EDIFIED EDITION

2 Kings

A modern rendering of the Holy Scriptures

25	719	Old	12
chapters	verses	Testament	book of 66

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Edified Edition (EDE): a modern rendering of the Holy Scriptures from the original Hebrew and Greek, in everyday British English. www.edifiededition.com

Numbered notes follow each chapter.

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Chapter 1

2 Kings 1 tells how, after Ahab's death, Moab rebels against Israel. King Ahaziah falls through a lattice in his upper room and sends messengers to ask Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, whether he will recover. The angel of the LORD sends Elijah to meet them with a question: is there no God in Israel? Because of this, the king will not leave his bed but will die. The messengers describe a hairy man with a leather belt, and the king knows it is Elijah. He sends a captain with fifty men to fetch him, and fire from heaven consumes them; it happens again to a second fifty. The third captain kneels and begs for his life, and at the angel's word Elijah goes with him and repeats the sentence to the king's face. Ahaziah dies, and because he has no son Joram becomes king in his place.

1 After Ahab's death, Moab rebelled against Israel.

2 Ahaziah had fallen through the lattice of his upper room in Samaria and was injured. So he

sent messengers, telling them, “Go and enquire of Baal-zebub,[1] the god of Ekron, whether I will recover from this injury.”

3 But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, “Go up and meet the messengers of the king of Samaria and ask them, ‘Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to enquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron?’

4 Now therefore this is what the LORD says: ‘You will not get up from the bed you have taken to. You will certainly die.’” So Elijah went.

5 When the messengers returned to the king, he asked them, “Why have you come back?”

6 They told him, “A man came up to meet us and said to us, ‘Go back to the king who sent you and tell him, “This is what the LORD says: Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are sending men to enquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you will not get up from the bed you have taken to. You will certainly die.”’”

7 The king asked them, “What sort of man was he who came up to meet you and told you this?”

8 They replied, “He was a hairy man,[2] with a leather belt round his waist.” The king said, “It was Elijah the Tishbite.”

9 Then he sent a captain with his fifty men to Elijah. The captain went up to him, where he was sitting on the top of a hill, and said to him, “Man of God, the king says, ‘Come down!’”

10 “If I really am a man of God,” Elijah replied to the captain, “then let fire fall from heaven and burn up you and your fifty!” And fire fell from heaven and burned up the captain and his men.[3]

11 The king sent another captain with his fifty men. This one said to Elijah, “Man of God, this is what the king says: ‘Come down at once!’”

12 Elijah answered them, “If I am a man of God, may fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men!” Then the fire of God came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty.

13 So the king sent a third captain with his fifty men. This third captain went up and fell on his knees before Elijah and pleaded with him: “Man of God, please let my life and the lives of these fifty servants of yours be precious in your sight.

14 Fire has come down from heaven and consumed the first two captains and their companies of fifty. But now let my life be precious in your sight.”

15 The angel of the LORD said to Elijah, “Go down with him; do not be afraid of him.” So Elijah got up and went down with him to the king.

16 He said to the king, “This is what the LORD says: ‘You sent messengers to enquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, as though there were no God in Israel to consult. Therefore you will not get up from the bed you have taken to. You will certainly die.’”

17 So he died, according to the word of the LORD that Elijah had spoken. Because Ahaziah had no son, Joram[4] succeeded him as king in the second year of Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah.

18 The other events of Ahaziah’s reign, and what he did, are recorded in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel.

1 ‘Lord of the flies’, probably a mocking alteration of Baal-zebul, ‘Baal the prince’; compare Beelzebul in Matthew 12:24.

2 Or ‘a man in a garment of hair’; compare Zechariah 13:4 and John the Baptist in Matthew 3:4.

3 James and John recall this in Luke 9:54, and Jesus rebukes them.

4 Also spelt Jehoram, like his namesake the king of Judah; the two reigned at the same time.

Chapter 2

2 Kings 2 tells how, when the LORD is about to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, Elijah three times tells Elisha to stay behind, at Gilgal, Bethel and Jericho, but Elisha will not leave him, though the sons of the prophets tell him that his master is to be taken that day. At the Jordan, Elijah strikes the water with his rolled-up cloak, and the river parts. Asked what he wants, Elisha asks for a double share of Elijah’s spirit, and Elijah says he will have it if he sees him taken. A chariot of fire with horses of fire separates them, and Elijah goes up in a whirlwind while Elisha cries out to him as his father and as Israel’s chariots and horsemen Elisha takes up Elijah’s cloak, strikes the Jordan, and it parts for him; the prophets see that Elijah’s spirit rests on him. Fifty men search three days for Elijah in vain. Elisha heals the bad spring at Jericho with salt, and at Bethel, when a crowd of youths jeers at him as a baldhead, he curses them and two bears maul forty-two of them.

1 When the LORD was about to take Elijah up to
heaven in a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on
their way from Gilgal.

2 Elijah said to Elisha, “Stay here, please, for the
LORD has sent me on to Bethel.” But Elisha said,
“As the LORD lives and as you yourself live, I will
not leave you.” So they went down to Bethel.

3 The sons of the prophets[1] at Bethel came out to
Elisha and asked him, “Do you know that today
the LORD is going to take your master from over
you?” “Yes, I know,” he replied. “Keep quiet.”

4 Then Elijah said to him, “Stay here, Elisha,
please, for the LORD has sent me to Jericho.” He
said, “As the LORD lives and as you yourself live, I
will not leave you.” So they came to Jericho.

5 The sons of the prophets at Jericho came up to
Elisha and asked him, “Do you know that today
the LORD is going to take your master from over
you?” “Yes, I know,” he answered. “Keep quiet.”

6 Then Elijah said to him, “Stay here, please, for
the LORD has sent me to the Jordan.” He said, “As
the LORD lives and as you yourself live, I will not
leave you.” So the two of them went on.

7 Fifty of the sons of the prophets went and stood
at a distance, facing them, while the two of them
stood by the Jordan.

8 Then Elijah took his cloak, rolled it up and struck
the water. The water divided to the right and to
the left, and the two of them crossed over on dry
ground.

9 When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha,
“Tell me what I can do for you before I am taken
from you.” Elisha said, “Let me inherit a double
share of your spirit.”[2]

10 “You have asked a hard thing,” Elijah said. “Yet
if you see me as I am being taken from you, it will
be yours; but if not, it will not.”

11 As they were walking along and talking,
suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire
appeared and separated the two of them, and
Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind.

12 As Elisha watched, he kept crying out, “My
father! My father! Israel’s chariots and its
horsemen!”[3] Then he could see him no longer. He
seized his own garments and ripped them in two.

13 He picked up the cloak that had fallen from
Elijah, went back and stood on the bank of the
Jordan.

14 He took the cloak that had fallen from Elijah and
struck the water, saying, “Where is the LORD, the
God of Elijah?” When he struck the water, it
divided to the right and to the left, and Elisha
crossed over.

15 When the sons of the prophets from Jericho,
watching from across the river, saw him, they
said, “Elijah’s spirit has come to rest on Elisha.”
They went to meet him and bowed down to the
ground in front of him.

16 “Look,” they said, “we your servants have fifty
strong men. Please let them go and search for
your master. Perhaps the Spirit of the LORD has
picked him up and set him down on some
mountain or in some valley.” “Do not send them,”
Elisha replied.

17 But they kept urging him until he was
embarrassed, and he said, “Send them.” So they
sent fifty men, who searched for three days but
did not find him.

18 When they came back to Elisha, who was
staying in Jericho, he said to them, “Did I not tell
you not to go?”

19 The men of the city said to Elisha, “Look, our
lord, this city is well situated, as you can see, but
the water is bad and the land is unfruitful.”[4]

20 “Bring me a new bowl,” he said, “and put salt in
it.” So they brought it to him.

21 Then he went out to the spring and threw the
salt into it, saying, “This is what the LORD says: ‘I
have healed this water. Never again will it cause
death or barrenness.’”

22 And the water has remained wholesome to this
day, according to the word Elisha had spoken.

23 From there Elisha went up to Bethel. As he was
going up the road, some young men[5] came out of
the town and jeered at him. “Go on up, baldhead!”
they shouted. “Go on up, baldhead!”

24 He turned round, looked at them and cursed
them in the name of the LORD. Then two she-
bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two
of the youths.

25 From there he went on to Mount Carmel, and
from there he returned to Samaria.

1 A company of prophets who lived and worked together, perhaps under Elijah's and then Elisha's leadership.

2 The portion due to the firstborn son (Deuteronomy 21:17); Elisha asks to be Elijah's heir.

3 Elijah had been Israel's true defence; the same words are spoken of Elisha in 13:14.

4 Or 'causes miscarriages'; so also in verse 21.

5 Hebrew 'little lads'; the word can describe youths as well as children, and verse 24 calls them 'young men'.

Chapter 3

2 Kings 3 tells how Joram son of Ahab reigns twelve years over Israel, doing evil though not as much as his parents, for he removes his father's sacred pillar of Baal. When Mesha king of Moab rebels and stops sending his tribute of lambs and wool, Joram marches against him with Jehoshaphat of Judah and the king of Edom, by way of the wilderness of Edom. After seven days they run out of water, and Jehoshaphat asks for a prophet of the LORD. Elisha, who used to pour water on Elijah's hands, says he would not look at Joram but for Jehoshaphat. While a musician plays, the hand of the LORD comes on him and he tells them to dig the valley full of pools: without wind or rain it will fill with water, and the LORD will give Moab into their hands. In the morning water flows from Edom. The Moabites, seeing the water red as blood in the sunrise, think the kings have slaughtered one another and rush to plunder, but are routed, and Israel ruins their land. In desperation the king of Moab sacrifices his firstborn son on the wall, and great wrath comes against Israel, so they withdraw to their own land.

1 In the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, Joram son of Ahab came to the throne of Israel in Samaria, and he reigned twelve years.

2 He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, though not as his father and mother had done. He removed the sacred pillar of Baal that his father had made.

3 Nevertheless he clung to the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he made Israel commit; he did not turn away from them.

4 Now Mesha king of Moab was a sheep-breeder,[1] and he used to pay the king of Israel a hundred thousand lambs and the wool of a hundred thousand rams.

5 But after Ahab died, the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel.

6 So at that time King Joram set out from Samaria and mustered all Israel.

7 He also sent word to Jehoshaphat king of Judah: "The king of Moab has revolted against me. Will you join me in a campaign against Moab?" "I will come," Jehoshaphat answered. "We are as one, you and I; my troops and my horses are yours."

8 "By which route shall we attack?" he asked. "By way of the wilderness of Edom," Joram answered.

9 So the king of Israel set out with the king of Judah and the king of Edom. After they had made a roundabout march of seven days, there was no water left for the army or for the animals with them.

