common problem. Grateful response is what Yahweh seeks, but human pride is ever present.

“**lifted up**” - *gabahh* - to soar, i.e. be lofty. The effect of Divine blessing and subsequent notoriety and prosperity was to temporarily puff up his heart with an unwarranted sense of importance.

V.26 - “**humbled**” - *kana* - to bend the knee, hence humiliate. Pride is by its very nature subversive of humility when mistakes have been made. The mark of a great man is to acknowledge the mistake and to humble himself. Asa, one of Judah’s finest kings, was unable to do this (2 Chron.16:10). Hezekiah was equal to the challenge.

“**pride**” - *gabahh* - elation, grandeur, arrogance.

“**so that the wrath of the LORD came not**” - The wrath threatened in v.25 did not come in Hezekiah’s lifetime, but was held in reserve to a later time simply because Hezekiah humbled himself. The mercy of Yahweh is astonishing as is illustrated by similar mercy shown to Ahab for humbling himself (1 Kings 21:27-29).

HEZEKIAH’S RICHES AND PROSPERITY – 2 Chron. 32:27-30

V.27 - “**riches and honour**” – This is reminiscent of Jehoshaphat who also stumbled briefly through pride and self reliance (2 Chron. 18:1).

“**pleasant jewels**” – The RSV translates, “for all kinds of costly vessels”.

V.28 - “**cotes**” - *averah* - a stall.

V.30 - “**upper watercourse**” - Roth. has, “upper spring of the waters”.

“**Gihon**” – The name signifies “a stream”. This was the Virgin’s fountain of Isa. 7:3 and 36:2. Before the Assyrian invasion Hezekiah sealed the spring and diverted its waters into the pool of Siloam by a tunnel running beneath the city wall.

“**prospered in all his works**” – *Prospered* is *tsaleach* - to push forward. Hezekiah was blessed by Yahweh because he trusted in God (2 Kings 18:5-7).

HEZEKIAH’S MISTAKE – 2 Chron. 32:31

V.31 - “**Howbeit**” - *ken* - set, rightly. Roth. has, “Yet verily”. The one mistake loomed as a dark shadow over Hezekiah’s reign as David’s errors did over his.

“**the wonder**” - *mopeth* - a miracle, by implication a token or omen. Roth. translates, “wonderful token”. This is a reference to the miracle of Ahaz’s sun dial and Hezekiah’s subsequent recovery (v.24). Probably Babylon the rising superpower was interested in the circumstances surrounding the defeat of the Assyrian army as well, and also Hezekiah’s recent ascent to power and wealth. They saw him as a valuable ally.

“**God left him to try him**” – *Try* is *nacah* - to test. The RSV translates, “God left him to himself, in order to try him”. Yahweh did not forsake Hezekiah; He stood back from him.

“**that he might know all that was in his heart**” - Roth. has, “to take note of all that was in his heart”. This is an exhortation to all the servants of God on the principle of Luke 12:48.

BABYLON’S DIPLOMATIC MISSION – 2 Kings 20:12-13

V.12 - “**Berodach-baladan**” – The name is a variation of Merodach-baladan and means, “Marduk has given a son” (Isa. 39:1). He was the king who welded the fractious Chaldean tribes together and conquered Babylonia, holding it against Sargon in 721 BC. He was

subsequently defeated by Sargon and fled, only to return later as king of Babylon in 702 BC during the reign of Sennacherib who also defeated him. It seems Merodach-baladan's embassy was sent shortly after his return to power in an attempt to stir up a revolt and gain assistance against Assyria in the west.

V.13 - “**hearkened unto them**” – *Hearkened* is *shama* - to hear. The RSV has, “welcomed them”. He did more than welcome them. He opened all his kingdom to their scrutiny.

“**armour**” - *keliy* - apparatus (implement, utensil or weapon). The RSV has, “his armoury”.

ISAIAH REBUKES HEZEKIAH – 2 Kings 20:14-19

V.15 - Even in error Hezekiah is absolutely honest. He does not attempt to cover his actions or hide his mistake.

V.18 - “**sons that shall issue**” – This is implicit evidence that he was still childless.

“**they shall be eunuchs**” – This prophecy was fulfilled (Dan. 1:3-7).

V.19 - “**good is the word of the LORD**” – It was characteristic of Hezekiah to accept without question or complaint the Divine edict.

“**is it not good**” – The RSV translates, “for he thought, why not, if there will be peace and security in my days”, and Roth., “is it not that peace and stability there shall be in my days”. This is not selfishness but a confidence in God that he would be blessed for his trust in Him. The wrath would fall upon his posterity who would justly deserve it.

HEZEKIAH'S DEATH AND BURIAL – 2 Chron. 32:32-33

V.32 - “**goodness**” - *chesed* - kindness, from the root to bow, i.e. to be kind. Roth. “lovingkindnesses”. This completes the record of Hezekiah's character. He manifested this essential quality of the Divine character (see 2 Chron. 31:20; 2 Kings 20:3).

V.33 - “**chiefest**” - *maaleh* - an elevation, i.e. acclivity or platform. The RSV has, “ascent of the tombs”. The word has the same root as “degrees” (2 Kings 20:9-10).

“**did him honour**” - *kabod* - weight i.e. splendour. Contrast his father Ahaz (2 Chron. 28:27).

MANASSEH -

The Murderous Corruptor

(JUDAH)

HEBREW - “Causing to forget”. (Root, *nasha* - forget or neglect).

FIRST MENTION - 2 Kings 20:21

LAST MENTION - Jer. 15:4

LENGTH OF REIGN - 55 years from (695) 685-641 BC

AGE AT ACCESSION - 12

DEATH - 67

FATHER - Hezekiah- “strengthened of Yah”

MOTHER - Hephzibah- “My delight is in her”

SIGNIFICANT REFERENCES - After repentance - 2 Kings 23:26, 24:3; Jer. 15:4. Cp. the principle of Ezek. 18:19-23 - Manasseh’s personal position may have been secured but the effects of his sins upon Judah were irreversible and brought about Judah’s demise.

SUMMARY OF CHARACTER

Manasseh the son of Hezekiah was without any doubt the worst king of Judah. The only mitigating factor was that near the end of his life he repented of his idolatry after a brief captivity in Babylon. By then however it was too late to reverse the effect of his idolatry and corruptions upon the ecclesia of God which went into captivity because “Yahweh turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked him withal” (2 Kings 23:26). The effect of Manasseh’s idolatry upon the people was utterly demoralising as the general failure of Josiah’s desperate reformation testifies. The greater part of Judah had become incorrigibly established in immorality and devious superstitions and nothing could be done to salvage them from it.

Not only did Manasseh literally murder thousands of God’s servants during his reign but he must also be held responsible for the eternal loss of many hundreds of thousands of lives as a result of his corrupting and defiling idolatries. A deliberate campaign of corruption and organised idolatry was commenced in Judah aimed at destroying every vestige of Hezekiah’s reforms. Tragically this campaign was entirely successful and what resistance did remain to it was quickly eliminated by a brutal campaign of murder as all who stood for the principles espoused by Hezekiah were massacred until blood flowed in the streets of Jerusalem. Tradition holds that one of the victims of Manasseh was Isaiah the prophet who was “sawn asunder” after having taken refuge in a hollow tree trunk. The destruction of the prophets and Yahweh’s servants signalled the end for Judah because the moral fibre of the ecclesia was gone and virtually nothing remained upon which a reformation could be based. The total demoralisation of the people and the complete absence of righteousness outside of the palace and the temple is clear from the words of Yahweh through Jeremiah the prophet in the days of Josiah the reformer; “Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgement, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it” (Jer. 5:1).

As Manasseh came to the throne at the age of twelve it must be assumed that the men who guided him in the early years of his reign were responsible for directing him along an evil path, but that Manasseh responded with alacrity to the influences brought upon him during the formative years is obvious. When he attained maturity he needed no guidance in undertaking his campaigns of corruption and murder which were only halted by Divine intervention resulting in his incarceration in the dungeons of Babylon. It remains to be seen whether Manasseh's repentance was genuine and sustained to the end of his life. "The judge of all the earth" may well forgive Manasseh on the principle of Ezek. 18:21-22, but he could not overlook the consequences of his corruptions.

HARMONY OF THE RECORDS OF THE REIGN OF MANASSEH

	2 Kings	2 Chron.
Accession at age 12	20:21	32:33
Divine estimation of his reign	21:1-2	33:1-2
His great idolatry and evil	21:3-9	33:3-9
Rejects the prophets of God		33:10
Prophets warn of impending doom	21:10-15	
Massacres God's prophets and the righteous	21:16	
Is carried captive into Babylon		33:11
Seeks Yahweh and is released		33:12-13
Fortifies the walls of Jerusalem		33:14
Removes idolatry and worships Yahweh		33:15-17
Death and final summary	21:17-18	33:18-20

VERSE BY VERSE NOTES

ACCESSION AND CORRUPT IDOLATRIES – 2 Kings 21:1-9

V.1 - "**twelve years old**" – Manasseh was born three years after Hezekiah was granted extension of life by 15 years (2 Kings 20:6). Hezekiah was in a period of spiritual lapse (2 Kings 20:12-13), which resulted in Isaiah's prophecy of the impending overthrow of the kingdom (2 Kings 20:16-18).

"**Manasseh**" - Heb. "causing to forget, from the root *nasha*, to forget, to neglect. There may be Egyptian influence in his name for Joseph named his son Manasseh (his wife was Egyptian). In Isa. 28:7,14; 30:1-3 the prophet speaks of the priests who had gone into Egypt. These may have led the young king Manasseh into idolatry. Being only 12 he was unable to rule effectively and therefore the leadership was committed either to the priests or the royal courtiers and this may have been the source of the idolatry into which the nation fell.

"**reigned fifty five years**" – This was longer than any king of Israel or Judah. He died aged 67.

V.2 - "**he did that which was evil**" - The record of Manasseh's evil begins immediately and suggests that he was guided by the priests, royal courtiers and false prophets at a very young age. He reintroduced the religious worship of the nations whom God had evicted

from the land because of the same corruptions. Manasseh was a young person who evidently considered orthodox worship as too “stuffy” and needing to be “brightened up” a bit.

V.3 - “he built up again” - The fact that he could do this shows that Hezekiah had left something upon which to rebuild. This would be the sense of 2 Kings 18:4 (“removed” in the Hebrew is *soor* - to turn off). He had probably caused the operation of the high places to cease and desecrated them, but not as thoroughly as Josiah did later in 2 Kings 23:13. The record speaks as though the high places built by Solomon still remained after 360 years and were left to Josiah to “defile” (Heb. *tame* - to be foul). However thorough Hezekiah’s purge might have been, it was short-lived for Manasseh reconstructed the high places of Solomon.

“reared up altars” - The atrocities of Baal worship like that of Ahab and Jezebel were introduced. However, far worse than this was to follow.

“and made a grove” - Heb. *asherah* - the pagan god related to Baal and Ashtarothe (the Phoenician goddess of love and increase). Baal and Ashtoreth were worshipped in tandem - male and female. For further information see footnote E pg. 260 of J. B. Rotherham. This worship being set up, it was not long before the people had whole-heartedly joined in. The worship was notoriously sensual; women surrendered their virtue; sacred places were brothels; and ‘holy’ prostitutes (male and female) presided over ‘worship’ and were themselves initiated by impure rites.

“worshipped all the host of heaven” - This was a new type of worship adopted from the Assyrians or the Chaldeans in which worship was conducted on housetops. Star worship was peculiarly a superstition from Babylon. Manasseh had built a place for this worship in an upper chamber over the doorway to one of the courts of the temple which had previously been erected by his grandfather and predecessors (2 Kings 23:12).

V.4 - “he built altars in the house of the LORD” - Manasseh built additional altars “in the house of Yahweh”. This probably means in the court as in v.5 (1 Kings 14:21; Deut. 12:11).

V.5 - “altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts” - The two courts were the court of the priests and the outer court.

V.6 - “son” - Both the Septuagint and Chronicles have “sons” (plural). He followed in the footsteps of his grandfather Ahaz in offering his children to Molech (2 Kings 16:3).

“observed times and used enchantments” - Roth. translates, “practised hidden arts and used divination”. He appointed necromancers or soothsayers, and wizards. These obviously had a Babylonish source and was strictly forbidden under the Law (Lev. 19:31; Deut. 18:11). Manasseh despaired of help from Yahweh to free him from the Assyrian yoke, hence his frantic worship of the host of heaven and the employment of a wizard may have been a bid to gain assistance against Assyria.

V.7 - “he set up a graven image” - Roth. has, “he set the image of the sacred stem”, i.e. the Asherah. This was mounted in the temple itself probably in the Holy Place between the lampstand and table of shewbread. This is an astonishing act of idolatry seeing Yahweh had chosen this house to put His name there (1 Kings 8:29,44; 9:3).

V.8 - In this verse the covenant made to David is alluded to (cp. 2 Sam. 7:10). The hope of Israel had now been forgotten, and the foundation of life in the ecclesia, God's Law, had been rejected.

V.9 - **"hearkened"** - *shama* - to hear intelligently. The great *shama* ("hear O Israel...") of Deut. 6:4-5 was completely repudiated by Manasseh to Judah's ruin.

"seduced" - *taah* - to vacillate, to reel or stray; translated as cause to go astray, deceive, make to stagger. Manasseh purposefully and wilfully organised idolatry to demoralise the people. Their sin became worse in Yahweh's eyes than the evil of the nations that had been evicted from the land by Joshua's campaigns.

YAHWEH CONDEMNS MANASSEH'S IDOLATRY – 2 Kings 21:10-16

V.10 - **"prophets"** – Note the plural. Many prophets were sent to Manasseh (2 Chron. 33:10,18). These were probably disciples of Isaiah who prophesied during Hezekiah's reign (Isa. 1:1). Habakkuk may have prophesied in this period, and the similarity of Hab. 1:5-6 to 2 Kings 21:12 should be noted.

V.11 - **"Amorites"** – Even the Amorites who were the most powerful and perverse nation of Canaan, and whose iniquity had become full, were outstripped by Manasseh (Gen. 15:16).

V.12 - **"whosoever heareth of it"** – Literally this reads, "his hearers" (i.e. ears).

"shall tingle" - i.e. it shall affect his ears like the sharp piercing sound spoken of Eli's house (1 Sam. 3:11). Jeremiah also used the same expression in his denunciation of Manasseh's works (Jer. 19:3).

V.13 - **"the plummet of the house of Ahab"** – *Plummet* is *mishqoleth* - a level, i.e. to be thrown down (see use in Amos 7:7-9; Isa. 34:11; Lam. 2:8). The line of Samaria and plummet of Ahab indicate similarity of judgement now pending on Judah as that which fell on Israel.

"wipeth a dish" – This is a graphic symbol for the overthrow of the people.

"turning it upside down" - Symbolic of the overthrow of the city by removing every last drop of moisture. Compare Ezekiel's subsequent prophecy in Ezek. 21:27.

V.14 – **"a prey and a spoil to all their enemies"** - Isaiah had prophesied of this outcome (Isa. 42:22). Other prophets (who may have been his scholars) now took up the refrain.

V.15 – **"have provoked me to anger"** - Yahweh's patience with His people manifested since the Exodus had reached its climax. Their apostasy under Manasseh exceeded the corruptions of the Amorites whom Israel evicted from the land.

V.16 - **"shed innocent blood very much"** - Manasseh was a man whose conscience was evidently pricked by those who stood up for the truth and who plainly spoke forth against his apostasy. So he formulated the policy of killing those who spoke truth while simultaneously denying all access to the scriptures. He represents those who decry Bible study because they have set up idols in their heart (the Catholic Church notoriously pursued this policy for centuries). Unable to defeat the prophets' forthright stand for the truth he slew them with the sword and systematically killed all the adherents of Hezekiah's

reforms till the blood of the slain filled Jerusalem (see the use of the same word 2 Kings 10:21). The reference to Jerusalem being filled with blood may indicate the murders were committed in one day (like the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre of 1572). The voice of the prophets (vv. 10-15) probably provoked Manasseh to institute a massacre on a grand scale to eliminate his opposition. Jewish tradition holds that Isaiah was "sawn asunder" (cp. Heb. 11:37) by Manasseh during this purge.

MANASSEH HUMBLING IN BABYLON – 2 Chron. 33:11-17

V.11 - "**thorns**" – A reference to hooks or rings passed through the nose of captives (Isa. 37:29). Yahweh intervened by providence and caused Manasseh to be carried to Babylon. It is curious he was captured by the Assyrians yet taken to Babylon the very home of the idolatries he had introduced. As such he was a type and forerunner for Judah who some 50 years later were taken to Babylon to be rescued from idolatry.

V.12 - "**he besought the LORD**" – *Besought* is *chalah* - to entreat. Manasseh humbled himself greatly in captivity where he had time to reflect on his folly. His repentance was answered by Divine providence again and he was released and returned to Jerusalem. From verses 12 and 13 it is clear Manasseh's repentance was genuine. In this remarkable turn around he acknowledged that Yahweh was the only true God.

V.14 - "**he built a wall**" – Manasseh set his hand to build up the defences of the ecclesia. He fortified the wall of Jerusalem and built another wall around the city. At the same time he improved the defences of all the cities of Judah.

V.15 - "**he took away the strange gods**" - Manasseh introduced a reformation by commanding the people to serve Yahweh. He also removed the Asherah from the temple together with other idols and strange altars, and rebuilt the altar of Burnt Offering upon which he offered peace offerings and thank offerings to Yahweh (Note: sin offering is conspicuous by its absence).

V.17 - "**Nevertheless the people did sacrifice still in the high places**" - The indifference of the people to Manasseh's reformation was revealed in that they still worshipped in the high places ostensibly in the name of Yahweh because of the king's commandment. Perhaps the omission of this record in Kings is evidence of its ineffectiveness in the sight of Yahweh. The reformation was obviously late in Manasseh's life and lacked energy, so the people, who were now steeped in idolatry, simply waited for his death. When Amon came to the throne he restored all that his father had broken down for it was left to Josiah to remove the vast quantity of idols and altars to false gods (2 Kings 23:4-14).

DEATH AND BURIAL – 2 Kings 21:17-18

V.18 - "**the garden of Uzza**" – The name Uzzah means 'strength'. Manasseh was not buried in the kings' burial ground but in the garden of another house which he had built. He had systematically reduced Judah to its lowest ebb – they had no spiritual strength in the wake of his reign. However, the strength of Divine mercy was seen in his restoration and may yet be seen when his destiny is determined at the Judgement Seat of Christ, but sadly the effects of his long and corrupt rule resulted in the eternal loss of thousands of his subjects.

AMON -

The Reprobate

(JUDAH)

HEBREW - “to train, to be skilled”.

FIRST MENTION - 2 Kings 21:18

LAST MENTION - Zeph. 1:1

LENGTH OF REIGN - 2 years from 640-639 BC.

AGE AT ACCESSION - 22

DEATH - 24

FATHER - Manasseh - “to cause to forget”

MOTHER - Meshullemeth - “to be friendly, reciprocate”

SUMMARY OF CHARACTER

The repentance of Manasseh near the end of his reign was too late to save Amon from an upbringing in the ways of the most corrupt idolatries. As a child he had known nothing else but the superstitions and immoralities practised by his father and the nation. Jerusalem was full of idols and the youthful Amon acquired a taste for the impure rites associated with pagan idolatry. This remained with him throughout his short reign until his death by assassination at the age of 24.

When the repentant Manasseh died, Amon acceded to the throne and immediately set about restoring the idolatry his father had removed. It may be assumed from the fact that Amon met death at the hands of his own palace courtiers who had also served his father, that he was a disagreeable individual who did not endear himself to his associates. It was as well that such an evil character was removed, before his eldest son, the 8 year old Josiah, was adversely affected by his father’s ways.

HARMONY OF THE RECORDS OF THE REIGN OF AMON

	2 Kings	2 Chron.
Accession aged 22	21:18	33:20
Divine estimation of his reign	21:19-22	33:21-23
Assassinated by his own servants	21:23	33:24
People of land kill his assassins	21:24	33:25
Final summary and burial	21:25-26	

VERSE BY VERSE NOTES

ACCESSION AND EVIL REIGN – 2 Kings 21:19-22

V.19 - “**Amon**” - Heb. to train, to be skilled. Egyptian influence is possible in his name for it is almost the same as the Egyptian sun god “Amen”. Manasseh had adopted Egyptian superstition and his oldest son was skilled in his father’s ways (2 Chron. 33:23).

“**twenty two years old**” - Amon married at 15 and was born when Manasseh was 45. His entire upbringing as a child was in the environment of idolatry. Manasseh’s eventual

repentance made no impact on the youth who had tasted the sensual pleasure of the worship of the Asherah. To this he turned with alacrity on his father's death.

“**Haruz**” – The Hebrew signifies “earnest, determined”.

“**Jotbah**” – His name means goodness, or pleasantness.

V.20 - “**as his father Manasseh did**” - Nothing could erase Manasseh's legacy. Amon duplicated his father's former evil and utterly repudiated his repentance.

ASSASSINATION AND BURIAL – 2 Kings 21:23-26

V.23 - “**servants**” – These servants were courtiers or palace officials who had access to the king. Amon was murdered at the age of 24 by the men who had probably influenced both him and his father into the evil they committed. Divine providence was at work here to eradicate these men to allow a new era to dawn in Judah through the accession of Josiah.

V.24 - “**made Josiah his son king**” - The people in turn slew the courtiers who had assassinated Amon thus paving the way for a more suitable education of Josiah in Divine things. Yahweh had determined long before that Josiah would arrive on the scene and destroy both Judah's and Jeroboam's idolatry (1 Kings 13:2).

V.26 - “**buried in his sepulchre in the garden of Uzza**” - Amon was buried near his father in the garden of *Uzza* which is the Hebrew for “strength”. His early demise was a fitting end for a man who had learnt nothing from the genuine repentance of his father. He could have had strength in Divine things, but he chose to follow the weakness of flesh. While Amon lay inert in the garden of Uzza, Yahweh was at work to restore to David's throne the strength of David's character and singleness of heart. The boy Josiah became king.

JOSIAH -

The Youthful Reformer

(JUDAH)

HEBREW - “Yahweh his foundation”.

FIRST MENTION - 1 Kings 13:2

LAST MENTION - Zeph. 1:1

LENGTH OF REIGN - 31 years from 639-609 BC

AGE AT ACCESSION - 8 years

DEATH - 39

FATHER - Amon - “to train, to be skilled”.

MOTHER - Jedidah - “beloved”.

SIGNIFICANT REFERENCES - 1 Kings 13:2; Jer. 1:2; Zeph. 1:1, Jer. 22:15-16.

1 Kings 13:2 - Josiah was named in a prophecy some 340 years before his birth as being the one who would cleanse the land of the idolatry of Jeroboam.

Jer. 1:2 - Jeremiah commenced to prophesy as a young man in the 13th year of Josiah’s reign when Josiah was 21. They were mutually concerned over the parlous state of the ecclesia and were companions in the work of reformation.

Zeph. 1:1 - Zephaniah was a fourth generation descendent of Hezekiah and therefore a kinsman of Josiah in whose reign he prophesied. His influence and prophecies had an important effect on the young king.

Jer. 22:15-16 - Josiah’s character was patterned upon Yahweh’s character. He did “judgement and justice” and “judged the cause of the poor and needy”.

SUMMARY OF CHARACTER

Josiah is unique among the kings of Israel and Judah as the only one against whom nothing adverse is recorded. While Solomon’s words are true; “For there is no man that sinneth not”, the Divine chronicler is silent upon the subject of Josiah’s weaknesses and an unblemished record remains a monument to a truly remarkable man. His greatness was not in anyway marred by his refusal to heed the warning of Pharaoh-Necho, “Forbear thee from meddling with God, who is with me, that he destroy thee not”. Why should Josiah be any more disposed to accept the claims of a godless gentile king than was Hezekiah in the face of the blasphemous claims of Sennacherib? His death at the hands of Necho at the early age of 39 was in fulfilment of the promise made to him that he would be removed before the wrath of Yahweh descended upon Judah and Jerusalem, and was therefore in a sense a manifestation of Divine mercy. The motive of Josiah in going out against Necho was clearly to prevent Judah from becoming the meat in the political “sandwich” between Egypt and Assyria. This final act of Josiah was true to character for he always put the welfare of the ecclesia before himself and it is this aspect of his character that features most prominently in a study of his life.

Josiah ascended the throne at the age of 8 after the assassination of his father Amon and the purge of the royal courtiers responsible for his death. It is obvious that a child of such tender age could not rule the kingdom alone nor undertake his own education in Divine things, and therefore the guidance and education of the boy-king that was to develop in later years one of the most zealous and single-minded of Yahweh's servants must be attributed to others. Careful examination of the record reveals four people who may have played a part in shaping the direction of Josiah's life. Firstly there was his mother Jedidah, "the beloved" "whom Yah had adorned" with the meek and quiet spirit of the holy women of old. Secondly, the influence of Shaphan the faithful scribe is undoubted. He appears to have been very close to the young king and was clearly his most trusted and reliable servant. That he was considerably older than Josiah appears from the fact that he had a son, Ahikam who was a member of Josiah's delegation to Huldah. The subsequent history of Shaphan's sons in relation to the prophet Jeremiah illustrate that the faithful scribe had ruled his own house well and in the process had probably been responsible for the early education of Josiah.

Next to Shaphan was Hilkiah the high priest who was almost certainly the father of Jeremiah the prophet (Jer. 1:1). His faithfulness shines from the record and in view of the fact that much of the responsibility of ruling the kingdom fell upon the high priest in cases such as this it may be assumed that he played an important part in Josiah's development into manhood. Finally, the influence of Zephaniah the prophet cannot be underestimated. The opening verse of Zephaniah's prophecy is peculiar inasmuch as it traces his antecedents back four generations to one "Hizkiah" which is identical in the Hebrew to Hezekiah. It would appear that Zephaniah was a member of the royal household, having descended from Hezekiah, and therefore had easy access to the young king. The purge of idolatry by Josiah in his twelfth year may be partly attributed to the influence of Zephaniah who roundly condemned the idolatry of Judah and the black-frocked Chemarims who promoted it.