10 "Alas!" said the king of Israel. "The LORD has called these three kings together only to give them into the hand of Moab!"

11 But Jehoshaphat asked, "Is there no prophet of the LORD here, through whom we may enquire of the LORD?" One of the officials of the king of Israel answered, "Elisha son of Shaphat is here. He used to pour water on Elijah's hands."[2]

12 "He has the LORD's word," said Jehoshaphat. So the three kings, of Israel, of Judah and of Edom, went down to see him.

13 Elisha told the king of Israel, "What business have you with me? Go and consult your father's prophets and your mother's." "No," the king of Israel replied. "It is the LORD who has brought us three kings here to hand us over to Moab."

14 Elisha said, "As the LORD of Armies lives, before whom I stand, if I did not have regard for Jehoshaphat king of Judah, I would not look at you or even notice you.

15 But now bring me a musician." While the musician was playing, the hand of the LORD came on Elisha,

16 and he said, "This is what the LORD says: 'Make this valley full of pools.'

17 For this is what the LORD says: 'You will see neither wind nor rain, yet this valley will be filled with water, and you will drink, you and your cattle and your other animals.'

18 This is an easy thing in the sight of the LORD; He will also give Moab into your hands.

19 You will overthrow every fortified city and every
major town. You will cut down every good tree,
stop up all the springs and ruin every good field
with stones."

20 The next morning, about the time of the morning
offering, water came flowing from the direction of
Edom, and the land was filled with water.

21 Meanwhile all the Moabites had heard that the
kings had come up to fight against them. Everyone
old enough to bear arms was called up and
stationed on the border.

22 When they rose early in the morning, the sun
was shining on the water, and to the Moabites
across the way the water looked red, like blood.[3]

23 "This is blood!" they said. "The kings must have
fought and killed one another. Now, Moab, to the
plunder!"

24 But when the Moabites came to the camp of
Israel, the Israelites rose up and struck them, and
they fled before them. The Israelites advanced
into the land,[4] striking down Moab as they went.

25 They destroyed the towns, and each man threw
a stone on every good field until it was covered.
They stopped up all the springs and cut down
every good tree. Only Kir-hareseth was left with
its stones in place, and even it was surrounded by
slingers, who attacked it.

26 When the king of Moab saw that the battle was
going against him, he took with him seven
hundred swordsmen to break through to the king
of Edom, but they failed.

27 Then he took his firstborn son, who was to
succeed him as king, and offered him as a burnt
offering on the city wall. And great wrath came
against Israel,[5] so they withdrew from him and
returned to their own land.

1 Mesha's own inscription, the Moabite Stone, records his revolt against Israel.

2 That is, he was Elijah's personal servant (1 Kings 19:21).

3 There is wordplay between Hebrew *adom*, 'red', *dam*, 'blood', and *Edom*.

4 The Hebrew of this phrase is uncertain.

5 The meaning is debated: perhaps the anger of the Moabites, roused to fight on; perhaps Israel's own horror; perhaps divine anger.

Chapter 4

2 Kings 4 tells of Elisha's miracles. The widow of one of the sons of the prophets is about to lose her two sons to a creditor; Elisha tells her to borrow as many empty jars as she can, and her one flask of oil fills them all, so that she can pay her debts and live on the rest. A wealthy woman of Shunem gives him a small upper room for his visits. Elisha promises that by the same time next year she will hold a son, and she does. Years later the boy dies in her lap, and she lays him on the prophet's bed and rides to Elisha at Mount Carmel, refusing to leave him. Gehazi's staff laid on the boy brings no response, but Elisha shuts the door, prays and stretches himself on the child until his body grows warm, and the boy sneezes seven times and opens his eyes. At Gilgal during a famine, wild gourds poison a pot of stew, and Elisha makes it harmless with flour. From twenty barley loaves a hundred men eat and have some left over, as the LORD had said.

1 The wife of one of the sons of the prophets cried
out to Elisha, "Your servant my husband is dead,
and you know that your servant feared the LORD.
Now the creditor is coming to take my two
children as his slaves."

2 Elisha said to her, "What shall I do for you? Tell
me, what do you have in the house?" "Your
servant has nothing in the house at all," she said,
"except a small flask of oil."

3 He said, "Go and borrow empty jars from all your
neighbours. Do not get just a few.

4 Then go in and shut the door behind you and
your sons. Pour oil into all these jars, and as each
one is filled, set it aside."

5 So she left him and shut the door behind her and
her sons. They kept bringing the jars to her, and
she kept pouring.

6 When all the jars were full, she said to her son,
"Bring me another jar." But he said to her, "There
is not a jar left." Then the oil stopped flowing.

7 She went and told the man of God, and he said,
"Go, sell the oil and pay your debts. You and your
sons can live on what is left."

8 One day Elisha went to Shunem, where a wealthy
woman lived, and she urged him to stay for a

meal. So whenever he passed that way, he would stop there to eat.

9 She said to her husband, “I am sure that this man who often comes our way is a holy man of God.

10 Let us make a small room on the roof with walls, and put a bed, a table, a chair and a lamp in it for him. Then whenever he comes to us, he can stay there.”

11 One day when Elisha came there, he went up to the upper room and lay down.

12 He said to his servant Gehazi, “Call this Shunammite woman.” So he called her, and she stood before him.

13 Elisha said to Gehazi, “Tell her, ‘You have gone to all this trouble for us. What can be done for you? Can we speak on your behalf to the king or to the commander of the army?’” She replied, “I live among my own people.”[1]

14 “What then can be done for her?” Elisha asked. Gehazi answered, “Well, she has no son, and her husband is old.”

15 “Call her,” Elisha said. So Gehazi called her, and she stood in the doorway.

16 Elisha said, “At this season, when the time comes round, you will be holding a son in your arms.” “No, my lord, man of God,” she protested. “Do not deceive your servant.”

17 But the woman conceived, and at that season the following year she gave birth to a son, as Elisha had told her.

18 The child grew, and one day he went out to his father, who was with the reapers.

19 He said to his father, “My head! My head!” His father told a servant, “Carry him to his mother.”

20 The servant picked him up and brought him to his mother. The boy sat on her lap until noon, and then he died.

21 She carried him upstairs, laid him on the bed of the man of God, closed the door and went out.

22 Then she called her husband: “Send me one of the servants with a donkey. I must go quickly to the man of God, and I will be back.”

23 “Why go to him today?” he asked. “It is not the New Moon or the Sabbath.” “It will be all right,” she said.

24 She saddled the donkey and said to her servant, “Drive on quickly; do not slow down for me unless I tell you.”

25 So she set out and came to the man of God at Mount Carmel. When the man of God saw her in the distance, he said to his servant Gehazi, “Look, there is the Shunammite!

26 Run to meet her and ask her, ‘Are you well? Is your husband well? Is the child well?’” “All is well,” she said.

27 But when she reached the man of God on the mountain, she took hold of his feet. Gehazi came to push her away, but the man of God said, “Leave her alone. She is in bitter distress, and the LORD has hidden it from me and has not told me.”

28 “Did I ask my lord for a son?” she said. “Did I not say, ‘Do not raise my hopes’?”

29 Elisha told Gehazi, “Get ready, take my staff and go at once. Do not stop to greet anyone you meet, and if anyone greets you, do not reply. Put my staff on the boy’s face.”

30 But the child’s mother said, “As the LORD lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So he got up and followed her.

31 Gehazi went on ahead of them and laid the staff on the boy’s face, but there was no sound and no response. So he went back to meet Elisha and told him, “The boy has not woken up.”

32 When Elisha reached the house, there was the boy lying dead on his bed.

33 He went in, shut the door behind the two of them and prayed to the LORD.

34 Then he got up on the bed and lay on the child, putting his mouth on his mouth, his eyes on his eyes and his hands on his hands. As he stretched himself out over him, the child’s body grew warm.

35 Elisha got down, walked back and forth once in the house, and then went up and stretched himself out over him again. The boy sneezed seven times and opened his eyes.

36 Elisha called Gehazi and said, “Call the Shunammite.” So he called her. When she came, Elisha said, “Pick up your son.”

37 She came in and threw herself at his feet, bowing to the ground. Then she lifted up her son and left the room.

38 Elisha returned to Gilgal when there was a famine in the land. While the sons of the prophets were sitting before him, he said to his servant, “Put on the large pot and cook some stew for the sons of the prophets.”

39 One of them went out into the fields to gather herbs. He found a wild vine and gathered as many of its gourds as his cloak could hold. When he came back, he sliced them into the pot of stew, though no one knew what they were.

40 They ladled out the stew for the men, but as they began to eat, they shouted, “Man of God, this pot will kill us!” And they could not eat it.

41 Elisha said, “Bring some flour.” He threw it into the pot and said, “Serve it to the people to eat.” And there was nothing harmful in the pot.

42 A man came from Baal-shalishah, bringing the man of God bread from the first ripe grain: twenty loaves of barley bread and some ears of new grain in his sack. Elisha said, “Give it to the people to eat.”

43 “How can I set this before a hundred men?” his servant asked. But Elisha repeated, “Give it to the people to eat, for this is what the LORD says: ‘They will eat and have some left over.’”[2]

44 He set the food before them, and they ate it, and some was left over, just as the LORD had said.

1 That is, she is secure among her own family and needs no favours.

2 Compare the feeding of the crowds by Jesus, from barley loaves in John 6:9–13.

Chapter 5

2 Kings 5 tells how Naaman, commander of the army of Aram and a mighty warrior, suffers from a skin disease. A young Israelite girl taken captive in a raid tells his wife that the prophet in Samaria could cure him. The king of Aram sends Naaman with rich gifts and a letter to the king of Israel, who tears his clothes, fearing a pretext for war. Elisha sends for Naaman and, without coming out, tells him by a messenger to wash seven times in the Jordan. Naaman storms off, angry that the rivers of Damascus will not do, but his servants persuade him, and his flesh becomes like a little child’s. He returns to confess that there is no God in all the earth except in Israel, and asks for two mule-loads of earth to worship the LORD at home, and for pardon when he must bow in the temple of Rimmon. Elisha refuses all payment, but his servant Gehazi runs after Naaman and lies to obtain silver and clothing. Elisha confronts him, and Naaman’s disease clings to Gehazi, who leaves white as snow.

1 Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man in his master’s eyes and highly regarded, because through him the LORD had given victory to Aram. He was a mighty warrior, but he had a skin disease.[1]

2 Raiding parties from Aram had gone out and had taken captive a young girl from the land of Israel, and she served Naaman’s wife.

3 She said to her mistress, “If only my master were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his skin disease.”

4 Naaman went and told his master what the girl from the land of Israel had said.

5 “Go now,” said the king of Aram, “and I will send a letter to the king of Israel.” So Naaman set out, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels[2] of gold and ten sets of clothing.