Josiah "began to seek after the God of David his father" at the age of 16. It is a credit to him that he should commence a search to find Yahweh at such an early age, but it is even more remarkable when it is considered that his quest was undertaken without a scroll of the Law which was not discovered until 10 years later. At the age of 20 he had gained sufficient knowledge from his mentors concerning the pure worship of Yahweh to realise the nation had slumped dramatically during the reigns of Manasseh and Amon. So he instituted an initial purge of idolatry which was carried on for six years until a watershed event occurred that shook him to his foundations and galvanised him into even more zealous activity.

The discovery of the book of the Law during the cleansing and repairing of the temple in Josiah's 18th year had a profound effect on the young king. Few have ever "trembled" at God's word as he did when it was read in his hearing by Shaphan the scribe. Josiah immediately sprang into action in a desperate bid to avert the Divine judgements which he feared must fall on a guilty nation. A delegation returned from Huldah the prophetess with a message that confirmed his worst fears. Under the ominous shadow of the impending judgement of God the character of Josiah shone brightly as he feverishly prosecuted a reformation that stood no chance of success, but had as its prime objective the salvation of the nation. Such was the character of Josiah. His own position was secure and his eternal

well-being guaranteed, but he did not slacken his efforts to redeem the nation from the judgement that was justly about to fall upon them. A renewed and more widespread purge of idolatry was preceded by a national gathering of the people at which Josiah secured by command and coercion a covenant from them to dedicate themselves to Yahweh. A Passover followed which became renowned for its unprecedented meticulousness in observing the requirements of the Law, but it was all to no avail.

The reformation of Josiah was a dismal failure because it failed to reach the hearts of the people. Circumspection was not accompanied by introspection. Profession was not matched by performance. The nation's ceremonial observances were hollow, and while human observers may have thought they saw evidence of a genuine spiritual revival, Yahweh was not deceived; "And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly (mgn. "in false-hood"), saith Yahweh" (Jer. 3:10). The total lack of genuine response from the nation is beautifully illustrated in the description of the manner in which Josiah secured a covenant to serve Yahweh from the people assembled in Jerusalem. After reading the entire Pentateuch to the people, "the king stood by a pillar, and made a covenant before Yahweh to walk after Yahweh, and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all their heart and all their soul...!". Note how the word "their" in 2 Kings 23:3 is in italics indicating that it is not in the original text. A comparison with 2 Chron. 34:31 reveals the intended meaning of Yahweh's Chronicler; "with all *his* heart and with all *his* soul". This was Josiah's covenant. The people only entered into it for fear of the king. There were very few who shared Josiah's zeal (Jer. 5:1).

In view of the incorrigibility of the people and the absence of a book of the Law until late in his reign, the Divine summary of Josiah is truly remarkable; "And like unto him was there no king before him that turned to Yahweh with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him" (2 Kings 23:25). It was inevitable that this profound reverence and love of Yahweh's word should develop in Josiah a likeness to the Deity himself (Jer. 22:15-16).

HARMONY OF THE RECORDS OF THE REIGN OF JOSIAH

	2 Kings	2 Chron.
Accession aged 8	21:24-26	33:25
Divine estimation of his reign	22:1-2	34:1-2
Seeks Yahweh at age 16		34:3
Purges idolatry aged 20		34:5-7
Repairs the temple aged 26	22:3-7	34:8-13
Book of the Law found - is greatly moved	22:8-11	34:14-19
Sends to Huldah the prophetess	22:12-14	34:20-22
Yahweh's reply through Huldah	22:15-20	34:23-28
People gathered - reads Law to them	23:1-2	34:29-30
Makes a covenant to serve Yahweh	23:3	34:31-32
Institutes another purge of idolatry	23:4-14	34:33
Fulfills prophecy at Bethel	23:15-20	
Keeps the great Jubilee Passover	23:21-23	35:1-19
Another purge of idolatry in Judah	23:24	

Divine estimation of his greatness	23:25	
Yahweh's wrath against Judah remains	23:26-28	
Slain by Necho of Egypt at Megiddo	23:29-30	35:20-23
Buried in Jerusalem - people mourn		35:24
Jeremiah laments for Josiah		35:25
Final summary		35:26-27

VERSE BY VERSE NOTES

ACCESSION AND DIVINE ESTIMATION – 2 Kings 22:1-2

V.1 - **“Josiah”** - Heb. “Yahweh his foundation”. Josiah was one king who lived up to the meaning of his name as later years were to show. If Amon had named him he certainly did not have any control over the matter, for Josiah's name had been predetermined by God 340 years before (1 Kings 13:2). Having Yahweh as his foundation amidst the apostasy of Judah was most necessary if he was to succeed in the task before him.

“eight years old” – He was born when Amon was just 16. This was not uncommon in those times. Amon being assassinated at age 24, probably by providential appointment, saw Josiah's most impressionable years left to the education of his mind by his mother in the absence of his father and the ‘courtiers’ (who having slain Amon were in turn recompensed with death by the people). These courtiers were most likely the influence that had caused Amon to re-establish all that Manasseh had broken down following his humiliation and repentance. Their predecessors may have been the force behind Manasseh who could not have reigned at the age of 12 without assistance. During the early years of Josiah's reign the government of the nation was normally left in the control of the high priest, who in this instance was one of the faithful men involved in Josiah's reformation, namely Hilkiah (cp. 2 Kings 12:2).

“he reigned thirty and one years” - He died a young man aged 39; his ambitions and hopes for the good of the ecclesia frustrated, but not a complete failure. Josiah was able to influence a few, like Daniel, to ensure there was a remnant of faithful at the end.

“his mother's name Jedidah” – Her name means “beloved”, from the same root as David. The second name of Solomon was Jedadiah meaning “beloved of Yahweh”. It was given to him by Yahweh through Nathan (2 Sam. 12:25), and comes from the same root. It would seem Josiah's mother had a tremendous influence for good on him. His education at this crucial and vital stage was the foundation for his work in later years.

“daughter of Adaiah” - Heb. “whom Yahweh hath adorned”. She was probably one of the holy women of old time spoken of by Peter (1 Pet.3:3-5).

“Boscath” - Heb. “swell of ground”. A town in the Shephelah, the lowlands of Judah on the west, mentioned in Josh.15:39.

V.2 - **“right”** – *yashar* - “straight”. No other king in the history of Judah or Israel was as straight as Josiah. His single-mindedness and integrity of purpose is legendary.

“sight” - Heb. “eyes” (Roth.). The birth and upbringing of Josiah was carefully watched by Yahweh. There is a lesson for our walk here as well (Psa. 34:15, 66:7; Prov. 5:21; 15:3).

“walked in all the way of David his father” - David (“the beloved”) was his true spiritual father, not Amon. For the Spirit to declare that he walked in all the way of David was no small feat for Josiah considering the extent of the apostasy and idolatry of Judah.

“turn not aside” - *Turn* in the Hebrew signifies literally “to turn off” (i.e. from the way). Josiah in 39 years of life, and 31 years of that on the throne, did not have one major transgression or indiscretion recorded against him.

“to the right hand or the left” – These words are spoken of no other King, including David. They are a quotation from Deut. 17:20 (see also Deut. 5:32). The context of Deut. 17:18-20 speaks of the requirement laid on the king of writing out a copy of the Law so that he might learn to fear Yahweh and “turn not aside to the right hand or the left”. In so doing he would prolong his days on the throne. Given that the book of the Law was not found until Josiah’s 18th year this statement is quite remarkable.

THE PROPHET JEREMIAH AND HIS MESSAGE

Jeremiah was the son of Hilkiah, a priest in Anathoth. This Hilkiah may well have been the high priest of Josiah’s reign. Jeremiah commenced prophesying in the 13th year of Josiah. Jeremiah’s name means “whom Yahweh hath appointed”. He was principally a prophet of doom to his own generation while a prophet of hope for the future. The early chapters of his book, probably to chapter 12 were delivered in Josiah’s reign yet hardly a word is spoken of Josiah’s reformation due to its ineffectiveness on the hearts of the people. Jeremiah chapter 5:1 emphasises the small number of the people who were like Josiah. In chapter 11:3 Yahweh reminds Israel of the cursings of the Law shouted from Mt. Ebal (Deut. 27:15-26) and these sins they were now committing openly. It almost seems that Jeremiah completely disregarded the work of Josiah and prophesied as if Manasseh or Amon were still on the throne. A mention of Josiah’s reformation is made in chap. 3:10, “And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart but feignedly, saith Yahweh”. In chapter 10 Jeremiah speaks of some of the superstitions and customs adopted by Manasseh from Babylon. The following is a list of verses showing the apostasy rampant in Judah pointed out by Jeremiah in his first ten chapters : 1:16, 2:8, 2:19, 2:20, 2:23, 2:27-28, 2:30, 2:32, 2:34, 2:36, 3:1-2, 3:6, 3:9, 3:13, 4:22, 5:8-9, 5:26-28, 5:31, 6:10, 6:13, 7:4-6, 7:8-9, 7:17-18, 7:30, 7:31, 8:5, 8:10, 8:19, 9:1-2, 9:3-6, 9:9, 9:11, 9:13-14, 10:1-4, 10:14.

Jeremiah’s main message was of impending judgement - 1:15-16; 4:7,13; 5:6.

THE PURGE OF IDOLATRY – 2 Chron. 34:3-7

V.3 - **“eighth year of his reign”** – Josiah was now aged 16. Having been well educated by his mother and some faithful mentors he now began to make decisions for himself and to accept responsibility for the direction of his life.

“while he was yet young” - Roth. has, “he being yet a boy”. At an early age he repudiated fleshly ways and looked towards Yahweh. The record emphasises his early start. The word *young* is *na’ar* signifying an active young boy.

“he began to seek” - *Began* is *chalal* meaning to strike through; in this sense, to use a wedge for the purpose of opening, while *seek* is *darash* meaning to tread or beat a path; is used figuratively to learn or study; and is also used in the sense of following by search.

Josiah was a young lad who despite the condition of the ecclesia, and the attitude of the people of Judah, was determined to seek Yahweh.

“the God of David his father” – Again the chronicler is at pains to emphasise Josiah’s repudiation of his father Amon’s idolatrous ways.

“the twelfth year” – Josiah was now 20. At this point he may have begun to reign without the omnipresent guidance of his mentors. Clearly, he had come to a firm conviction by this time that something had to be done about the pervasive idolatry in the land and the apostate condition of the nation. The four years since he began to seek Yahweh for himself had prepared his own mind for task ahead.

“purge” - *taher* - to be bright, to be pure, clear, unadulterated, uncontaminated (used Mal. 3:3 “purifier”, “purify”; Ezra 6:20; Neh. 12:3).

“high places” – These were places of worship for any strange god initially set up in Judah by Solomon (1 Kings 11:7). Immorality was invariably present where high places were in operation.

“groves” - *asherim* - Roth. “sacred stems” (carved tree stumps). These idols were openly displayed to encourage immoral ‘worship’ along the lines of the activities described in Lev. 18 and 20.

“carved and molten images” – The molten images are not mentioned in the Kings record but Amon had served these (2 Chron. 33:22).

V.4-7 – The Chronicles record seems to provide a summary of Josiah’s purge of idolatry from his 12th year to his 18th year whereas 2 Kings 23:4-20 gives details of the purge following the discovery of the book of the Law. This discovery greatly influenced Josiah and he followed the law of Deut. 7:5 precisely in grinding the idols to pieces.

V.6 - **“with their mattocks”** - Lit. “in their ruins”. These were the ruins of the cities of the northern kingdom destroyed by the Assyrians, Josiah’s purge included even places where there was no one left who could be influenced by the idols.

THE PROPHET ZEPHANIAH AND HIS MESSAGE

He was a member of the royal family; his lineage going back to Hezekiah (Zeph. 1:1). This being the case, it is probable he had great influence on Josiah. He prophesied just before Josiah’s reformation and may have been influential in urging Josiah to cleanse the land of idolatry. Zephaniah like Jeremiah was probably quite young when he commenced his ministry. His immediate message was of impending disaster (Chap. 1). These prophecies of judgement upon Judah for idolatry may have initiated Josiah’s reformation. Jeremiah’s prophecies one year later had given them impetus. The importance of Zephaniah lies in his influence for good on the early education and attitude of Josiah. Zephaniah means “whom Yahweh hid” and it may be that this name had some relevance, for Manasseh had not been able to find and eliminate him as he did many other servants of Yahweh.

THE TEMPLE REPAIRED - JOSIAH'S 18th YEAR – 2 Kings 22:3-7

V.3 - “**eighteenth year**” – Josiah was now 26, his purging of the land having commenced at the age of 20. Jeremiah commenced prophesying one year later (Jer. 1:1-3). Zephaniah had probably already commenced prophesying (Zeph. 1:1).