6 The letter he brought to the king of Israel read: “With this letter I am sending you my servant Naaman, so that you may cure him of his skin disease.”

7 When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes. “Am I God, with power over life and death,” he said, “that this man expects me to rid someone of his skin disease? You can see he is trying to pick a quarrel with me!”

8 Word reached Elisha the man of God that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, and he sent a message to him: “What has made you tear your clothes? Have the man come to me, and he will discover that there is a prophet in Israel.”

9 So Naaman came with his horses and chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha’s house.

10 Elisha sent a messenger out to him to say, “Go and wash seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be clean.”

11 But Naaman went away angry. “I thought he would surely come out to me,” he said, “and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, wave his hand over the place and cure the disease.

12 Are the Abana[3] and the Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, not better than any water in Israel? Could I not wash in those and be made clean?” So he turned away and left in a fury.

13 But his servants came up to him and said, “My father, if the prophet had told you to do some

great thing, would you not have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you, ‘Wash and be clean’!”

14 So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, as the man of God had said, and his flesh was restored and became like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

15 Then Naaman and all his attendants went back to the man of God. He stood before him and said, “Now I know that there is no God in all the earth except in Israel. So please accept a gift from your servant.”

16 But Elisha said, “As the LORD lives, before whom I stand, I will accept nothing.” Naaman urged him to take it, but he refused.

17 “If not,” said Naaman, “then please let your servant be given as much earth as a pair of mules can carry,[4] for your servant will never again offer burnt offering or sacrifice to any other god but the LORD.

18 But may the LORD pardon your servant for this one thing: when my master goes into the temple of Rimmon[5] to bow down there, and he leans on my arm and I bow down in the temple of Rimmon, when I bow in the temple of Rimmon, may the LORD pardon your servant in this matter.”

19 “Go in peace,” Elisha said to him. When Naaman had gone some distance,

20 Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said to himself, “My master has let this Aramean Naaman off too lightly by not accepting what he brought. As the LORD lives, I will run after him and get something from him.”

21 So Gehazi hurried after Naaman. When Naaman saw someone running after him, he got down from his chariot to meet him. “Is all well?” he asked.

22 “Yes, all is well,” said Gehazi. “My master sent me with a message: ‘Two young men of the sons of the prophets have just arrived from the hill country of Ephraim. Would you give them a talent of silver and two changes of clothes?’”

23 “Please take two talents,” said Naaman. He pressed him to accept them, then tied up the two talents of silver in two bags with two sets of clothing, and gave them to two of his servants, who carried them ahead of Gehazi.

24 When Gehazi came to the hill,[6] he took the things from them and put them away in the house. Then he sent the men away, and they left.

25 When he went in and stood before his master, Elisha asked him, “Where have you been, Gehazi?” “Your servant has not been anywhere,” he replied.

26 But Elisha said to him, “Did my spirit not go with you when the man turned from his chariot to meet you? Is this the time to take money and clothing, olive groves and vineyards, sheep and cattle, male and female servants?

27 Naaman’s disease shall cling to you and to your descendants for ever.” And Gehazi went out from his presence diseased, as white as snow.

1 Hebrew *tsara’at*, a term for various skin conditions; traditionally ‘leprosy’, but not the disease now called by that name. Compare Luke 4:27, ‘Naaman the Syrian’.

2 About 340 kilograms (750 pounds) of silver and 69 kilograms (150 pounds) of gold.

3 So the traditional reading; the written Hebrew has ‘Amana’.

4 Soil from the LORD’s land, on which to worship the LORD in Aram.

5 Probably Hadad-Rimmon, the storm god of Damascus (Zechariah 12:11).

6 Hebrew *ophel*, perhaps the citadel of Samaria.

Chapter 6

2 Kings 6 tells how, when the sons of the prophets are cutting timber by the Jordan to build a larger meeting place, a borrowed axe head falls into the water, and Elisha makes it float. The king of Aram finds that every plan he makes against Israel is revealed to its king, and learns that Elisha tells the king even what he says in his bedroom. He sends an army by night to surround Dothan, and Elisha's servant is afraid, but Elisha prays that his eyes be opened, and he sees the hills full of horses and chariots of fire. At Elisha's prayer the Arameans are struck with blindness, and he leads them into Samaria, where their eyes are opened. He forbids the king of Israel to kill them, and after a great feast they are sent home, and Aramean raiders stop coming. Later Ben-hadad besieges Samaria, and the famine becomes so severe that a donkey's head sells for eighty shekels and two women agree to eat their sons. Hearing one woman's complaint, the king tears his clothes, showing the sackcloth beneath, and swears to have Elisha beheaded. Elisha, sitting with the elders, foresees the messenger's coming, and the king says that this disaster is from the LORD: why should he wait for the LORD any longer?

1 One day the sons of the prophets told Elisha,
"The place where we live under your leadership
has become too cramped for us.
2 Let us go to the Jordan, where each of us can get
a log, and let us build a place there for us to live."
"Go," he said.
3 Then one of them said, "Please come with your
servants."
"I will come," he answered.
4 So he went with them. When they came to the
Jordan, they began cutting down trees.
5 As one of them was felling a log, the iron axe
head fell into the water.
"Oh no, my lord!" he cried out. "It was borrowed!"
6 "Where did it go in?" asked the man of God.
When he was shown the spot, he cut a piece of
wood and threw it in, and the iron floated to the
surface.
7 "Lift it out," he said. So the man reached out his
hand and took it.
8 Now the king of Aram was at war with Israel.
After consulting his officers, he said, "I will set up
my camp in such and such a place."
9 But the man of God sent word to the king of
Israel: "Beware of passing that place, for the
Arameans are going down there."
10 So the king of Israel sent word to the place the
man of God had told him about, and warned it,
and was on his guard there, not once or twice.
11 This enraged the king of Aram. He summoned
his officers and demanded, "Will you not tell me
which of us is on the side of the king of Israel?"
12 "None of us, my lord the king," said one of his
officers, "but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel,
tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in
your bedroom."
13 "Go and find out where he is," the king ordered,
"so that I can send men and capture him."
The report came back: "He is in Dothan."
14 So he sent horses and chariots and a strong
force there. They came by night and surrounded
the city.
15 When the servant of the man of God got up early
in the morning and went out, an army with horses
and chariots was surrounding the city.
"Oh no, my lord!" his servant said. "What shall we do?"
16 "Do not be afraid," Elisha answered, "for those
who are with us are more than those who are with
them."
17 Then Elisha prayed, "LORD, please open his
eyes so that he may see."
The LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he looked, and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all round Elisha.
18 As the Arameans came down towards him,
Elisha prayed to the LORD, "Please strike this
people with blindness."
So He struck them with blindness,[1] as Elisha had asked.
19 Elisha said to them, "This is not the road, and
this is not the city. Follow me, and I will lead you
to the man you are looking for."
And he led them to Samaria.
20 As soon as they had entered Samaria, Elisha
said, "LORD, open the eyes of these men so that
they may see."
The LORD opened their eyes, and they looked, and there they were, inside Samaria.
21 When the king of Israel saw them, he asked
Elisha, "Shall I strike them down, my father? Shall
I strike them down?"
22 "Do not strike them down," he answered.
"Would you strike down those you have taken
captive with your own sword and bow? Set food

and water before them, so that they may eat and drink and then go back to their master."

23 So he prepared a great feast for them, and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they returned to their master. And the raiding bands of Aram stopped invading the land of Israel.

24 Some time later Ben-hadad king of Aram mustered his whole army, marched up and laid siege to Samaria.

25 There was a great famine in Samaria. The siege lasted so long that a donkey's head sold for eighty shekels of silver, and a quarter of a kab[2] of dove's dung[3] for five shekels.

26 As the king of Israel was passing along the wall, a woman cried out to him, "Help me, my lord the king!"

27 He replied, "If the LORD does not help you, where can I get help for you? From the threshing floor or the winepress?"

28 Then the king asked her, "What is the matter?" She answered, "This woman said to me, 'Give up your son so that we can eat him today, and tomorrow we will eat my son.'

29 So we cooked my son and ate him. The next day I said to her, 'Give up your son so that we may eat him,' but she has hidden her son."[4]

30 When the king heard the woman's words, he tore his clothes. As he went along the wall, the people looked, and there underneath, next to his body, was sackcloth.

31 He said, "May God deal with me, and more severely still, if the head of Elisha son of Shaphat stays on his shoulders today!"

32 Elisha was sitting in his house, and the elders were sitting with him. The king sent a messenger ahead, but before he arrived, Elisha said to the elders, "Do you see how this son of a murderer is sending someone to cut off my head? Look, when the messenger comes, shut the door and hold it shut against him. Is not the sound of his master's footsteps behind him?"

33 While he was still speaking to them, the messenger came down to him, and the king[5] said, "This disaster is from the LORD. Why should I wait for the LORD any longer?"

1 A rare word, also in Genesis 19:11; perhaps a dazzling confusion rather than total blindness.

2 About 0.3 litres (½ pint).

3 Perhaps the name of a wild plant or seed pod; so the traditional reading. The written Hebrew has a coarser word.

4 As Deuteronomy 28:53–57 had warned; compare Lamentations 4:10.

5 Hebrew 'he', apparently the king, who had followed his messenger (verse 32 and 7:2).

Chapter 7

2 Kings 7 tells how Elisha announces that by this time tomorrow fine flour and barley will be sold cheaply at the gate of Samaria. The king's officer scoffs that it could not happen even if the LORD opened windows in heaven, and Elisha tells him he will see it but not eat it. Four men with a skin disease outside the gate decide they have nothing to lose by going over to the Aramean camp, and find it deserted, for the Lord had made the Arameans hear the sound of a great army and they had fled for their lives. After eating and hiding plunder, the four men realise it is a day of good news and report it to the city. The king suspects a trap, but scouts find the road to the Jordan strewn with what the Arameans threw away. The people plunder the camp, food becomes cheap as the LORD had said, and the officer, posted at the gate, is trampled to death by the crowd.

1 Elisha said, "Hear the word of the LORD. This is what the LORD says: 'About this time tomorrow a seah[1] of fine flour will sell for a shekel, and two seahs of barley for a shekel, at the gate of Samaria.'"

2 The officer on whose arm the king leaned said to the man of God, "Look, even if the LORD were to make windows in heaven, could this happen?" "You will see it with your own eyes," Elisha replied, "but you will not eat any of it."

3 Now there were four men with a skin disease at the entrance to the city gate.[2] They said to one another, "Why should we sit here until we die?

4 If we say, 'We will go into the city,' the famine is there, and we will die there. And if we stay here, we will die. So come, let us go over to the camp of the Arameans. If they spare our lives, we live; if they kill us, we die."