“**sent Shaphan, son of Azaliah, son of Meshullam**” - Shaphan was a faithful scribe and his sons had a long and close association with the prophet Jeremiah. He was ‘Secretary of State’ (2 Sam. 8:17). His name means “coney” (see Prov. 30:24-26). Like the coney Shaphan was a man who trusted in the Rock of Israel and had survived the vicious purges of Manasseh. Shaphan’s name is mentioned throughout Jeremiah’s prophecy. His son Ahikam saved Jeremiah from death (Jer. 26:24). His grandson Gedaliah cared for the prophet when he had been released from prison by the Babylonians (Jer. 39:14). His son, Elashah was one of the messengers who carried Jeremiah’s letter to the elders who had been carried to Babylon during the reign of Jeconiah (Jer. 29:5). His son Gemariah had tried to protect the scroll dictated to Baruch by Jeremiah and burnt by Jehoiakim (Jer. 36:10-12, 25). Shaphan’s grandson Gedaliah was made governor of Judah by the King of Babylon and was a protector of Jeremiah. Jeremiah trusted this man (Jer. 40:5-6). Gedaliah supported Jeremiah’s prophecy (Jer. 40:9; cp. Jer. 29:4-7, 38:17-18). In Jer. 43:6 the record states that the king of Babylon had left the residue of the people in the care of Gedaliah, Jeremiah and Baruch. If the meaning of their names is strung together it reads, “Yah had become great” for “whom Yah hath appointed” was “blessed”. These three are spoken of as being contemporaries and intimate partners in the work of the Truth.

“**Azaliah**” – His name means, “whom Yahweh hath reserved”.

“**Meshullam**” – His name signifies, “friend”. May be mentioned in 2 Chron. 34:12 and this would indicate Shaphan was a Levite. He was sent with Maaseiah and Joah (2 Chron. 34:8).

“**to the house of the LORD**” - Having purged Judah and Jerusalem of most of the idols, altars and high places and while this work was still in progress Josiah now turned to the temple which had been polluted by Manasseh and Amon. Shaphan the faithful scribe is despatched to convene a meeting with Hilkiah the high priest.

V.4 - “**Hilkiah**” – The name means “the portion of Yahweh”. He could well be the father of Jeremiah. As the high priest at the time he was very influential and gave his full support to Josiah’s reformation.

“**sum the silver**” - Roth. has, “he poured out the silver”, i.e. to make up or take account of.

“**which is brought into the house of the LORD**” – This is a similar record to that of 2 Kings 12:10-12. The priests accepted money from the people and put it immediately in a chest by the door or threshold.

V.5 - “**breaches**” - The house of God was in disrepair. It had been abandoned during Manasseh’s reign largely due to the diversion of worship conducted in the high places. Manasseh had built altars to all the host of heaven and had erected an Asherah in the house itself but worship was gradually decentralised and the house fell into disrepair. Now the money collected from the people was put into the hands of the overseers who procured labour for the repairs to be undertaken. The overseers are named as Jahath, Obadiah,

Zechariah, and Meshullam (2 Chron. 34:12). In 2 Chron. 34 the dilapidations mentioned were mostly in the chambers of the house. Shaphan is sent on this errand with Maaseiah (“work of Yahweh”), governor of Jerusalem and Joah (“whose brother is Yahweh”) the recorder.

THE BOOK OF THE LAW FOUND IN THE TEMPLE – 2 Kings 22:8-14

V.8 - **“the book of the law”** - This was found by Hilkiah in the process of carrying into effect the instructions of the king delivered by Shaphan (2 Chron. 34:14). Keil believes that this expression relates to the 5 books of Moses. This seems to be supported by 2 Chron. 34:14. Perhaps this was not the only copy of the law which was left in the land, but was the only one in Jerusalem. Manasseh’s purge would have seen to that when he slew all the prophets and adherents of the true worship of Yahweh. However, it was a practice of the times to place a copy of the Law in the foundations of important buildings like the Temple. It seems that when the workman were reinforcing the foundations they came across the scroll that had been secreted there since the days of Solomon.

“he read it” - This does not necessarily imply that he read all of it, but that he read from it. See note v. 10.

V.9 - **“Shaphan came to the king”** – Shaphan’s respect for the word of God shines through the record. He immediately recognised the importance of the discovery and conveyed the scroll to the king.

V.10 - **“read it”** - i.e. “he read in it” (2 Chron. 34:18); not as in 2 Kings 23:2 where “all the words” of the law were read. Both Keil and Roth. translate, “he read therein” for 2 Chron. 34:18. What part he read is conjecture, but many think it was sections including the curses of Deut. 28 and Lev. 26 which caught the king’s attention.

V.11 - **“the words”** – Again this implies not “all the words” as in 2 Kings 23:2.

“rent his clothes” - Always a sign of deep despair and concern. Josiah’s immediate and profound reaction to the reading from the book; the immediate despatch of a delegation to Huldah, and the frantic methods by which he now attacked the problem of idolatry are almost conclusive evidence that he had not previously had in his possession a copy of the 5 books of Moses.

V.12 - **“the king commanded Hilkiah”** - The deputation is immediately despatched to Huldah under the leadership of Hilkiah. This is a testimony to his integrity and the confidence that Josiah placed in him.

“Ahikam the son of Shaphan” – Ahikam’s name means “brother of rising”. This man was a strong supporter of Jeremiah in later years (Jer. 26:24). The context of that chapter shows the authority that he commanded in the reign of Jehoiakim. He was a faithful man like his father Shaphan.

“Achbor the son of Michaiah” - Achbor means “attacking; like the nibbling of a mouse” and Michaiah signifies “who is like Yah”. Achbor’s son Elnathan was instrumental in having Urijah the prophet killed by Jehoiakim (Jer. 26:22). He is also mentioned as one of the princes in Jer. 36:12.

“Shaphan the scribe” - The ‘secretary of state’ was of course among the members of the deputation.

“Asaiah” – His name means “Whom Yahweh created”. He was a trusted officer of the king. This completed an impressive group, probably the core of Josiah’s reliable supporters in the reformation. Their errand was urgent - “What was the destiny of the nation?”

V.13 - **“inquire of the LORD for me”** - Josiah was aware that there were some in the nation through whom Yahweh would speak. The reading of the curses of the law contained in Lev. 26 and Deut. 28 struck fear into Josiah and he felt an urgent need to know how Yahweh felt after the long abuses which He had suffered from Judah’s kings, particularly culminating in the evil reigns of Manasseh and Amon. Josiah also wanted to know what Yahweh thought of his efforts to overthrow idolatry and false worship. What would be his lot? He felt that he had done his best to seek Yahweh the God of David his father.

“for the people” - i.e. of Jerusalem. Jeremiah had been told to look for a man in Jerusalem who worked righteousness so that Yahweh might pardon the city. There was none except in the temple and in the king’s palace (Jer. 5:1). Josiah wanted to know the destiny of the city.

“for all Judah” - The destiny of the nation was his next concern. The curses of the Law threatened the overthrow of the nation. Would Yahweh do it?

“our fathers have not hearkened” - The history of Israel and of Judah had been one of repeated disobedience punctuated by a few periods of light. The present generation were no better and perhaps Josiah has in mind the times of Manasseh and Amon.

V.14 - **“Huldah the prophetess”** - Her name means “a weasel”. It is evident that both Jeremiah and Zephaniah were unavailable at this time. Huldah dwelt in the college or school. This may have been a surviving remnant of the school of the prophets established by Samuel to retain the teaching of the Truth amongst the people. Her husband Shallum was keeper of the clothes either of the king or the priests. She was evidently a faithful woman renowned for her prophecies.

YAHWEH’S MESSAGE THROUGH HULDAH THE PROPHETESS – 2 Kings 22:15

V.15 - **“Tell the man”** - The reply of Huldah to the members of the deputation is strikingly impersonal. The name of Josiah is not even mentioned. “Tell the man” clearly refers to Josiah but couched differently to v.18 which directly refers to the king. This was done because verses 15-17 describe the judgement pending on the nation from which the king himself was to be exempt (vv. 18-19).

V.16 - These are the judgements outlined in Lev. 26 and Deut. 28 on which Josiah’s fear for the nation’s future was based.

V.17 - **“Because they have forsaken me”** - The specific sins of the people are now detailed with obvious reference to the idolatry and superstitions of Manasseh. Forsaking Yahweh is mentioned as the foremost sin of the people in direct contrast to the king himself (2 Kings 23:25). The first commandment was to have no other gods but to love Yahweh with the whole heart, soul and might. This had been abandoned under Manasseh.

“the works of their hands” - The idols which they had made - the Asherah, carved and molten images. Isaiah explained the folly of idols (Isa. 44:9-20; see also Psa. 115:4-8).

“shall not be quenched” - God’s wrath against this place (Jerusalem) was not to be quenched as history has shown. Jeremiah prophesied a similar judgement (Jer. 4:4). Both Amos and Isaiah had previously prophesied a similar judgement (Amos 5:6; Isa. 1:31) that had been pending for some time.

V.18 - **“the king of Judah”** - Josiah had asked concerning himself and the prophetess now turned to him. He was to be excluded from the coming judgements because of his uprightness.

V.19 - **“thine heart was tender”** – *Tender* is *rakak* - to soften. Josiah had allowed his mind and his emotions to be malleable to Divine principles. Contrary to the impression gained from Josiah’s ruthless disposal of idolatry he was in fact tender and soft of heart, prepared to be moulded and shaped by God’s word.

“humbled thyself” - This was a most necessary characteristic if one desired to acquire Yahweh’s approval. Isaiah had outlined this (Isa. 66:2). There is a difference between Josiah’s humility and that of other kings such as Ahab and Manasseh. The verse goes on to show that Josiah humbled himself because of what Yahweh had spoken against Jerusalem and his people not what had been spoken against him personally as in the cases mentioned.

“I will gather thee unto thy fathers” - This is as good as saying, “I will kill you”. Josiah was to die by Divine intervention in a show of mercy to him (Isa. 57:1-2). This also plainly revealed the hopelessness of his ambition to reform Judah as God’s judgements were certain to fall regardless of his efforts.

“into thy grave in peace” – This was a Divine assurance that he was a righteous and upright man (Isa. 57:1-2). In mercy, God was to remove him that his eyes should not see the evil that was to come on the nation he loved. With this heavy message the deputation returned to Josiah.

THE BOOK OF THE LAW READ TO ALL THE PEOPLE – 2 Kings 23:1-3

V.1 - **“And the king sent”** - Ignoring the chapter division, it is clear that upon hearing the prophecy Josiah immediately proclaimed a national conference of elders. Not content with having his own salvation secured he manifested his love for the nation and worked indefatigably to institute a spiritual revival which might turn the tide of Divine judgement.

V.2 - **“the king went up to the house”** - Josiah directed the nation’s attention to the focal point of their worship. He gathered them into the temple court.

“the priests, and the prophets” - Chronicles has priests and Levites. Jeremiah and Zephaniah may have been among those assembled.

“all the people” - i.e. of Jerusalem, plus those summoned from the country.

“he read all the words” - He had the Law read to the people. This task was assigned to the priests (Deut. 31:9-12). All the words were read in contrast to some of the words read to Josiah (2 Kings 22:10). These were obviously read from the book which had been found.

V.3 - **“stood by a pillar”** – The practice is recorded in 2 Kings 11:14,17. This was so a covenant could be made between Yahweh, the king and the people.

“all their heart and all their soul” - Note the word “their” is in italics in the A.V. and compare the parallel record of 2 Chron. 34:31 where “his” is used. This was Josiah’s covenant. The reference is to the first and great commandment (Deut. 6:5) to which was added the need for careful attention to the words of the Law (v.7). Josiah had done this but without the assistance of a book of the Law. Now that he had the Law his zeal was greatly increased. See the Divine estimation of him in 2 Kings 23:25.

“the people stood to the covenant” – The people may have stood but they had no intention of performing the terms of the covenant. They gave assent to it because of the presence of Josiah who would brook no rebellion. Their involvement was only superficial and without real meaning (see Jer. 11:9-10; 25:3; 3:10).

A RENEWED PURGE OF IDOLATRY – 2 Kings 23:4-14

V.4 - **“the king commanded”** - This is characteristic of Josiah. His zeal for Yahweh knew no bounds. His youthful vigour and desire for immediate reformation did not permit an approach which may have more effectively influenced his subjects, many of whom had been involved in idolatry for a generation. He was quick to act on his own convictions, but had no time to allow others to acquire the same convictions. However, for this he can be completely excused because of the pitiful spiritual condition of the nation. There were only a few who supported him with the same spirit of reform and renewal.

“priests of the second order” - i.e. the priests ranking under the high priest himself.

“keepers of the door” – These were the Levites whose duty it was to watch the temple (2 Kings 22:4; 1 Chron. 23:5). Their role was to ensure that nothing unclean entered the house and of old time their mentor and guide was Phinehas (1 Chron. 9:20). How ashamed he would be of the porters who had permitted so much pollution to enter Yahweh’s house. It was ironic that this class were now invited to remove every last vestige of the false worship instituted by Manasseh and Amon.