5 So at dusk they set out for the Aramean camp. But when they reached the edge of the camp,

there was no one there,

6 for the Lord had made the Aramean army hear
the sound of chariots and horses, the sound of a
great army. They said to one another, “Look, the
king of Israel has hired the kings of the Hittites
and the kings of Egypt to attack us!”

7 So they got up and fled at dusk, abandoning their
tents, their horses and their donkeys, leaving the
camp just as it was, and running for their lives.

8 When the men with the skin disease reached the
edge of the camp, they went into one tent and ate
and drank. They carried off silver, gold and
clothing from it and went and hid them. Then they
came back, went into another tent, took things
from it and hid those too.

9 Then they said to one another, “We are not doing
right. This is a day of good news, and we are
keeping it to ourselves. If we wait until daylight,
punishment will overtake us. Come, let us go and
report it to the king’s household.”

10 So they went and called to the gatekeepers of
the city and told them, “We went into the Aramean
camp, and there was not a soul there, not a sound
of anyone, only horses tethered and donkeys
tethered, and the tents left as they were.”

11 The gatekeepers called out, and the news was
reported inside the royal palace.

12 The king got up in the night and said to his
officials, “Let me tell you what the Arameans have
done to us. They know we are starving, so they
have left the camp to hide in the countryside,
thinking, ‘When they come out of the city, we will
take them alive and get into the city.’”

13 One of his officials answered, “Let some men
take five of the horses that are left here in the city.
Their fate will be no worse than that of all the
Israelites left here, or of all the Israelites who
have already perished.[3] Let us send them to find
out.”

14 So they took two chariots with their horses, and
the king sent them after the Aramean army,
saying, “Go and see.”

15 They followed them as far as the Jordan, and the
whole road was strewn with clothing and
equipment that the Arameans had thrown away in
their haste. So the messengers returned and
reported to the king.

16 Then the people went out and plundered the
Aramean camp. So a seah of fine flour sold for a
shekel, and two seahs of barley for a shekel, as
the LORD had said.

17 The king had put the officer on whose arm he
leaned in charge of the gate, and the people
trampled him in the gateway, and he died, just as
the man of God had foretold when the king came
down to him.

18 It happened as the man of God had said to the
king: “About this time tomorrow two seahs of
barley will sell for a shekel, and a seah of fine
flour for a shekel, at the gate of Samaria.”

19 The officer had answered the man of God,
“Look, even if the LORD were to make windows in
heaven, could such a thing happen?” And the man
of God had said, “You will see it with your own
eyes, but you will not eat any of it.”

20 And that is exactly what happened to him, for
the people trampled him in the gateway, and he
died.

1 About 7 litres (1½ gallons).

2 Such people had to live outside the town (Leviticus 13:46).

3 The Hebrew repeats part of the sentence; the sense is that the men risk nothing they are not already facing.

Chapter 8

2 Kings 8 tells how the Shunammite woman, warned by Elisha of a seven-year famine, lives in the land of the Philistines, and on her return appeals to the king for her house and land just as Gehazi is telling him how Elisha raised her son; the king restores everything to her. Elisha goes to Damascus, where the sick Ben-hadad sends Hazael with a great gift to ask whether he will recover. Elisha says he will recover, yet the LORD has shown that he will die, and weeps, foreseeing the cruelties Hazael will inflict on Israel; he tells him he will be king of Aram. The next day Hazael smothers Ben-hadad with a wet cloth and becomes king. In Judah, Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat, who married a daughter of Ahab, reigns eight years and does evil, yet the LORD spares Judah for David's sake; Edom and Libnah revolt. His son Ahaziah, grandson of Omri through his mother Athaliah, reigns one year and also follows the house of Ahab. He joins Joram king of Israel against Hazael at Ramoth-gilead, and visits him at Jezreel where he is recovering from his wounds.

1 Elisha had said to the woman whose son he had
restored to life, "Get up and go away with your
household, and live wherever you can, for the
LORD has called for a famine, and it will come on
the land for seven years."

2 The woman did as the man of God had said. She
went away with her household and lived in the
land of the Philistines for seven years.

3 At the end of the seven years she came back from
the land of the Philistines and went to appeal to
the king for her house and her land.

4 At the time the king was in conversation with
Gehazi, the servant of the man of God. "Tell me,"
he was saying, "about all the wonders Elisha has
performed."

5 Gehazi was in the middle of telling the king how
Elisha had brought a dead boy back to life when in
came the very woman whose son it was, to plead
with the king for her house and land. "My lord the
king," said Gehazi, "here is the woman, and here
is the son Elisha brought back to life."

6 The king questioned the woman, and she told him
the story. Then the king assigned an official to her,
saying, "Give back everything that belonged to
her, with all the produce of her land from the day
she left the country until now."

7 Elisha came to Damascus at a time when Ben-
hadad king of Aram was ill. When the king was
told, "The man of God has come here,"

8 he said to Hazael, "Take a gift with you and go to
meet the man of God. Enquire of the LORD
through him: 'Will I recover from this illness?'"

9 So Hazael went to meet him, taking with him as a
gift forty camel-loads of all the finest goods of
Damascus. He came and stood before him and
said, "Your son Ben-hadad king of Aram has sent
me to ask, 'Will I recover from this illness?'"

10 Elisha said to him, "Go and tell him, 'You will
certainly recover,'[1] but the LORD has shown me
that he will certainly die."

11 He fixed his gaze on him steadily until Hazael
was embarrassed. Then the man of God wept.

12 "Why is my lord weeping?" Hazael asked.
"Because I know the harm you will do to the
Israelites," he answered. "You will set their
fortresses on fire, kill their young men with the
sword, dash their little children to pieces and rip
open their pregnant women."

13 Hazael said, "How could your servant, a mere
dog, accomplish such a great thing?" Elisha
answered, "The LORD has shown me that you will
be king over Aram."

14 Then Hazael left Elisha and returned to his
master, who asked him, "What did Elisha say to
you?" He replied, "He told me that you will
certainly recover."

15 But the next day he took a cloth, soaked it in
water and spread it over the king's face, so that
he died. And Hazael reigned in his place.

16 In the fifth year of Joram son of Ahab king of
Israel, when Jehoshaphat had been king of Judah,[2]
Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat came to the throne of
Judah.

17 He was thirty-two years old when he became
king, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem.

18 He walked in the way of the kings of Israel, as
the house of Ahab had done, for he had married a
daughter of Ahab. He did what was evil in the
sight of the LORD.

19 Yet for the sake of His servant David the LORD
was not willing to destroy Judah, since He had
promised to give a lamp to David and his
descendants for ever.

20 In Jehoram's days Edom rebelled against Judah's
rule and set up its own king.

21 So Joram crossed over to Zair with all his chariots. He rose by night and broke through the Edomites who had surrounded him and his chariot commanders, but his army fled home.[3]

22 So Edom has been in rebellion against Judah's rule to this day. Libnah also rebelled at that time.

23 The other events of Joram's reign, and all that he did, are recorded in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah.

24 Joram rested with his ancestors and was buried with them in the City of David. And his son Ahaziah succeeded him as king.

25 In the twelfth year of Joram son of Ahab king of Israel, Ahaziah son of Jehoram came to the throne of Judah.

26 Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Athaliah, a granddaughter[4] of Omri king of Israel.

27 He walked in the way of the house of Ahab and did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, as the house of Ahab had done, for he was related by marriage to the house of Ahab.

28 Ahaziah went with Joram son of Ahab to war against Hazael king of Aram at Ramoth-gilead, and the Arameans wounded Joram.

29 So King Joram returned to Jezreel to recover from the wounds the Arameans had inflicted on him at Ramah when he fought against Hazael king of Aram. And Ahaziah son of Jehoram king of Judah went down to Jezreel to see Joram son of Ahab, because he had been wounded.

1 So the traditional reading; the written Hebrew has 'You will not recover'.

2 The phrase is probably a copying error and is missing from some manuscripts and versions; or it may indicate a co-regency.

3 The Hebrew is unclear about who fled; perhaps Joram's own men.

4 Hebrew 'daughter'; she was the daughter of Ahab (verse 18), and so descended from Omri.

Chapter 9

2 Kings 9 tells how Elisha sends one of the sons of the prophets to Ramoth-gilead to anoint Jehu, an army commander, king over Israel in a private room, with the charge to strike down the house of Ahab and avenge the blood of the LORD's servants shed by Jezebel; then the young man flees. When Jehu tells his fellow officers, they spread their cloaks for him and proclaim him king. Jehu drives furiously to Jezreel, where the wounded Joram is visited by Ahaziah king of Judah. Joram's messengers do not return, and the watchman recognises Jehu's wild driving. The two kings ride out and meet him at Naboth's field. When Joram asks whether he comes in peace, Jehu answers that there can be no peace while Jezebel's idolatries abound, and shoots Joram through the heart; his body is thrown on Naboth's plot, as the LORD had said. Ahaziah flees and is wounded, dies at Megiddo and is buried in Jerusalem. Jezebel paints her eyes and taunts Jehu from a window as a Zimri; at his word her servants throw her down, and when they go to bury her, only her skull, feet and hands are left, as Elijah had foretold.

1 Elisha the prophet summoned one of the sons of the prophets and said to him, "Tuck your cloak into your belt, take this flask of oil with you and go to Ramoth-gilead.

2 When you get there, look for Jehu son of Jehoshaphat, son of Nimshi. Go in, get him away from his companions and take him into an inner room.

3 Then take the flask of oil, pour it on his head and say, 'This is what the LORD says: I anoint you king over Israel.' Then open the door and run. Do not wait."

4 So the young man, the prophet,[1] went to Ramoth-gilead.

5 When he arrived, the army commanders were sitting together. "I have a message for you, commander," he said. "For which of us?" Jehu asked. "For you, commander," he replied.

6 Jehu got up and went into the house. Then the young man poured the oil on his head and said to him, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I anoint you king over the LORD's people Israel.

7 You must strike down your master Ahab's family. In this way I will take vengeance on Jezebel for the blood of My servants the prophets and of every one of the LORD's servants.

8 The whole house of Ahab shall perish. I will cut off from Ahab every male,[2] whether slave or free,

in Israel.

9 I will treat Ahab's family as I treated the family of
Jeroboam son of Nebat and the family of Baasha
son of Ahijah.

10 As for Jezebel, the dogs will eat her in the plot of
ground at Jezreel, and no one will bury her.'" Then
he opened the door and fled.

11 When Jehu went out to his master's officers, one
of them asked him, "Is everything all right? Why
did this madman come to you?" "You know the
man and the sort of things he says," he replied.

12 "That is not true!" they said. "Tell us." Jehu said,
"This is what he told me: 'This is what the LORD
says: I anoint you king over Israel.'"

13 At once they each took their cloaks and spread
them under him on the bare steps.[3] Then they
blew the ram's horn and shouted, "Jehu is king!"