“burned them without Jerusalem” – Burning of the vessels of false gods was performed according to Deut. 7:25; 12:3. This was the action to be taken with idols and anything connected with them. They were taken outside Jerusalem (i.e. “outside the camp”, because they were unclean) and burnt in the Kidron Valley. The ashes were carried to Bethel probably at the same time as the events of v.15-20.

V.5 - **“put down the idolatrous priests”** – Some translators have, “he slew”. Keil has “abolished”. The Hebrew for *put down* is *shabath* means to repose, i.e. desist from exertion. Verse 9 perhaps suggests that such priests were not slain, but rather put out of office. However, in Israel some idolatrous priests were slain (V.20).

“whom the kings of Judah had ordained” – This is no doubt primarily a reference to Manasseh and Amon. These were the “Chemarims” or black robed priests spoken of in Hos. 10:5 and Zeph. 1:4. Manasseh had introduced the worship of the host of heaven and required a priesthood based on the Babylonish model.

“**planets**” - *mazzalah* - constellations. In ancient astral religions the sun and moon represented male and female deities respectively. Immorality was never far removed from such worship, hence its attraction to the flesh.

V.6 - “**And he brought out the grove from the house of the LORD**” - Roth. has, “And he brought forth the sacred stem out of the house of Yahweh”. This was the image of the Asherah made by Manasseh and subsequently removed by him (2 Chron. 33:15), but later replaced by Amon (2 Chron. 33:22). Installation of this monstrous idol in the Temple was the greatest abomination of Manasseh’s reign apart from the shedding of much innocent blood of the prophets. To set up an idol representing human fertility and the worship of immorality, including sodomy, in the very house upon which Yahweh’s glory had descended in the days of Solomon and the place in which he had chosen to put his name, inevitably evoked the bitter wrath of God. Josiah having removed those who conducted the worship now moved to destroy the symbol of the worship. The Asherah was transported to the valley of the Kidron and burnt. What remained was stamped into powder and strewn upon the graves of the common people (Jer. 26:23). King Asa of Judah, centuries before, had burnt a similar idol in this location (1 Kings 15:13), and Hezekiah also carried some idols to this place (2 Chron. 29:16), but none were so thorough as Josiah. Chronicles adds, “he strowed it (the dust) upon the graves of them that had sacrificed unto them”. These undoubtedly were the idolatrous men and women who had lived in the days of Manasseh.

“**strowed**” - *zaraq* - to sprinkle. The word is used of the sprinkling of the blood under the Law.

V.7 - “**brake down the houses of the sodomites**” - *Brake down* is *nathats* - tear down. Ellicott has, “the cabins of the Sodomites”. Josiah now turns to the removal of the devotees who seduced the people to immoral worship. The sodomites were male ‘priests’ who offered themselves by prostitution to men and women as an integral part of the worship of the Asherah (1 Kings 14:24).

“**by the house of the LORD**” - Roth. has, “in the house of Yahweh” (and all commentators agree so it should be). Probably these cabins or tents had been erected in the court of the house and were the places where the immorality was conducted.

“**women wove hangings for the Asherah**” - *Hangings* is *bayith* - houses. These appear to be small tent temples for either the housing of images or the conduct of prostitution.

V.8 - “**all the priests out of the cities of Judah**” - Josiah caused all the priests of the high places to migrate to Jerusalem so he could control their activities. These were of the Levitical order (v.9). Once the high places were vacated he commanded their desecration and defilement. Here the priests had burned incense thus distracting the people from the worship of the temple.

“**Geba to Beersheba**” - Geba is near Ramah about 10 kms (6 miles) north of Jerusalem, on the northern frontier of Judah (Josh. 18:24). Beersheba was over 56 kms (35 miles) south, on the southern frontier of Judah.

“**the high places of the gates**” - Probably only one gate was involved, that of the governor Joshua whose residence was on the left as one entered the city. The high places erected here may have been for visitors to offer worship before leaving so that they might secure a safe journey home! Josiah tore these down. It would appear that he thought that by

removing places of incense offering he could concentrate the attention of the people on the worship of Yahweh in the temple which he was about to re-institute. However this approach failed as the next verse shows.

V.9 - **“Nevertheless the priests...came not up”** - The priests which Josiah had deposed were not allowed to offer on the altar in Jerusalem because of their past actions.

“but they did eat of the unleavened bread” - Roth. omits the words “of the” and has, “they did eat unleavened bread”. This term is used to indicate partaking of altar sacrifices (Lev. 2:1-11; 6:16-18, 10:12). Once more Josiah showed his zeal for strict conformity to the Law of Moses. The deposed priests were not permitted to partake of the altar offerings with their contemporaries, the legitimate priests, but had to take their meals apart “among their brethren”; i.e. their own company. They were probably made to do the menial tasks associated with the worship (cp. Ezek. 44:10-14; Lev. 21:21-22).

V.10 - **“defiled Topheth”** - *Defiled* is *tame* meaning, to be foul. Tophet signifies “a smiting” (in a figure of contempt). The high place of Tophet was situated in the valley of the son of Hinnom (a Jebusite whose name is said to mean “shrieking”). This is where children were offered in sacrifice to Molech and the shrieks of both victims and relatives were often heard. Molech is an appellative meaning “reigning one”. He was a god of the Ammonites; a variation of Baal. This was a hideous rite introduced by Solomon, (1 Kings 11:5) and practised by Ahaz (2 Chron. 28:3), and Manasseh (2 Kings 21:6) and utterly forbidden by the Law (Lev. 18:21; 20:1-5). Josiah caused this obnoxious worship to cease by completely desecrating Topheth.

V.11 - **“took away the horses”** - Roth. has, “And he did away with the horses”. The word for *took away* is the same in Hebrew as “put down” in v.5. Some have rendered it, “he killed”, but most including Ellicott and Keil have, “cleared away”. These horses had been “devoted” (Roth.) to the sun. They drew the chariots of the sun in solemn processions held in honour of that deity. Horses were regarded as sacred to the sun by many nations including the Assyrians from whom the custom was probably adopted by Ahaz, Manasseh and Amon.

“by the chamber of Nathan-melech” – Nathan-melech’s chamber was situated at the “entering of the house of Yahweh”. Keil suggests that this chamber was one of the storehouses within the court mentioned in Neh. 10:38-39; 1 Chron. 9:26; Ezra 8:29. These chambers were in the outer court. *Nathan-melech* means “given of the king”, and this was probably the case. Manasseh having instituted this custom had probably given this chamber to stable the devoted horses. Nathan-melech was a eunuch who may have been in charge of the horses and chariots.

“suburbs” – This is a Persian word meaning an open house. Some commentators say it was a cloister around the court by which the chambers were entered from without.

“the chariots of the sun” - Having removed the horses, Josiah now burns the ceremonial chariots they drew.

V.12 - **“altars...on the top of the upper chamber of Ahaz”** - These altars were built on the roof of an upper chamber on the wall surrounding the outer court (Jer. 35:4). Ahaz had built this and it was later removed by Hezekiah. However, it was replaced by Manasseh

and then Amon, hence the use of the phrase, “the kings of Judah”. The altars were used to worship all the host of heaven (Jer. 19:13; 32:29; Zeph. 1:5).

“**altars which Manasseh...two courts**” - See 2 Kings 21:5. These were also for the worship of all the host of heaven.

“**brake them down from thence**” - *Brake* is *ruwts* - to run or to rush. The word suggests the sense of haste employed by Josiah in removing these objects. Roth. has, “did the king break down and hurried from thence”. The work was thorough however, as these altars once broken down were crushed into powder before being transported to the Kidron and cast into the stream (Roth. “ravine”).

V.13 - “**the high places...before Jerusalem**” - These high places were situated on the southern summit of the Mount of Olives (directions were taken by facing east). They were built in the first instance by Solomon who succumbed to the idolatrous whims of his multitude of wives (1 Kings 11:5-8). Hezekiah had destroyed them and Manasseh had rebuilt them (2 Kings 21:3).

“**the mount of corruption**” – Such was the name given to the Mount of Olives because of its effect upon the nation through idolatry. The word *corruption* is *mashchyth*, from a root meaning destructive (in the sense of having snared). So Roth. translates the word, “destruction”.

“**which Solomon...had builded**” - Solomon is specifically marked out as the instigator of this idolatry which finally led to the destruction of the nation.

“**Ashtoreth**” - Another name for Astarte the goddess of the Phoenicians and Canaanites. The Babylonian version was Ishtar and was identified with the planet Venus, the pagan goddess of sexual love, maternity, and fertility. Prostitution was part of the worship of this goddess. Her worship was early established in Zidon and is fittingly called the abomination of the Zidonians (1 Kings 11:5,33; 2 Kings 23:13). Aphrodite and Venus of Rome were the Grecian and Roman versions of Astarte. These all had their origin in Semiramis the mother of Nimrod (called the Queen of heaven) who was noted for her extreme beauty. Astarte was the goddess worshipped by the ancient world and was regarded as the very embodiment of everything attractive in female form and the perfection of female beauty. Because of its natural appeal to the flesh this worship pervaded the whole earth albeit under differing names.

“**Chemosh**” – Chemosh the abomination of the Moabites (Num. 21:29, Jer. 48:46) was worshipped in the same manner as Molech by the sacrifice of children as burnt offerings (2 Kings 3:27). The first two occurrences of *abomination* in verse 13 are *shiqquts* meaning to be filthy, but the last occurrence of the term is a different word (see the next note).

“**Milcom**” – Milcom was another name for Molech the god of the Ammonites. He is called the *abomination* of Ammon. The word here is *toebah* signifying disgusting, an abhorrence.

V.14 - “**the images... the groves**” - Lit. this reads, “the pillars and the Asherahs”. The pillars would be the carved and molten images of 2 Chron. 34:4. The Asherah were tree stumps carved into grotesque shapes, hence Josiah’s men broke in pieces the pillars and cut down the sacred stems.

“filled their places” – *Places* is *meqomah* indicating a standing and speaks of their place or station. Hence it is a term for the position or base of idols. Josiah defiled these positions with dead men’s bones (Num.19:16).

PROPHECY FULFILLED AT BETHEL – 2 Kings 23:15-20

V.15 - **“Moreover the altar that was at Bethel”** - Roth. has, “Moreover also the altar that was in Bethel, the high place which Jeroboam”. Josiah was determined to rid not only his own kingdom of idolatry but the area of the now defunct northern kingdom also. Little did he realise that his determination was being channelled by Divine providence to fulfil a prophecy made 340 years earlier by the man of God from Judah (1 Kings 13:1-3). In the record of 2 Chron. 34:6-7 it seems that during this trip north he covered the area of Manasseh, Ephraim, Simeon and Naphtali, cutting down all the idols in sight and desecrating the high places and altars. He took with him the ashes mentioned in v.4.

“Jeroboam the son of Nebat who made Israel to sin” – Jeroboam was the man who lost an opportunity of gaining the sure mercies of David because his personal ambition got in the way. The spirit continually designates him as the one responsible for the apostasy of Israel. This altar in Bethel was established by him 340 years before to prevent his people from travelling to Jerusalem for the annual feasts (1 Kings 12:26-33). Bethel was on the border of Israel and Judah about 18 kms (11 miles) north of Jerusalem. Jeroboam had set up a golden calf like that made in the wilderness, based on Apis the Egyptian deity. He had fled to Egypt during the last years of Solomon’s reign. Josiah perceived that it was absolutely necessary to clean up all the land, even though Israel had been in captivity since the 6th of Hezekiah, some 98 years before.

“burned the high place” - Having broken down the altar and the high place, Josiah set about to grind the whole lot into powder. This necessitated the cracking up of the rock slabs and so he kindled a fire under them for this purpose.

“stamped it small to powder” - *Stamped* is *daqad* - to crush or crumble. This was no mean feat and would take a considerable amount of time and Josiah zealously oversaw the whole operation.

“burned the grove” - Roth. has, “burned a sacred stem”. The image of Astarte was found here with its counterpart, the image of Baal. Josiah’s zeal to cleanse the northern kingdom may also have been an effort to influence the remnant of Israel to join themselves to his reformation.

V.16 - **“And as Josiah turned himself”** - This event most probably occurred while Josiah’s men were in the process of breaking down the high place. The prophecy of 1 Kings 13:1-3 required that the bones of the idolatrous priests be burnt upon the altar. Josiah in his single-minded zeal had probably not seen the sepulchres of these priests and it required Divine providence to manipulate him to fulfil the prophecy. Yahweh knew that if Josiah saw the graves of these men he would immediately go into action and so he caused him to turn himself in their direction.

“spied the sepulchres” - Roth. has, “he saw the graves”. Having seen these graves he interrupted his work and sent across a number of men to dig up the bones which had been there for 340 years. Having gathered the bones, he brought them to the altar and burnt them thereon, thus fulfilling the prophecy of the man of God from Judah.

V.17 - “**What title is that I see**” – The word *title* is the same word used in Ezek. 39:15 for the sign to be set up beside every bone discovered in the land after Armageddon. Josiah noted a memorial stone among the graves.