14 So Jehu son of Jehoshaphat, son of Nimshi,
conspired against Joram. (Joram and all Israel had
been defending Ramoth-gilead against Hazael
king of Aram,

15 but King Joram had returned to Jezreel to
recover from the wounds the Arameans had
inflicted on him in the battle with Hazael king of
Aram.) Jehu said, "If this is your wish, let no one
slip out of the city to go and tell the news in
Jezreel."

16 Then he got into his chariot and drove to Jezreel,
because Joram was lying ill there, and Ahaziah
king of Judah had gone down to see him.

17 The watchman standing on the tower in Jezreel
saw Jehu's troops approaching. "I see a company
of troops," he called. "Take a horseman," Joram
ordered. "Send him to meet them and ask, 'Do you
come in peace?'"

18 So the horseman rode off to meet him and said,
"This is what the king says: 'Do you come in
peace?'" "What have you to do with peace?" Jehu
replied. "Fall in behind me." The watchman
reported, "The messenger has reached them, but
he is not coming back."

19 So the king sent out a second horseman. When
he came to them he said, "This is what the king
says: 'Do you come in peace?'" Jehu replied,
"What have you to do with peace? Fall in behind
me."

20 The watchman reported, "He has reached them,
but he is not coming back either. And the driving
is like that of Jehu son of Nimshi, for he drives like
a madman."

21 "Harness my chariot," Joram ordered, and when
it had been harnessed, Joram king of Israel and
Ahaziah king of Judah rode out, each in his own
chariot, to meet Jehu. They met him at the plot of
ground that had belonged to Naboth of Jezreel.

22 When Joram saw Jehu, he asked, "Do you come
in peace, Jehu?" "How can there be peace," Jehu
replied, "as long as all the idolatry and witchcraft
of your mother Jezebel abound?"

23 Joram turned his chariot round and fled, calling
out to Ahaziah, "Treachery, Ahaziah!"

24 Then Jehu drew his bow with all his strength
and shot Joram between the shoulders. The arrow
pierced his heart, and he slumped down in his
chariot.

25 Jehu said to Bidkar, his chariot officer, "Pick him
up and throw him on the plot of ground that
belonged to Naboth of Jezreel. Remember how
you and I were riding together behind Ahab his
father when the LORD pronounced this sentence
against him:

26 'As surely as I saw the blood of Naboth and the
blood of his sons yesterday, declares the LORD, I
will repay you on this very plot of ground, declares
the LORD.'[4] Now then, pick him up and throw him
on the plot, in keeping with the word of the
LORD."

27 When Ahaziah king of Judah saw this, he fled up
the road to Beth-haggan. Jehu chased him,
shouting, "Kill him too!" They wounded him in his
chariot on the way up to Gur near Ibleam, but he
escaped to Megiddo and died there.

28 His servants took him by chariot to Jerusalem
and buried him with his ancestors in his tomb in
the City of David.

29 (Ahaziah had become king of Judah in the
eleventh year of Joram son of Ahab.)[5]

30 Then Jehu came to Jezreel. When Jezebel heard
of it, she painted her eyes, arranged her hair and
looked out of a window.

31 As Jehu entered the gate, she called out, "Do
you come in peace, you Zimri, murderer of your
master?"[6]

32 He looked up at the window and called, "Who is
on my side? Who?" Two or three eunuchs looked
down at him.

33 "Throw her down!" Jehu said. So they threw her
down, and some of her blood spattered the wall
and the horses, which trampled her underfoot.

34 Jehu went in and ate and drank. Then he said, “See to that cursed woman and bury her, for she was a king’s daughter.”

35 But when they went out to bury her, they found nothing of her except her skull, her feet and the palms of her hands.

36 They went back and told Jehu, who said, “This is the word of the LORD that He spoke through His servant Elijah the Tishbite: ‘In the plot of ground at Jezreel the dogs will eat the flesh of Jezebel.

37 Jezebel’s body will be like dung on the ground in the plot at Jezreel, so that no one will be able to say, “This is Jezebel.”’”

1 Hebrew ‘the young man, the young man, the prophet’.

2 See the note at 1 Kings 14:10.

3 The meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain; compare Matthew 21:8.

4 Compare 1 Kings 21:19, 29.

5 8:25 has ‘twelfth year’; the difference probably reflects different ways of counting the start of a reign.

6 Zimri had killed King Elah and reigned only seven days (1 Kings 16:9–18).

Chapter 10

2 Kings 10 tells how Jehu writes to the leaders of Samaria, who are guardians of Ahab’s seventy sons, challenging them to set one on the throne and fight. Terrified, they submit, and at his second letter they behead all seventy and send the heads to Jezreel in baskets. Jehu has them piled at the city gate and tells the people that not a word the LORD spoke against Ahab’s house has failed. He kills all who remain of Ahab’s house in Jezreel, and on the road he slaughters forty-two relatives of Ahaziah. He takes Jehonadab son of Rechab into his chariot to see his zeal for the LORD. In Samaria he pretends that he will serve Baal more than Ahab did, and calls all Baal’s prophets, worshippers and priests to a great sacrifice in Baal’s temple, where his guards kill them all. He destroys the temple and turns it into a latrine, so wiping out Baal worship from Israel. Yet Jehu does not turn from Jeroboam’s golden calves at Bethel and Dan. The LORD promises his sons the throne to the fourth generation, but in his days Hazael begins to cut off parts of Israel east of the Jordan. Jehu reigns twenty-eight years in Samaria, and his son Jehoahaz succeeds him.

1 Now Ahab had seventy sons[1] in Samaria. So Jehu wrote letters and sent them to Samaria, to the officials of Jezreel,[2] to the elders and to the guardians of Ahab’s sons. He said,

2 “You have your master’s sons with you, and chariots and horses, a walled city and an armoury. So, the moment this letter reaches you,

3 choose the best and most capable of your master’s sons and set him on his father’s throne. Then fight for your master’s house.”

4 But they were terrified and said, “If two kings could not stand against him, how can we?”

5 So the palace administrator, the city governor, the elders and the guardians sent this message to Jehu: “We are your servants and will do anything you tell us. We will not make anyone king. Do whatever you think best.”

6 Then Jehu wrote them a second letter, saying, “If you are on my side and will obey me, take the heads of your master’s sons and come to me at Jezreel by this time tomorrow.” Now the king’s sons, seventy of them, were with the leading men of the city, who were bringing them up.

7 When the letter arrived, these men took the king’s sons and slaughtered all seventy of them. They put their heads in baskets and sent them to Jehu in Jezreel.

8 A messenger reported to Jehu, “The heads of the king’s sons have been delivered.” “Lay them in two piles at the city gate,” Jehu said, “and leave them there till morning.”

9 In the morning he went out, stood before all the people and said, “You are innocent. It was I who conspired against my master and killed him, but who struck down all these?

10 Know, then, that not a word the LORD has spoken against the house of Ahab will fall to the ground. The LORD has done what He promised through His servant Elijah.”

11 So Jehu struck down everyone in Jezreel who remained of the house of Ahab, as well as all his leading men, his close friends and his priests, leaving him no survivor.

12 Then Jehu set out and went towards Samaria. At Beth-eked of the Shepherds[3] on the way,

13 he came across some relatives of Ahaziah king
of Judah. “Who are you?” he asked. “We are
relatives of Ahaziah,” they said, “and we have
come down to greet the sons of the king and of the
queen mother.”
14 “Take them alive!” he ordered. So they took
them alive and slaughtered them at the well of
Beth-eked, forty-two men. He left none of them
alive.
15 When he left there, he came upon Jehonadab
son of Rechab,[4] who was coming to meet him.
Jehu greeted him and asked, “Is your heart true to
mine, as mine is to yours?” “It is,” Jehonadab
answered. “If it is,” said Jehu, “give me your
hand.” So he gave him his hand, and Jehu helped
him up into the chariot.
16 “Come with me,” he said, “and see my zeal for
the LORD.” So they had him ride in his chariot.
17 When Jehu came to Samaria, he struck down all
who remained of Ahab’s family in Samaria, until
he had wiped them out, according to the word the
LORD had spoken to Elijah.
18 Next Jehu called all the people together and told
them, “Ahab was a half-hearted servant of Baal.
Jehu will serve him wholeheartedly.
19 Now summon to me all the prophets of Baal, all
his worshippers and all his priests. Let no one be
missing, for I am going to hold a great sacrifice
for Baal. Anyone who is missing shall not live.”
But Jehu was acting deceptively, in order to
destroy the worshippers of Baal.
20 “Announce a sacred assembly in honour of
Baal,” Jehu ordered, and it was announced.
21 Then he sent word throughout Israel, and all the
worshippers of Baal came; not one stayed away.
They crowded into the temple of Baal until it was
full from one end to the other.
22 Jehu said to the keeper of the wardrobe, “Bring
out robes for all the worshippers of Baal.” So he
brought out robes for them.
23 Then Jehu and Jehonadab son of Rechab went
into the temple of Baal. Jehu said to the
worshippers of Baal, “Search and make sure that
none of the LORD’s servants are here with you,
only worshippers of Baal.”
24 So they went in to offer sacrifices and burnt
offerings. Now Jehu had posted eighty men
outside with this warning: “If anyone lets one of
the men I am handing over to you escape, it will
be his life for the other’s life.”
25 As soon as Jehu had finished offering the burnt
offering, he ordered the guards and officers, “Go
in and kill them; let no one escape.” So they
struck them down with the sword, and the guards
and officers threw the bodies out. Then they went
into the inner shrine[5] of the temple of Baal.
26 They brought out the sacred pillar[6] of the temple
of Baal and burned it.
27 They demolished the pillar of Baal and tore
down the temple of Baal, and made it a latrine, as
it is to this day.
28 So Jehu wiped out Baal worship from Israel.
29 But he did not turn away from the sins of
Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he made Israel
commit: the golden calves at Bethel and at Dan.
30 The LORD said to Jehu, “Because you have done
well in doing what is right in My sight, and have
done to the house of Ahab all that I had in mind,
your sons will sit on the throne of Israel to the
fourth generation.”[7]
31 Yet Jehu took no care to walk in the law of the
LORD, the God of Israel, with all his heart. He did
not turn away from the sins of Jeroboam, which he
made Israel commit.
32 In those days the LORD began to cut off parts of
Israel. Hazael defeated the Israelites throughout
their territory
33 east of the Jordan, all the land of Gilead, the
territory of Gad, Reuben and Manasseh, from
Aroer by the Arnon Valley through Gilead to
Bashan.
34 The other events of Jehu’s reign, all that he did
and all his achievements, are recorded in the Book
of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel.
35 Jehu rested with his ancestors and was buried in
Samaria. And his son Jehoahaz succeeded him as
king.
36 Jehu had reigned over Israel in Samaria for
twenty-eight years.

1 That is, descendants; the number may include grandsons.

2 Perhaps ‘of the city’, following the Greek and Latin.

3 Or ‘the shepherds’ meeting place’.

4 The ancestor of the Rechabites, known for their strict way of life (Jeremiah 35:1–19).

5 Hebrew ‘the city of the temple of Baal’; the meaning is uncertain.

6 So the Greek and other versions; the Hebrew has ‘pillars’.

7 Jehoahaz, Jehoash, Jeroboam II and Zechariah (15:12). Hosea 1:4 condemns the bloodshed of Jezreel.

Chapter 11

2 Kings 11 tells how, when Ahaziah’s mother Athaliah learns that her son is dead, she sets out to destroy the whole royal family of Judah. But Jehosheba, Ahaziah’s sister, rescues his infant son Joash and hides him with his nurse in the house of the LORD for six years while Athaliah rules. In the seventh year Jehoiada the priest makes a covenant with the commanders of the Carites and the guards, shows them the king’s son, and posts them round the temple with King David’s spears and shields. He brings out the boy, puts the crown on him, gives him the testimony, and they anoint him, clapping and shouting, “Long live the king!” Athaliah comes to the temple, tears her clothes and cries, “Treason!” but is taken out and put to death at the palace. Jehoiada makes a covenant between the LORD, the king and the people that they will be the LORD’s people. The people tear down the temple of Baal and kill its priest Mattan, and the king takes his seat on the royal throne, while the city is quiet. Joash is seven years old when he begins to reign.

1 When Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she set about destroying the whole royal family.

2 But Jehosheba, King Joram’s daughter and Ahaziah’s sister, took Joash son of Ahaziah and stole him away from among the king’s sons who were about to be murdered. She put him and his nurse in a bedroom, and so they hid him from Athaliah, and he was not killed.

3 He remained hidden with her in the house of the LORD for six years, while Athaliah ruled the land.

4 In the seventh year Jehoiada[1] sent for the commanders of hundreds of the Carites[2] and of the guards and had them brought to him in the house of the LORD. He made a covenant with them and put them under oath in the house of the LORD. Then he showed them the king’s son.

5 He commanded them, “This is what you are to do: a third of you who come on duty on the Sabbath are to keep watch over the royal palace,

6 a third at the Sur Gate, and a third at the gate behind the guards, taking turns to guard the house.

7 And your two companies that go off duty on the Sabbath are to keep watch over the house of the LORD to protect the king.

8 Station yourselves round the king, each man with his weapon in his hand. Anyone who approaches your ranks is to be put to death. Stay close to the king wherever he goes.”

9 The commanders of hundreds did just as Jehoiada the priest ordered. Each one took his men, those coming on duty on the Sabbath and those going off duty, and came to Jehoiada the priest.

10 The priest gave the commanders of hundreds the spears and shields that had belonged to King David and were kept in the house of the LORD.

11 The guards stood, each with his weapon in his hand, from the south side of the house to the north side, near the altar and the house, all round the king.

12 Jehoiada then led out the king’s son, set the crown on his head and handed him the testimony.[3] So they made him king and anointed him, and with clapping they cried, “Long live the king!”

13 When Athaliah heard the noise of the guards and the people, she came to the people at the house of the LORD.

14 She looked, and there was the king, standing by the pillar, as the custom was, with the commanders and the trumpeters beside the king, and all the people of the land rejoicing and blowing trumpets. Then Athaliah tore her clothes and cried out, “Treason! Treason!”

15 Jehoiada the priest ordered the commanders of hundreds who were in charge of the troops, “Bring her out between the ranks, and put to the sword anyone who follows her.” For the priest had said, “She must not be put to death in the house of the LORD.”

16 So they seized her as she reached the place
where the horses enter the palace grounds, and
there she was put to death.

17 Jehoiada then made a covenant binding the king
and the people to the LORD, that they would be
His people; he also made a covenant between the
king and the people.

18 All the people of the land went to the temple of
Baal and tore it down. They smashed its altars and
its images to pieces, and they killed Mattan the
priest of Baal in front of the altars. Then Jehoiada
the priest posted guards over the house of the
LORD.

19 He took the commanders of hundreds, the
Carites, the guards and all the people of the land,
and they brought the king down from the house of
the LORD and went into the palace by way of the
gate of the guards. Then the king took his seat on
the royal throne.

20 All the people of the land rejoiced, and the city
was quiet, for Athaliah had been put to the sword
at the palace.

21 Joash[4] was seven years old when he became
king.

1 The high priest, and Jehosheba's husband (2 Chronicles 22:11).

2 Probably foreign mercenaries, like the Cherethites of David's time (2 Samuel 20:23).

3 Probably a copy of the law or of the covenant (compare Deuteronomy 17:18–20).

4 Hebrew 'Jehoash', a longer form of the same name; so also often in chapter 12. This verse is 12:1 in the Hebrew text, and 12:1–21 in English are 12:2–22 in Hebrew.

Chapter 12

2 Kings 12 tells how Joash reigns forty years in Jerusalem and does what is right in the sight of the LORD as long as Jehoiada the priest instructs him, though the high places remain. He orders the priests to use the money brought to the LORD's house for its repairs, but by his twenty-third year they have done nothing. So Jehoiada sets a chest with a hole in its lid beside the altar, and the money put into it is counted by the king's secretary and the high priest and paid to the carpenters, builders and masons, who are so honest that no accounts are required; the guilt and sin offerings still go to the priests. When Hazael captures Gath and turns towards Jerusalem, Joash buys him off with all the dedicated gifts and the gold of the temple and palace. In the end his own officials conspire against him and kill him at Beth-millo, and his son Amaziah succeeds him.

1 In the seventh year of Jehu, Joash came to the
throne, and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem.
His mother's name was Zibiah; she was from
Beersheba.

2 Joash did what was right in the sight of the LORD
all the years that Jehoiada the priest instructed
him.

3 Yet the high places were not removed; the people
continued to sacrifice and burn incense there.

4 Joash said to the priests, "All the money brought
into the house of the LORD as sacred gifts, the
money assessed for each person, the money from
vows[1] and the money that anyone freely chooses
to bring into the house of the LORD,

5 let the priests receive it, each from his own
contact,[2] and let them use it to repair any damage
found in the house."

6 But by the twenty-third year of King Joash the
priests had still not repaired the house.

7 So King Joash summoned Jehoiada the priest and
the other priests and asked them, "Why are you
not repairing the damage to the house? From now
on take no more money from your contacts, but
hand it over for the repair of the house."

8 The priests agreed that they would collect no
more money from the people and would not be
responsible for repairing the house.

9 Then Jehoiada the priest took a chest, bored a
hole in its lid and set it beside the altar, on the
right as one enters the house of the LORD. The
priests who guarded the entrance put into it all
the money that was brought into the house of the
LORD.

10 Whenever they saw that there was a large
amount of money in the chest, the king's secretary
and the high priest came up, counted the money
that had been found in the house of the LORD and
tied it up in bags.

11 When the amount had been determined, they
gave the money to the men appointed to supervise
the work on the house of the LORD. They paid it

out to the carpenters and builders who worked on the house of the LORD,

12 to the masons and stonecutters, and for buying timber and dressed stone for repairing the damage to the house of the LORD, and for all the other expenses of repairing the house.

13 But the money brought into the house of the LORD was not used to make silver basins, snuffers, bowls, trumpets or any articles of gold or silver for the house of the LORD;

14 it was paid to the workmen, who used it to repair the house of the LORD.

15 They did not require an account from the men to whom they handed the money to pay the workers, because they acted with complete honesty.

16 The money from the guilt offerings and the sin offerings was not brought into the house of the LORD; it belonged to the priests.

17 At that time Hazael king of Aram went up and attacked Gath and captured it. Then Hazael turned to attack Jerusalem.

18 But Joash king of Judah took all the sacred objects dedicated by his ancestors Jehoshaphat, Jehoram and Ahaziah, the kings of Judah, and the gifts he himself had dedicated, together with all the gold found in the treasuries of the house of the LORD and of the royal palace, and sent them to Hazael king of Aram. Then Hazael withdrew from Jerusalem.

19 The other events of Joash's reign, and all that he did, are recorded in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah.

20 His officials rose up and formed a conspiracy, and struck Joash down at Beth-millo, on the road that goes down to Silla.[3]

21 His officials Jozabad son of Shimeath and Jehozabad son of Shomer struck him, and he died. He was buried with his ancestors in the City of David, and his son Amaziah succeeded him as king.

1 The Hebrew is difficult; it probably refers to the census tax (Exodus 30:12–16) and to payments for vows (Leviticus 27:2–8).

2 The meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain; perhaps 'from the treasurers'.

3 The places are uncertain. 2 Chronicles 24:20–25 links the murder with the stoning of Jehoiada's son Zechariah.

Chapter 13

2 Kings 13 tells how Jehu's son Jehoahaz reigns seventeen years over Israel and does evil, so that the LORD gives Israel into the hands of Hazael and Ben-hadad of Aram. When Jehoahaz pleads with the LORD, He gives Israel a deliverer, though they still cling to Jeroboam's sins, and Jehoahaz is left with only a small force. His son Jehoash reigns sixteen years and also does evil. When Elisha falls mortally ill, Jehoash weeps over him, calling him Israel's chariots and horsemen. Elisha has him shoot an arrow eastwards, the LORD's arrow of victory over Aram, and then strike the ground with arrows; he strikes only three times, and Elisha is angry, for he will now defeat Aram only three times. Elisha dies and is buried, and when a dead man is thrown into his tomb and touches his bones, he comes to life. The LORD is gracious to Israel because of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and after Hazael's death Jehoash defeats Ben-hadad three times and recovers Israel's towns.

1 In the twenty-third year of Joash son of Ahaziah king of Judah, Jehoahaz son of Jehu came to the throne of Israel in Samaria, and he reigned seventeen years.

2 He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and followed the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he made Israel commit; he did not turn away from them.

3 So the LORD's anger burned against Israel, and for a long time He kept them under the power of Hazael king of Aram and of Ben-hadad son of Hazael.

4 Then Jehoahaz pleaded with the LORD, and the LORD listened to him, for He saw how severely the king of Aram was oppressing Israel.

5 The LORD gave Israel a deliverer,[1] so that they escaped from the power of Aram, and the Israelites lived in their own homes as they had before.

6 But they did not turn away from the sins of the house of Jeroboam, which he made Israel commit; they continued in them. The Asherah pole also remained standing in Samaria.

7 Nothing was left of the army of Jehoahaz except fifty horsemen, ten chariots and ten thousand foot

soldiers, for the king of Aram had destroyed them and made them like dust at threshing time.

8 The other events of the reign of Jehoahaz, all that he did and his achievements, are recorded in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel.