“**the men of the city**” - These local men must have been on the scene watching Josiah’s work and at his enquiry they spoke. It was obviously common knowledge among them and had been handed down from generation to generation. Josiah was unaware of the prophecy. They doubtless marvelled in the fact that one of their “legends” had actually come to pass.

“**It is the sepulchre of the man of God**” - This was probably the city’s graveyard for the old prophet from Samaria buried the man of God in his own grave (1 Kings 13:30), and was subsequently buried there himself alongside him.

V.18 - “**And he said, Let him alone**” - Josiah’s immediate reaction was to discriminate between the man of God from Judah and the priests of the high places. Roth. translates the phrase, “Let him rest”, almost as to say, “Don’t stir his bones, leave that to the resurrection”. This seems to be a sign of forgiveness for the man of God. At this commandment they “let his bones alone” (*alone* is *malat* – escape).

V.19 - “**all the houses...of the high places**” – The houses mentioned were the buildings associated with the worship in these places. Having finished his work in Bethel, Josiah now turns to all the cities of Samaria. In 2 Chron. 34:6 the record states that he went as far north as the regions of Naphtali.

“**Josiah took away**” - Josiah removed these houses and did to them as he had done in Bethel - i.e. burn them and crush the rest into powder. This would have taken some considerable time, as this was done in all the cities of Samaria. Josiah was allowed freedom of movement through the northern kingdom because Assyria was now declining in power and influence.

V.20 - “**he slew all the priests**” - *Slew* is *zabach* - to slaughter an animal (in sacrifice). Roth. translates, “He sacrificed all the priests of the high places”. Thus Josiah fulfilled the prophecy of the man of God from Judah (1 Kings 13:2). Whereas Josiah had only removed the priests of the high places in Judah, he slew those in Israel. The different treatment may be due to the fact that the former were Levites (sons of Aaron) and the latter were not (see Deut. 17:2-5). Having slain them he burnt their bones on the altars and defiled them with filth and corruption. The work thoroughly completed, he returned to Jerusalem.

THE PASSOVER PROCLAIMED IN JOSIAH’S 18th YEAR – 2 Kings 23:21-23

V.21 - “**the king commanded**” – There is characteristic uncompromising firmness here by Josiah. He felt compelled to coerce the people into righteousness by command. He perceived there was no alternative because of their parlous spiritual condition. Having removed the places of idolatry and hence diminished opportunity for the flesh to fulfil its lusts, he then instituted the Passover in his 18th year. His aim was to direct the attention of his people to the principles of the Atonement.

Some commentators have suggested that it was only the book of Deuteronomy that was discovered in the temple. However, Josiah’s vigorous activity in removing idolatry and instituting the Passover all in the same year, after the book of the Law was found, is implicit proof that he did not have access to the first four books of Moses before this time.

Otherwise, why did he not purge the idolatry spoken of in Leviticus? Did not Leviticus 26 say the same things as Deut. 28 in relation to impending judgement. And why did he not hold a Passover? It seems clear Josiah did not have any part of the Divine revelation prior to his 18th year.

“keep the Passover” - Hezekiah had set the precedent (2 Chron. 30:1) after his reformation.

“in the book of this covenant” – This is more correctly translated by Roth., “in this book of the covenant”. The reference is to the book found by Hilkiah (2 Kings 22:8; 23:2) and is further proof that the book found was all five books of Moses for the Passover is not recorded in its particulars in Deuteronomy. If that book alone was discovered the words of Josiah here would be incongruous. 2 Chron. 35:1-19 gives a detailed account of Josiah’s Passover and for exactness in conformity to the Law there was no Passover like this one from the time of Samuel through all the kings of Israel to Josiah’s day (2 Chron. 35:18).

V.22 - **“there was not holden such a Passover”** - Chronicles adds from the days of Samuel, and Kings says from the days when Judges were set over the people. This Passover eclipsed all that had been held in the days of the Judges (450 years), the kings of Israel and the kings of Judah (360 years). With the intervening period this is an overall time of 930 years.

V.23 - **“eighteenth year of king Josiah”** – This was a watershed year in the life of Josiah and the history of Judah. Some suggest it was also a Jubilee year. It is possible that for this reason Ezekiel refers to this year when commencing his prophecy in the “thirtieth year” (Ezek.1:1). Dating back this arrives at the 18th year of Josiah. This dating assumes great importance when Ezekiel sees the vision of the Temple of the future age opened for worship exactly 50 years after Josiah’s Passover (Ezek. 40:1). This strongly suggests that from Christ’s return to the inauguration of the Temple will be a jubilee period.

REMOVAL OF CLANDESTINE IDOLATRY – 2 Kings 23:24

V.24 - **“the...familiar spirits”** - Having abolished open and public idolatry and its attendant immorality, Josiah now turned to the private superstitions of the people. These familiar spirits were the necromancers (a sorcerer who brought up the spirits of the dead - 1 Sam. 28:7). The eradication of these was commanded (Lev. 19:31). They had been introduced by Manasseh (2 Kings 21:6).

“images” - Heb. *teraphim*. Roth. has, “household gods”. Josiah now probed his people’s homes to remove any lingering evidence of idolatry. Teraphim were small idols placed in the home as objects of veneration (Gen. 31:19; Jud. 17:5; 1 Sam. 19:13).

“the idols” - Roth. has, “manufactured gods” (cp. Lev. 26:30). Gesenius translates, “idol blocks” and Ewald, “doll images” (cp. 2 Kings 17:12). All these abominations and defiling influences did Josiah remove from the homes and precincts of the city of Jerusalem as well as throughout all Judah.

“that were spied” – *Spied* is *ra’ah* - seen. Doubtless many household idols were concealed by their devotees, for the evidence is that they were steeped in idolatry (Jer.3:8-10).

“put away” - Roth. has, “consume”. Cp. Lev. 20:27; Deut. 18:9-10.

“the words of the law ... that Hilkiah found” – This is further proof that Josiah lacked the 5 books of Moses before his 18th year. Having newly found the book he was determined to do everything possible to perform the words written in it.

THE DIVINE ESTIMATION OF JOSIAH – 2 Kings 23:25

V.25 - **“And like unto him was there no king before him”** - There was no king like Josiah either before or after him “that turned to Yahweh with all his heart, soul and might according to all the law of Moses”. This is a direct quotation from Deut. 6:5 which Christ said was the first and greatest commandment (Mark 12:29-30). In the same context a scribe said that to do these things was far more valuable than the ritual offerings and was commended by Christ (Mark 12:32-34). There is no doubt Josiah appreciated the principles of the Law as well as he followed the letter. In Jer. 22:15-16 the prophet speaks of Josiah as having done judgement and justice towards the poor and needy. Yahweh considers this knowing Him. Hence, Josiah also kept the second great commandment - “love thy neighbour as thyself”. A similar thing is said of Hezekiah, but there is a distinct difference (2 Kings 18:5-6). Hezekiah was noted for his implicit trust in Yahweh in difficult circumstances. Josiah was noted for his zeal to perform the commandments of Yahweh set down in the Law.

YAHWEH'S WRATH AGAINST JUDAH REMAINS – 2 Kings 23:26-28

V.26 - **“Notwithstanding the LORD turned not”** - Roth. translates the verse, “Howbeit Yahweh turned not away from the glow of his great anger wherewith his anger glowed against Judah because of all the provocations wherewith Manasseh had provoked him”. Huldah’s prophecies would come to pass regardless of Josiah’s efforts to reverse them, because of the evils of Manasseh (2 Kings 22:16-17). That Josiah worked in the face of that prophecy is a testimony to his character. His love for his people was great despite their unresponsiveness. Ellicott in his commentary gives some idea of the fierce anger of Yahweh when he translates, “The great heat of his wrath wherewith his wrath burnt”. For Jeremiah’s comment on Manasseh’s evil see Jer. 15:4.

V.27 - **“And the LORD said, I will remove Judah out of my sight”** - Yahweh announced his intention to proceed with his judgements against Judah because of Manasseh’s legacy which could not be undone. He declared this through Jeremiah and Zephaniah. Josiah’s work had little effect on the minds of the people and reading the first ten chapters of Jeremiah confirms this. Judah was to go into captivity as did Israel. Jerusalem was to be set aside temporarily as the place of Yahweh’s name and Solomon’s temple upon which Yahweh said He would put his name was to be forsaken by him (Lam. 2:8).

V.28 - **“are they not written in the book of the chronicles”** - 13 years of Josiah’s reign remained. This record says that the rest of his acts are recorded in Chronicles. However, all that record says is, “After all this (18th year) when Josiah had prepared the temple”. It appears that Josiah’s last 13 years were spent concentrating on the temple and its services.

JOSIAH'S DEATH AT MEGIDDO – 2 Kings 23:29-30

V.29 - **“Pharaoh-necho...went up against Assyria”** - The Assyrian empire was declining and weakening rapidly. Babylon in the east was growing in power, so Necho with political ambitions in Asia decided on a campaign in political alliance with Assyria to overthrow emerging Babylon (see RSV translation below). This put Josiah in a position where his

independence was seriously threatened for Judah was the buffer state between Assyria and Egypt.

THE ALLIANCE OF EGYPT WITH ASSYRIA AND THE DEATH OF JOSIAH

Archaeology has facilitated a correct translation of the passage dealing with Josiah's death and revealed the reason for Pharaoh-Necho's advance toward the Euphrates. "In his (Josiah's) days Pharaoh-Necho king of Egypt went up to the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates. King Josiah went to meet him; and Pharaoh-Necho slew him at Megiddo, when he saw him" (2 Kings 23:29, RSV). Heretofore, in the absence of an archaeological clue the phrase "Pharaoh-Necho went up to the king of Assyria" has been wrongly translated "went up against the king of Assyria" (AV & A.R.V.). While it is true the Hebrew preposition *al* here employed may mean "against", the historical context shows that in this passage it has one of its more specialised meanings.

Historians used to be perplexed why Josiah advanced against Necho when the Pharaoh was on his way to fight Assyria, the ancient enemy of the Hebrews. The Babylonian Chronicle published by C.J. Gadd in 1923 has put the whole matter in a new light and shows that Pharaoh-Necho did not advance against the Assyrian at all, but went to his aid.

Upon Ashurbanipal's death in 633 BC, the Assyrian empire declined rapidly. In 612 BC Nineveh fell under attack by a coalition of Babylonians, Medes and Scythians. A remnant of the Assyrian army fled west to Haran and made it a temporary capital. The king of Egypt, Pharaoh-Necho, accordingly, came to help the Assyrian remnant and their King Ashuruballit, who stood at bay for several years at Carchemish under the combined attacks of the Medes and the Babylonians.

Josiah, no lover of Assyria, and not wishing any aid to reach the hard-pressed Assyrians, went to Megiddo to stop Necho, but was killed by the Egyptian. Necho in turn, was overwhelmingly defeated when he eventually clashed with Nebuchadnezzar at Carchemish on the Euphrates in 605 BC.

With the battle of Carchemish two ancient empires passed away forever, and Egypt never again became a first-rate power. The magnificent city of Carchemish, with a long and brilliant career behind it, was utterly destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar and lay buried under desert dust until modern excavations brought its interesting monuments to the light of day.

An Extract from *Archaeology and the O.T.* by Merrill F. Unger.

"Josiah went out against him" - The prophecy of 2 Kings 22:20 was about to be fulfilled. By Divine manipulation of political events Josiah was virtually forced to go against Necho in battle. In 2 Chron. 35:21-22 the record states that Necho sent ambassadors to Josiah to discourage his advance claiming that God was with him. This is confirmed by the Chronicler in v.22. No doubt God was with Necho for a purpose, namely that of removing Josiah and precipitating by political events the eventual overthrow of Judah, according to Huldah's prophecy. Josiah disguised himself and gathered his forces at the valley of Megiddo. This was a vital trade and military route on the highway from Egypt through the Camel range into the valley of Jezreel.

“he slew him” - Chronicles says the Egyptian archers shot at him and he was hit and said to his servants “have me away for I am sore wounded”. His servants transferred him to a second chariot and raced towards Jerusalem, but he died (2 Chron. 35:24).

“when he had seen him” - Roth. has, “as soon as he saw him”.

V.30 - **“dead from Megiddo”** – The Kings record says that he died at Megiddo and was brought to Jerusalem and buried in his own sepulchre. There is no real discrepancy between the records.

THE NATION MOURNS JOSIAH'S DEATH – 2 Chron. 35:24-27

V.24 - **“And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah”** - Roth. translates, “And all Judah and Jerusalem were mourning over Josiah”. This shows that the mourning was spontaneous and genuine. This must be the case, for the Spirit later chose this mourning to foreshadow that to be seen at Christ's manifestation to the remnant of Judah after Armageddon (Zech. 12:9-14). Roth. translates mourning as “wailing” in Zech. 12. The people of the land knew the goodness of Josiah, and they stood in awe of his single-minded zeal for Yahweh and genuinely mourned his death even though they could not muster the moral courage to cast off the corruptions of Manasseh.