9 Jehoahaz rested with his ancestors and was buried in Samaria. And his son Jehoash[2] succeeded him as king.

10 In the thirty-seventh year of Joash king of Judah, Jehoash son of Jehoahaz came to the throne of Israel in Samaria, and he reigned sixteen years.

11 He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD. He did not turn away from any of the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he made Israel commit; he continued in them.

12 The other events of the reign of Jehoash, all that he did and his achievements, including his war against Amaziah king of Judah, are recorded in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel.

13 Jehoash rested with his ancestors, and Jeroboam took his seat on the throne. Jehoash was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel.

14 Now Elisha had fallen ill with the illness from which he was to die. Jehoash king of Israel went down to him and wept over him. “My father! My father!” he cried. “Israel’s chariots and its horsemen!”[3]

15 Elisha said to him, “Fetch a bow and some arrows.” So he fetched a bow and arrows.

16 “Take the bow in your hands,” Elisha told the king of Israel. When he had taken it, Elisha put his hands on the king’s hands.

17 “Open the east window,” he said, and he opened it. “Shoot!” Elisha said, and he shot. Elisha declared, “The LORD’s arrow of victory, the arrow of victory over Aram! You will strike the Arameans at Aphek until you have made an end of them.”

18 Then he said, “Take the arrows,” and the king took them. “Strike the ground,” Elisha told the king of Israel. He struck it three times and stopped.

19 The man of God grew angry with him. “You ought to have struck it five or six times,” he said. “Then you would have beaten Aram until it was wiped out. As it is, you will defeat Aram just three times.”

20 Elisha died and was buried. Now Moabite raiders used to invade the land every spring.

21 One day some Israelites were burying a man when they spotted a raiding band, and they threw the body into Elisha’s tomb. The moment it touched Elisha’s bones, the man came back to life and stood up.

22 Hazael king of Aram oppressed Israel throughout the reign of Jehoahaz.

23 But the LORD was gracious to them and had compassion on them, and turned towards them because of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. To this day He has not been willing to destroy them or to banish them from His presence.

24 Hazael king of Aram died, and his son Ben-hadad succeeded him as king.

25 Then Jehoash son of Jehoahaz recaptured from Ben-hadad son of Hazael the towns that he had taken in battle from his father Jehoahaz. Three times Jehoash defeated him, and so he recovered the towns of Israel.

1 Not named; perhaps Jehoash (verse 25) or Jeroboam II (14:27), or an Assyrian king whose attacks weakened Aram.

2 Hebrew ‘Joash’, a shorter form of the name; the king of Israel is called Jehoash in this translation to distinguish him from Joash of Judah.

3 The words Elisha himself had spoken of Elijah (2:12).

Chapter 14

2 Kings 14 tells how Amaziah son of Joash reigns twenty-nine years in Judah and does what is right, though not like David, leaving the high places. He executes his father's murderers but spares their children, as the law of Moses commands. After defeating ten thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt and capturing Sela, he challenges Jehoash king of Israel, who answers with a fable of a thistle that asked a cedar for its daughter and was trampled by a wild beast. Amaziah will not listen; he is defeated and captured at Beth-shemesh, and Jehoash breaks down part of Jerusalem's wall and carries off the treasures of the temple and palace and hostages to Samaria. Amaziah outlives Jehoash by fifteen years, but is killed by conspirators at Lachish, and the people make his sixteen-year-old son Azariah king; he rebuilds Elath. In Israel, Jeroboam son of Jehoash reigns forty-one years and does evil, yet he restores Israel's borders as the LORD had promised through the prophet Jonah son of Amittai, for the LORD saw Israel's bitter suffering and saves them by his hand. Jeroboam's son Zechariah succeeds him.

1 In the second year of Jehoash son of Jehoahaz
king of Israel, Amaziah son of Joash came to the
throne of Judah.

2 He was twenty-five years old when he became
king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in
Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jehoaddan;[1]
she was from Jerusalem.

3 He did what was right in the sight of the LORD,
though not like his ancestor David. In everything
he followed the example of his father Joash.

4 Yet the high places were not removed; the people
continued to sacrifice and burn incense there.

5 As soon as the kingdom was firmly in his grasp,
he executed the officials who had murdered his
father the king.

6 Yet he did not put the murderers' children to
death, in keeping with what is written in the Book
of the Law of Moses, where the LORD
commanded: "Fathers are not to be put to death
for their children, nor children put to death for
their fathers; each is to be put to death for his
own sin."[2]

7 He defeated ten thousand Edomites in the Valley
of Salt and took Sela[3] in battle, and he renamed it
Joktheel, the name it has to this day.

8 Then Amaziah sent messengers to Jehoash son of
Jehoahaz, son of Jehu, king of Israel, saying,
"Come, let us face each other in battle."

9 But Jehoash king of Israel replied to Amaziah
king of Judah, "A thistle in Lebanon sent word to a
cedar in Lebanon, 'Give your daughter to my son
in marriage.' Then a wild animal in Lebanon came
by and trampled the thistle underfoot.

10 You have indeed defeated Edom, and now you
are proud of it. Enjoy your glory, but stay at home!
Why stir up trouble that will bring you down, and
Judah with you?"

11 Amaziah, however, refused to listen. So Jehoash
king of Israel marched out, and the two kings met
in battle at Beth-shemesh in Judah.

12 Judah was routed by Israel, and every man fled
to his home.

13 Jehoash king of Israel captured Amaziah king of
Judah, son of Joash, son of Ahaziah, at Beth-
shemesh. Then he came to Jerusalem and broke
down the wall of Jerusalem from the Ephraim Gate
to the Corner Gate, a stretch of four hundred
cubits.[4]

14 He took all the gold and silver and all the
articles found in the house of the LORD and in the
treasuries of the royal palace. He also took
hostages and returned to Samaria.

15 The other events of the reign of Jehoash, what
he did and his achievements, including his war
against Amaziah king of Judah, are recorded in
the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel.

16 Jehoash rested with his ancestors and was
buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel. And his
son Jeroboam[5] succeeded him as king.

17 After the death of Israel's king Jehoash son of
Jehoahaz, Amaziah son of Joash, Judah's king,
lived on for fifteen years.

18 The other events of Amaziah's reign are
recorded in the Book of the Chronicles of the
Kings of Judah.

19 In Jerusalem a plot was hatched against him,
and he fled to Lachish, but they sent after him and
put him to death there.

20 He was brought back on horses and was buried
in Jerusalem with his ancestors, in the City of
David.

21 Then the whole people of Judah chose Azariah,[6]
then sixteen years old, and crowned him king to
succeed his father Amaziah.

22 It was he who rebuilt Elath and restored it to
Judah after the king rested with his ancestors.

23 In the fifteenth year of Amaziah son of Joash
king of Judah, Jeroboam son of Jehoash king of
Israel came to the throne in Samaria, and he
reigned forty-one years.

24 He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD
and did not turn away from any of the sins of
Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he made Israel
commit.

25 He restored the border of Israel from Lebo-
hamath to the Sea of the Arabah,[7] according to
the word of the LORD, the God of Israel, spoken
through His servant Jonah son of Amittai, the
prophet from Gath-hepher.[8]

26 For the LORD had seen how bitterly everyone in
Israel was suffering, slave or free; there was no
one to help Israel.

27 The LORD had never said He would wipe out
Israel's name from under heaven, so He rescued
them through Jeroboam son of Jehoash.

28 The other events of Jeroboam's reign, all that he
did and his achievements, how he waged war and
how he recovered for Israel Damascus and
Hamath, which had belonged to Judah,[9] are
recorded in the Book of the Chronicles of the
Kings of Israel.

29 Jeroboam rested with his ancestors, the kings of
Israel. And his son Zechariah succeeded him as
king.

1 So the traditional reading; the written Hebrew has 'Jehoaddin'.

2 Deuteronomy 24:16.

3 'The Rock'; perhaps the site later known as Petra.

4 About 180 metres (600 feet).

5 Usually called Jeroboam II, to distinguish him from Jeroboam son of Nebat.

6 Also called Uzziah (15:13; Isaiah 6:1).

7 The Dead Sea.

8 The prophet of the book of Jonah (Jonah 1:1).

9 The Hebrew is obscure; perhaps 'which had belonged to Yaudi', a small kingdom in northern Syria, or a reference to David's empire.

Chapter 15

2 Kings 15 tells how Azariah reigns fifty-two years over Judah and does what is right, though the high places remain. The LORD strikes him with a skin disease, and he lives in a separate house while his son Jotham governs. In Israel the house of Jehu ends: Zechariah reigns six months before Shallum kills him, fulfilling the LORD's word to Jehu. Shallum reigns one month before Menahem kills him and savagely attacks Tiphsah. Menahem reigns ten years and pays Pul king of Assyria a thousand talents of silver, raised from Israel's wealthy men, to keep him on the throne. His son Pekahiah reigns two years before his officer Pekah kills him. In Pekah's reign Tiglath-pileser of Assyria captures much of northern Israel and deports its people, and Hoshea kills Pekah and reigns in his place. In Judah, Jotham reigns sixteen years, does what is right and builds the Upper Gate of the LORD's house; in his days the LORD begins to send Rezin of Aram and Pekah against Judah, and his son Ahaz succeeds him.

1 In the twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam king of
Israel, Azariah son of Amaziah came to the throne
of Judah.

2 He was sixteen years old when he became king,
and he reigned fifty-two years in Jerusalem. His
mother's name was Jecoliah; she was from
Jerusalem.

3 He did what was right in the sight of the LORD,
just as his father Amaziah had done.

4 Yet the high places were not removed; the people
continued to sacrifice and burn incense there.

5 The LORD struck the king, and he had a skin
disease until the day he died. He lived in a
separate house,[1] while Jotham the king's son was
in charge of the palace and governed the people of
the land.

6 The other events of Azariah's reign, and all that
he did, are recorded in the Book of the Chronicles
of the Kings of Judah.

7 Azariah rested with his ancestors and was buried
with them in the City of David. And his son Jotham
succeeded him as king.

8 In the thirty-eighth year of Azariah king of Judah,
Zechariah son of Jeroboam came to the throne of
Israel in Samaria, and he reigned six months.

9 He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, as
his ancestors had done. He did not turn away from
the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he made
Israel commit.

10 Shallum son of Jabesh conspired against him,
attacked him in front of the people,[2] killed him
and reigned in his place.

11 The other events of Zechariah's reign are
recorded in the Book of the Chronicles of the
Kings of Israel.

12 So the word of the LORD spoken to Jehu was
fulfilled: "Your sons will sit on the throne of Israel
to the fourth generation." And so it happened.

13 In the thirty-ninth year of Uzziah king of Judah,
Shallum son of Jabesh came to the throne, and he
reigned one month in Samaria.