V.25 - **“And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah”** – *Lamented* is *quwn* meaning to lament; to strike a musical note, chant or wail. Roth. has, “And Jeremiah chanted a dirge over Josiah”. So deep was Jeremiah's sorrow that he wrote a dirge which was preserved as a national ordinance. This is not a reference to the “Lamentations of Jeremiah” as we know them, but nevertheless there are allusions to Josiah in that book (Lam. 3:26-27; 4:20).

“in their lamentations” - The dirges composed were compiled into a book and made a national ordinance. This again reveals the genuineness of the people's mourning.

V.26 - **“and his goodness, according to...the law”** - This epitaph is given of no other king. The word *goodness* is *chesed*, a fundamental characteristic of Yahweh (Exod. 34:6). Combining this testimony with Jer. 22:15-16 we find that Josiah manifested the character of Yahweh in a balanced manner. He manifested mercy (*chesed*) and truth (*emeth*) which are the two essential elements of the Divine character. Ultimately, this is what Yahweh seeks to achieve in all His servants. It was just remarkable that a young man born into such a time of apostasy was able to arrive at this point of development. Indeed, nothing is too hard for Yahweh.

JEHOAHAZ -

The Preferred

(JUDAH)

HEBREW- “Yahweh-seized”.

FIRST MENTION - 2 Kings 23:30

LAST MENTION - 2 Chron. 36:4

LENGTH OF REIGN - 3 months during 609 BC.

AGE AT ACCESSION - 23 years

FATHER - Josiah - “Yahweh his foundation”

MOTHER - Hamutal - “Father in law of dew”.

SUMMARY OF CHARACTER

The reign of Jehoahaz the second eldest son of Josiah was brief. Scarcely had the nation recovered from the shock of Josiah’s death and accomplished the installation of Jehoahaz upon the throne before Pharaoh-Necho returned to Jerusalem after his defeat at Carchemish to bring Judah under his heel. He obviously did not trust the young king to be a faithful vassal and took him captive into Egypt, installing in his place his elder brother Jehoiakim.

The fact that the people preferred Jehoahaz the younger to Jehoiakim the eldest son, and the rightful heir to the throne, illustrates that the characters of the two men were well known. Although the reign of Jehoahaz is described as being evil, it is clear that he was preferred to the arrogant, treacherous and tyrannical Jehoiakim. The only indication given of Jehoahaz’s character is the Divine assessment of his reign; “And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD according to all that his fathers had done”. From this we may assume that he served false gods and manifested no faith in Yahweh during his brief tenure on the throne.

HARMONY OF THE RECORDS OF THE REIGN OF JEHOAHAZ

	2 Kings	2 Chron.
Installed as king by the people aged 23	23:30	36:1-2
Divine estimation of his reign	23:31-32	
Deposed by Necho - Jehoiakim crowned	23:33-34	36:3-4
Death in Egypt	23:34	

VERSE BY VERSE NOTES

DEATH OF JOSIAH - ACCESSION OF JEHOAHAZ – 2 Kings 23:29-30

V.29 - “**went up against the king of Assyria**” – The RSV has, “went up to the king of Assyria”. Babylon overthrew Nineveh in 612 BC and dissolved the Assyrian empire. Necho went up to join the remnants of the Assyrian empire against Babylon. The year was 609 BC (see boxed section under Josiah).

V.30 - **“And the people of the land took Jehoahaz”** – This is reminiscent of Josiah’s own accession (2 Kings 21:24). The people did not follow normal convention but chose Jehoahaz before his elder brother Jehoiakim. Perhaps this was because Jehoahaz showed more promise as a ruler than Jehoiakim. This is implied in Jer. 22:10-12 where Jehoahaz is called Shallum.

HIS EVIL REIGN AND EARLY DEMISE – 2 Kings 23:31-34

V. 31 - **“daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah”** – Hamutal the mother of Jehoahaz had been taken to wife by Josiah from the fortress town of Libnah. Her father’s name means, “Yah will rise”.

V.32 - **“fathers”** – This plural term certainly does not include Josiah.

V.33 - **“Riblah”** – The name signifies, “to be fruitful, fertile”. It was a place on the source of the Orontes, south of Hamath (“walled”) in the far north, used by Necho, and later Nebuchadnezzar, as a base for military operations (see 2 Kings 25:6-7,20-21).

“that he might not reign in Jerusalem” - There is some dispute over the text but the RSV and Roth. support the AV. It appears Necho sent back to take Jehoahaz prisoner whose reliability as a vassal he probably doubted.

“put the land to tribute” – *Tribute* is *onesh* - a fine, so that Roth. translates, “he laid a fine upon the land”.

“an hundred talents of silver, and a talent of gold” – These were not vast sums of money but it was sufficient to crush an impoverished nation and became the cause of a cruel exaction by Jehoiakim.

V.34 - **“he came to Egypt and died there”** - His age at death is not given either here or in Jeremiah’s bleak prophecy (Jer. 22:10-12). He died in ignominy in isolation from his land and people.

JEHOIAKIM -

The Arrogant Tyrant

(JUDAH)

HEBREW - “Yahweh will raise”.

FIRST MENTION - 2 Kings 23:34

LAST MENTION - Dan. 1:2

LENGTH OF REIGN - 11 years from BC 608-597

AGE AT ACCESSION - 25 years

FATHER - Josiah - “Yah his foundation”.

MOTHER - Zebudah - “Gainfulness” (root, to purchase).

SUMMARY OF CHARACTER

As Judah rapidly declined in the growing shadow of Babylon rising in the east, and the territorial ambitions of Pharaoh-Necho of Egypt, the eldest son of Josiah came to the throne and hastened Judah’s demise by his arrogant and cruel tyranny. Jehoiakim who had been passed over by the people as king was installed as a vassal by Necho in the place of his brother Jehoahaz whose reign lasted only 3 months. Necho required a man who would be prepared to harshly exact from the weakened nation the tribute demanded by him; he needed a man who would impassively bleed the nation dry in order to fulfil the obligations of his vassalage. In Jehoiakim he found that man.

The malevolence of Jehoiakim is highlighted in the record of Kings in two incidents. Firstly there was the harsh exaction of tribute from all the people of the land without consideration of the poor and needy, and secondly there was his treachery in his dealings with Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. However, it is to the prophecy of Jeremiah that we must turn to see the full extent of Jehoiakim’s wickedness. In Jer. 22, Yahweh condemned Jehoiakim’s wickedness for “building his house in unrighteousness”. He coveted a spacious palace with luxurious embellishments and in order to obtain it cruelly exacted unpaid labour from “the poor and needy”, and even went to the extent of shedding blood to achieve his ambitions.

Only the influential intervention of Ahikam the son of Shaphan saved Jeremiah from the vengeance of Jehoiakim. Urijah, another prophet of Yahweh, was not so fortunate and was pursued and viciously murdered by the king for prophesying against Judah as Jeremiah had done. Cruelty, unrighteousness, covetousness and murder were crowned by arrogance towards Yahweh in the matter of the scroll dictated by Jeremiah to Baruch. The picture of Jehoiakim sitting by the fireside nonchalantly slicing pieces from the scroll and casting them into the fire is the complete antithesis of Josiah’s reverential trembling as the book of the law was read to him by Shaphan. It was fitting therefore that Jehoiakim should die ignominiously, unlamented by his people and that he should “be buried with the burial of an ass” (Jer. 22:19).

HARMONY OF THE RECORDS OF THE REIGN OF JEHOIAKIM

	2 Kings	2 Chron.
Installed as king by Pharaoh-necho	23:34	36:4
Cruelly taxes the people	23:35	
Divine estimation of his reign	23:36-37	36:5
Murders Urijah the prophet	Jer. 26:20-24	
Becomes a vassal of Nebuchadnezzar	24:1	
Burns Jeremiah's scroll	Jer. 36:20-26	
Rebels and is attacked from all sides	24:2-4	
Invaded and killed by Nebuchadnezzar		36:6-7
Final summary	24:5-7	36:8

VERSE BY VERSE NOTES

INSTALLATION AS KING BY NECHO – 2 Kings 23:34-35

V.34 - “**Eliakim**” – Jehoiakim’s alternative name means “God of raising” or “Whom God sets up”. This name conferred by Necho memorialised Jehoiakim’s vassalage and the loss of his, and Judah’s, political independence. It was therefore a misnomer.

V.35 - “**taxed the land**” - Tribute normally came from the treasuries of the palace or temple. Menahem of Israel under an enormous burden of tribute taxed the wealthy, but Jehoiakim heavily taxed rich and poor to his own profit. Josephus summed up his character as “unjust and malignant, neither holy towards God, nor forbearing towards man”.

“**exacted**” - *nagas* - to drive (an animal, workman, debtor) by implication to tax, harass, tyrannize.

ACCESSION AND DIVINE ESTIMATION – 2 Kings 23:36-37

V.36 - “**Zebudah, the daughter of Pedaiah of Rumah**” - Zebudah was another of Josiah’s wives. Her father’s name *Pedaiah* means, “Yah has ransomed”, while *Rumah* her home town signifies “height”. Her son gave great cause for sorrow and heartbreak if she was in fact anything like her husband Josiah.

A VASSAL OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR – 2 Kings 24:1-4

V.1 - “**In his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up**” - There is some confusion as to dates in this period. Dan. 1:1 states that Nebuchadnezzar invaded in Jehoiakim’s 3rd year (606 BC), but Babylonian records say Nebuchadnezzar did not accede to the throne until 604 BC and that the invasion did not come until 598 BC. Nebuchadnezzar as commander of the Babylonian army defeated Necho at Carchemish in 605 BC.

V.2 - “**the LORD sent**” – It is notable that the record states it was Yahweh Who sent the enemies, not Nebuchadnezzar. This was the beginning of predicted Divine judgement.

“**bands**” - *geduwd* - a crowd (especially soldiers); guerrillas. These invasions resulted in the Rechabites moving into Jerusalem for safety (Jer. 35:11).

V.3 - “**for the sins of Manasseh**” – The apostate reign of Manasseh had left indelible marks notwithstanding his own personal repentance.

V.4 - **“for the innocent blood”** - The blood of saints is precious in God’s sight (Ps. 116:15), and for this he could not pardon Manasseh’s murders and the guilt of the land. Amongst those slaughtered by Manasseh was Isaiah the prophet according to Jewish tradition.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR’S INVASION – 2 Chron. 36:5-8

V.6 - **“bound him in fetters”** - It would appear that Nebuchadnezzar bound Jehoiakim with a view to taking him to Babylon. Jer. 22:18-19 required that he die at Jerusalem with an ignominious death and this doubtless occurred.

V.7 - **“the vessels of the house of the LORD”** – These vessels are referred to also by Daniel in chapter 1:2.

V.8 - **“his abominations that which was found in him”** - These are detailed in Jeremiah and Habakkuk.

JEHOIAKIM’S CHARACTER REVEALED – Jer. 22:13-19

V.13 - **“useth his neighbour’s service without wages”** - Jehoiakim used forced labour to build a new palace. He coveted a spacious and splendid house in a time of real distress for the nation and was not averse to shedding blood to obtain it (Hab. 2:9-11). Unlike Josiah his father he had no respect for the law of God (see Lev. 19:13).

V.14 - **“wide house”** – *Wide* is *middah* - extension. So Roth. translates, “roomy house”. While the poor languished, Jehoiakim expanded lavishly.

“large chambers” – *Large* is *ravach* - to breathe freely, by implication to have ample room. *Chambers* is *aliyah* and indicates a second story room, i.e. stairway, lofty. So Roth. has, “spacious roof-chambers”. This was grossly excessive in distressing times.

“ceiled” - *caphan* - to hide by covering, to roof. The RSV has, “panelling” (cp. Hag.1:4).

“vermilion” – i.e. red; significantly a colour symbolic of his character (sin).

V.15 - **“closest thyself in cedar”** - Roth. has, “because thou art eager to excel in cedar” (Luke 12:15).

V.16 - **“He judged the cause”** – *Judged* is *duwn* - to rule, by implication to judge (as umpire), also to strive. Roth. translates, “Did he not plead the cause of the oppressed and needy”. The reference is to Jehoiakim’s father, Josiah. In this Josiah was a pattern of Christ, a greater son of David (Psa. 72:2,4,12-14).

“was not this to know me?” - Josiah blended and balanced mercy with justice and thus manifested Yahweh’s character (Mic. 6:8). This is truly knowing the Father.

V.17 - **“covetousness”** - *betsa* - plunder. Roth. translates the phrase, “Verily thou hast neither eyes, nor heart, save for thy plundering”.

“violence” - *merutsah* - oppression, from the root *ratsats* - to crack in pieces. Roth. has, “And for crushing”. Like Manasseh, Jehoiakim brooked no opposition and murdered some who stood in his way (Jer. 26:22-23).

V.19 - **“burial of an ass”** - So hateful was Jehoiakim to Yahweh that this ignominious end is decreed against him. No wonder the people had chosen Jehoahaz his younger brother as

king before him. Josephus records that Nebuchadnezzar “commanded him to be thrown before the walls without any burial” after killing him.

THE MURDER OF URIJAH THE PROPHET – Jer. 26:20-24

V.20 - “**Urijah the son of Shemaiah**” – The prophet’s name means, “Flame of Yah”. This is interesting in the light of Jeremiah’s experience (cp. Jer. 20:9). Like Jeremiah, Urijah could not withhold the word of God which spoke through him, and was condemned to death by Jehoiakim for his words. His father’s name means “Yah has heard” and doubtless as he was dragged out of Egypt to be killed he called upon his God to remember him. The day of resurrection will demonstrate that Yahweh has heard.

V.22 - “**Elnathan the son of Achbor**”- Elnathan (“God is giver”) was obviously close to the king but was one of few courtiers who attempted to prevent the destruction of Jeremiah’s scroll (Jer. 36:12,25). However, in this matter he proved himself to be complicit in the crimes of Jehoiakim, including the murder of Yahweh’s prophets. His father Achbor had been selected by Josiah to be part of the delegation to Huldah (2 Kings 22:14).

THE BURNING OF THE SCROLL - Jer. 36:20-26

V.21 - “**out of Elishama the scribe’s chamber**” – It is fitting that the meaning of Elishama’s name where the scroll of Jeremiah was hidden is “God of hearing”. Jehoiakim had no intention of hearing God, but Yahweh both heard and saw his blasphemy in destroying the word of God.

V.24 - “**Yet they were not afraid, nor rent their garments**” – As Jehoiakim cut to shreds the scroll and cast it piece by piece into the fire, his servants stood impassively by witnessing one of the most breathtaking acts in Israel’s history. There is a direct contrast here between Jehoiakim and his father Josiah who trembled at God’s word when it was read to him (2 Kings 22:8-11).

V.25 - “**Nevertheless Elnathan and Delaiah and Gemariah had made intercession to the king**” – Burning of the scroll was the greatest test faced by these men. Who would they stand with in this matter – Yahweh or the king. Delaiah’s name means, “Yah has delivered” and it can only be hoped that these events turned him so that he might be delivered. Gemariah (“Yah has perfected”) was a son of Shaphan, one of the stalwarts who stood behind Josiah’s reformation and produced many faithful sons. But this son was in serious trouble being so close to the corrupt king Jehoiakim.

V.26 - “**the king commanded Jerahmeel...to take Baruch...and Jeremiah**” – Fittingly Jerahmeel signifies, “God will be compassionate”; and He was, to the intended victims! Yahweh hid Jeremiah and Baruch (“Blessed”) from the murderous intent of Jehoiakim and they did not suffer the fate of Urijah.

JEHOIACHIN -

The Helpless

(JUDAH)

HEBREW- “Yahweh will establish”

FIRST MENTION - 2 Kings 24:6

LAST MENTION - Jer. 52:51

LENGTH OF REIGN - 3 months 10 days during 597 BC

AGE AT ACCESSION - 18 years

FATHER - Jehoiakim - “Yahweh will raise”

MOTHER - Nehushta - “copper”.

SUMMARY OF CHARACTER

The premature death of Jehoiakim allowed only a brief respite from the oppressions of his reign because his eighteen year old son ascended the throne and pursued the same policies as his wicked father. Jehoiachin's occupancy of the throne was short; in 597 BC. Nebuchadnezzar came against Jerusalem and took him captive to Babylon after a reign of only 3 months and 10 days.

The helplessness of Jehoiachin in the face of the Babylonian monarch is indicated by his immediate surrender; “And Jehoiachin the king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, he, and his mother, and his servants, and his princes, and his officers”. This captivity effectively denuded Judah of a government and viable economy. The princes, officers and royal servants along with the mighty men of valour and craftsmen were carried away and only “the poorest sort of the people of the land” remained.

It is interesting to reflect that the line of David was carried on through Jehoiachin and not Zedekiah his uncle and successor. Zerrubabel who led the return of the Jews from Babylon was a direct descendant of Jehoiachin, 1 Chron. 3:17-19; Hag. 1:1; Matt. 1:12. In order for this to be accomplished Jehoiachin was released from prison in Babylon by the successor of Nebuchadnezzar and exalted among the captive kings to enjoy the privileges of state. He was not worthy of this special treatment but Yahweh was ordering events to ensure that the line of David was perpetuated until the seed should “come whose right it is” to sit upon David's throne.

HARMONY OF THE RECORDS OF THE REIGN OF JEHOIACHIN

	2 Kings	2 Chron.
Accession at age 18	24:6	36:8
Divine estimation of his reign	24:8-9	36:9
Taken into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar	24:10-16	36:10
Exalted in Babylon aged 55	Jer. 52:31-34	

VERSE BY VERSE NOTES

ACCESSION AND DIVINE ESTIMATION – 2 Kings 24:8-9

V.8 - “**Elnathan of Jerusalem**” – Elnathan means “God is giver”. He may well be the man who features in the shameful actions of Jehoiakim (Jer. 26:22; 36:12,25). The marriage of his daughter Nehushta to Jehoiakim would explain Elnathan’s dubious attachment to the king.

THE CAPTIVITY OF JEHOIACHIN – 2 Kings 24:10-16

V.12 - “**officers**” - *caric* - a eunuch. Such eunuchs were regarded as potentially more loyal to the kings they served. These like Daniel and his friends went into captivity, but only the latter were to distinguish themselves in Babylon through loyalty to Yahweh their king.

“**in the eighth year**” - i.e. of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign. The year was 597 BC. and this captivity left the nation of Judah a shell of its former self. The cream of the nation’s youth and manpower were taken away to Babylon. Among the captives was the prophet Ezekiel (Ezek. 1:2).

JEHOICHIN EXALTED IN BABYLON – Jer. 52:31-34

V.31 - “**seven and thirtieth year**” - Jehoiachin was then 55. It was around the year 562 BC.

“**Evil-Merodach**” – His name means, “Man (or servant) of the god Marduk”. Evil-Merodach was the son and successor of Nebuchadnezzar (562-560 BC).

V.32 - “**spake kindly**” – The word *kindly* is *towb* - good. Perhaps this kindly treatment of Jehoiachin can be traced to Daniel’s position of authority in Babylon. Daniel was related to Jehoiachin (Dan. 1:3).

ZEDEKIAH -

The Profane Rebel

(JUDAH)

HEBREW - “Right of Yah”; “Justice of Yah” (Ges.).

FIRST MENTION - 2 Kings 24:17 **LAST MENTION** - Jer. 52:11

LENGTH OF REIGN - 11 years from 596-586 BC

AGE AT ACCESSION - 21 years

FATHER - Josiah - “Yah his foundation”.

MOTHER - Hamutal - “Father in law of dew”.

BROTHERS - Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim.

SUMMARY OF CHARACTER

The tragic end of Judah, temporarily forestalled by the righteous reign of Josiah, was hastened by the wickedness of firstly, Jehoiakim and then by his younger brother Zedekiah. “For through the anger of Yahweh it came to pass in Jerusalem and Judah, until he had cast them out from his presence, that Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon”. This statement suggests that Yahweh brought the judgement He proposed for Judah (because of Manasseh’s evils) upon the head of these two kings who were equally worthy of it (2 Kings 24:20).

Though, the account of Zedekiah’s reign is brief, a clear picture of his character emerges from the record. He followed the ways of Jehoiakim (2 Kings 24:19) and was as treacherous as his older brother in his dealings with Nebuchadnezzar. A solemn oath of allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar which preceded his installation as king was foolishly broken despite the fact that Nebuchadnezzar “had made him swear by God”. Not only was Zedekiah rebellious to an earthly monarch, he also rebelled against Yahweh. The record states he “humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet speaking from the mouth of Yahweh” (2 Chron. 36:12). He was stiff-necked and hard-hearted in the face of many appeals to turn back to Yahweh and consequently was an ample representative of apostate Judah (2 Chron. 36:13 - cp. Vv. 14-16).

During the persecution of Jeremiah recorded in Jer.38, Zedekiah is revealed also as a weak man who feared his own people and was more concerned with his own personal safety than the vindication and preservation of a righteous prophet of Yahweh. The final indictment of Zedekiah summarises in two words the evil of his character; “And thou, **profane wicked** prince of Israel whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end” (Ezek.21:25).

HARMONY OF THE RECORDS OF THE REIGN OF ZEDEKIAH

	2 Kings	2 Chron.
Installed as king by Nebuchadnezzar	24:17	36:10
Divine estimation of his reign	24:18-19	36:11-12
Rebels against Nebuchadnezzar	24:20	36:13
Jerusalem is besieged	25:1-3	

Jerusalem is taken - he flees	25:4	
Is captured and taken to Babylon	25:5-7	
Nebuchadnezzar destroys Jerusalem	25:8-10	
The people are taken into captivity	25:11-12	36:17-20
The temple is sacked	25:13-17	36:18-20
The kingdom of Judah is dissolved	25:18-21	

VERSE BY VERSE NOTES

ACCESSION AND DIVINE ESTIMATION – 2 Kings 24:17-20

V.17 - **“Mattaniah”** - “Gift of Yah”. This was Zedekiah’s original name. The change to Zedekiah (“Right of Yah”) opened the door for a Divine play on words in Jer. 23:5-6 and 33:15-16. In these prophecies the Spirit foreshadows a son of David (Christ) who as the next king of Israel will truly manifest the righteousness of Yahweh.

“his father’s brother” – Zedekiah was in fact Jehoiakim’s half-brother. Roth. has, “relative”.

V.20 - **“it came to pass”** – The RSV translates the passage, “it came to the point in Jerusalem and Judah, that he cast them out of his presence”.

“Zedekiah rebelled” - 2 Chron. 36:13 records the utter perfidy of Zedekiah who, having sworn in the name of Yahweh before Nebuchadnezzar, went back on his oath and rebelled.

THE SIEGE OF JERUSALEM – 2 Kings 25:1-3

V.1 - **“ninth year”** - The year was 588 BC. Jerusalem and its temple was now less than two years from destruction.

“forts” - *dayeq* - a battering-tower. Roth. has, “siege-wall”.

V.3 - **“the famine prevailed”** - Nearly 2 years of siege depleted food stocks to desperation levels. It was the fourth month of the year 586 BC (Jer. 39:2).

THE FALL OF JERUSALEM – 2 Kings 25:4-7

V.4 - **“the city was broken up”** - Jer. 39:1-3 records the same events but adds the fact that the leaders of Nebuchadnezzar’s army came inside the breached walls as far as the middle gate. Josephus suggests that this gate was in the temple.

“all men of war fled” - Josephus says that the breach was made at midnight. Jer. 39:4 says that the decision to flee was a spur of the moment decision precipitated by the sight of the Babylonians inside Jerusalem’s defences.

“between two walls” – This is probably a reference to the double walls near the pool of Siloam (Isa. 22:11).

“by the kings garden” - In Neh. 3:15 this is said to be by the pool of Siloam. The escape route was therefore either via the Fountain Gate or the Dung Gate on the south eastern corner of the city.

“**the plain**” - *arabah* - a desert. Roth. has, “waste plain”. The word is descriptive here of the wilderness between Jerusalem and the plains of Jericho.

V.5 - “**plains of Jericho**” – This was the very place where Israel’s history had commenced 1,000 years before under Joshua. The nation’s history ended where it had begun. There were many such poetic touches to the end of Judah as a kingdom befitting the character of the Divine judgement that fell upon them.

V.6 - “**Riblah**” - “to be fruitful, fertile”. Riblah was near Hamath in Syria and became the camping ground of the Babylonian kings during military campaigns.

“**and they gave judgement upon him**” - Roth. has, “and they pronounced upon him sentence of judgement. Befitting his character and perfidy Zedekiah was harshly treated.

V.7 - “**put out the eyes of Zedekiah**” – This was a fulfilment of Jer. 34:2-3 and Ezek. 12:13. He was literally blind to match what he was in fact spiritually - “a blind leader of the blind”.

“**fetters of brass**” - Zedekiah was manacled by a symbol of the flesh. Flesh had ruled his life, and finally he was bound by it and taken away blind into captivity.

HISTORY FROM THE DEATH OF JOSIAH TO THE FALL OF JERUSALEM

609 The Assyrian Campaign of Pharaoh-Necho - Josiah killed at Megiddo.
The accession of Jehoahaz - Jehoahaz deposed by Necho after a reign of 3 months.
Jehoiakim installed as king by Necho.

605 Nebuchadnezzar as commander of the army of Babylon defeats Egyptian army at Carchemish. Nabopolassar king of Babylon dies and is succeeded by his son Nebuchadnezzar. The first captivity of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 1:1).

601 Nebuchadnezzar receives tribute from Jehoiakim - 2 Kings 24:1-2.

597 Nebuchadnezzar overthrows Jehoiakim.
Jehoiachin accedes to the throne and is taken into captivity after a reign of 3 months and ten days.
Zedekiah installed as king by Nebuchadnezzar.

588 Nebuchadnezzar besieges Jerusalem.

586 Jerusalem falls - the temple destroyed.

Zedekiah captured, blinded and carried into Babylon.