14 Menahem son of Gadi then marched from Tirzah
to Samaria. There he struck down Shallum son of
Jabesh, killed him and took the throne himself.

15 The other events of Shallum's reign, and the
conspiracy he led, are recorded in the Book of the
Chronicles of the Kings of Israel.

16 At that time Menahem, starting out from Tirzah,
attacked Tiphsah[3] and everyone in it and its
surrounding territory, because they would not
open their gates to him. He sacked it and ripped
open all its pregnant women.

17 In the thirty-ninth year of Azariah king of Judah,
Menahem son of Gadi came to the throne of Israel,
and he reigned ten years in Samaria.

18 He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD.
Throughout his reign he did not turn away from
the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he made
Israel commit.

19 Pul[4] king of Assyria invaded the land, and
Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents[5] of silver to
win his support and strengthen his own hold on
the kingdom.

20 Menahem raised the money from Israel by
levying it on all the wealthy men, fifty shekels of
silver each, to give to the king of Assyria. So the
king of Assyria withdrew and did not stay in the
land.

21 The other events of Menahem's reign, and all
that he did, are recorded in the Book of the
Chronicles of the Kings of Israel.

22 Menahem rested with his ancestors, and his son
Pekahiah succeeded him as king.

23 In the fiftieth year of Azariah king of Judah,
Pekahiah son of Menahem came to the throne of
Israel in Samaria, and he reigned two years.

24 He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD.
He did not turn away from the sins of Jeroboam
son of Nebat, which he made Israel commit.

25 One of his chief officers, Pekah son of Remaliah,
conspired against him. With fifty men of Gilead he
attacked him in Samaria, in the citadel of the royal
palace, together with Argob and Arieh,[6] and killed
him and reigned in his place.

26 The other events of Pekahiah's reign, and all
that he did, are recorded in the Book of the
Chronicles of the Kings of Israel.

27 In the fifty-second year of Azariah king of Judah,
Pekah son of Remaliah came to the throne of
Israel in Samaria, and he reigned twenty years.

28 He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD.
He did not turn away from the sins of Jeroboam
son of Nebat, which he made Israel commit.

29 While Pekah was king of Israel, Tiglath-pileser
king of Assyria invaded and captured the towns of
Ijon, Abel-beth-maacah, Janoah, Kedesh and
Hazor, together with Gilead and Galilee and the
whole territory of Naphtali, and carried the people
off to Assyria.

30 Hoshea son of Elah then plotted against Pekah
son of Remaliah, struck him down and killed him,
and took the throne himself. This was in the
twentieth year of Jotham son of Uzziah.

31 The other events of Pekah's reign, and all that
he did, are recorded in the Book of the Chronicles
of the Kings of Israel.

32 In the second year of Pekah son of Remaliah
king of Israel, Jotham son of Uzziah came to the
throne of Judah.

33 He came to the throne at twenty-five and ruled
in Jerusalem for sixteen years. His mother was
Jerusha, the daughter of Zadok.

34 He did what was right in the sight of the LORD,
just as his father Uzziah had done.

35 Yet the high places were not removed; the
people continued to sacrifice and burn incense
there. He rebuilt the Upper Gate of the house of
the LORD.

36 The other events of Jotham's reign, and what he
did, are recorded in the Book of the Chronicles of

the Kings of Judah.

37 In those days the LORD began to send Rezin king of Aram and Pekah son of Remaliah against Judah.[7]

38 Jotham rested with his ancestors and was buried with them in the city of his ancestor David. And his son Ahaz succeeded him as king.

1 Or ‘a house of freedom’, that is, released from royal duties; compare 2 Chronicles 26:16–21.

2 So the Hebrew; some Greek manuscripts have ‘at Ibleam’.

3 Some Greek manuscripts have ‘Tappuah’, a town nearer Tirzah.

4 Another name for Tiglath-pileser III (verse 29; 1 Chronicles 5:26).

5 About 34 tonnes.

6 The words ‘Argob and Arieh’ are obscure; they may be names of Pekahiah’s officers, or misplaced from verse 29.

7 The background of Isaiah 7:1–17.

Chapter 16

2 Kings 16 tells how Ahaz reigns sixteen years in Judah and does not do what is right in the sight of the LORD, but follows the ways of the kings of Israel, even making his son pass through the fire and sacrificing at the high places and under every green tree. When Rezin of Aram and Pekah of Israel besiege Jerusalem, and Rezin drives Judah out of Elath, Ahaz calls himself the servant and son of Tiglath-pileser of Assyria and sends him silver and gold from the temple and palace. Tiglath-pileser captures Damascus and kills Rezin. Visiting him in Damascus, Ahaz sees an altar there and has Uriah the priest build a copy, on which he sacrifices, moving the LORD’s bronze altar aside for his own use. He also strips the bronze stands and removes the Sea from its bronze oxen, and makes changes to the temple for the sake of the king of Assyria. His son Hezekiah succeeds him.

1 In the seventeenth year of Pekah son of Remaliah, Ahaz son of Jotham came to the throne of Judah.

2 Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. He did not do what was right in the sight of the LORD his God, as his ancestor David had done.

3 He walked in the way of the kings of Israel. He even made his son pass through the fire,[1] following the detestable practices of the nations the LORD had driven out before the Israelites.

4 He sacrificed and burned incense at the high places and on the hilltops, and beneath every spreading tree.

5 Rezin king of Aram and Pekah son of Remaliah, king of Israel, then marched on Jerusalem to attack it. They laid siege to Ahaz but were unable to defeat him.

6 At that time Rezin king of Aram recovered Elath for Aram and drove the Judeans out of Elath. Edomites[2] came to Elath and have lived there to this day.

7 Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria to say, “I am your servant and your son. Come up and save me from the hand of the king of Aram and of the king of Israel, who are attacking me.”

8 Ahaz took the silver and gold found in the house of the LORD and in the treasuries of the royal palace and sent it as a gift to the king of Assyria.

9 The king of Assyria agreed. He marched against Damascus and captured it, deporting its people to Kir, and he put Rezin to death.

10 Then King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria. He saw the altar at Damascus, and he sent Uriah the priest a sketch of the altar, with a detailed pattern for its construction.

11 Uriah the priest built an altar in accordance with all the instructions King Ahaz had sent from Damascus, and finished it before King Ahaz returned from Damascus.

12 When the king came back from Damascus and saw the altar, he approached it and went up on it.

13 There he burned his burnt offering and grain offering, poured his drink offering, and splashed on the altar the blood of his peace offerings.

14 As for the bronze altar that stood before the LORD, he shifted it from its place in front of the house, between his new altar and the house of the LORD, and set it beside the new altar on its north side.

15 King Ahaz then ordered Uriah the priest: “On the great new altar, burn the morning burnt

offering and the evening grain offering, the king's burnt offering and his grain offering, and the burnt offering of all the people of the land, with their grain offering and their drink offerings. Splash on it all the blood of the burnt offerings and sacrifices. But the bronze altar will be for me to use for enquiry."[3]

16 And Uriah the priest did just as King Ahaz had ordered.

17 King Ahaz cut off the side panels of the stands and removed the basins from them. He took down the Sea from the bronze oxen that supported it and set it on a stone base.

18 He also removed the covered way for the Sabbath[4] that had been built at the house, and the king's outer entrance to the house of the LORD, on account of the king of Assyria.

19 The other events of the reign of Ahaz, and what he did, are recorded in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah.

20 Ahaz rested with his ancestors and was buried with them in the City of David. And his son Hezekiah succeeded him as king.

1 Child sacrifice, forbidden in Leviticus 18:21 and Deuteronomy 18:10.

2 So the traditional reading; the written Hebrew has 'Arameans'. Many think 'Rezin king of Aram' earlier in the verse was originally 'the king of Edom'.

3 Perhaps for examining omens in the manner of the Assyrians; the meaning is uncertain.

4 The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain; perhaps a canopy or a royal platform.

Chapter 17

2 Kings 17 tells how Hoshea reigns nine years in Samaria and becomes a vassal of Shalmaneser king of Assyria, but conspires with So king of Egypt and withholds his tribute, so he is imprisoned. The king of Assyria besieges Samaria for three years, captures it in Hoshea's ninth year and deports Israel to Assyria. This happens because Israel sinned against the LORD who brought them out of Egypt: they worshipped other gods, built high places, set up pillars and Asherah poles on every hill, served idols, made the two calves, worshipped the host of heaven and Baal, sacrificed their children in the fire and practised divination. The LORD warned them through all His prophets and seers to turn back, but they were stubborn, rejected His covenant and followed worthless idols, until He removed them from His presence, leaving only Judah, which also failed to keep His commands. The king of Assyria settles foreigners in Samaria's towns. When lions attack them, a priest of Israel is sent back to teach them how to fear the LORD, but each nation keeps its own gods, fearing the LORD while serving their idols, as their descendants do to this day.

1 In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah, Hoshea son of Elah came to the throne of Israel in Samaria, and he reigned nine years.

2 He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, though not like the kings of Israel who had gone before him.

3 Shalmaneser king of Assyria marched against him, and Hoshea submitted to him and paid him tribute.

4 But the king of Assyria discovered that Hoshea was plotting against him, for he had sent envoys to So king of Egypt[1] and had stopped paying tribute to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year. So the king of Assyria seized him and put him in prison.

5 Then the king of Assyria invaded the whole land, marched against Samaria and besieged it for three years.

6 In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria captured Samaria[2] and deported the Israelites to Assyria. He settled them in Halah, on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the towns of the Medes.

7 All this happened because the Israelites had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt from under the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. They had worshipped other gods

8 and followed the customs of the nations the LORD had driven out before the Israelites, and the customs the kings of Israel had introduced.

9 The Israelites secretly did things against the LORD their God that were not right. They built themselves high places in all their towns, from watchtower to fortified city.

10 On every lofty hill and beneath every spreading tree they erected sacred pillars and Asherah poles for themselves,

11 and there they burned incense at all the high
places, as the nations had done whom the LORD
had driven out before them. They did wicked
things that provoked the LORD to anger.

12 They served idols, though the LORD had said,
"You shall not do this."

13 Yet the LORD had warned Israel and Judah
again and again through every prophet and seer:
"Turn back from your evil ways. Keep My
commandments and My statutes, in keeping with
the whole law I gave your ancestors and sent to
you by My servants the prophets."

14 But they would not listen. They were as stiff-
necked as their ancestors, who did not trust in the
LORD their God.

15 They rejected His statutes and the covenant He
had made with their ancestors, and the warnings
He had given them. They followed worthless idols
and became worthless themselves.[3] They imitated
the nations around them, although the LORD had
commanded them not to do as they did.

16 They abandoned all the commandments of the
LORD their God and made for themselves two
idols cast in the shape of calves, and an Asherah
pole. They bowed down to all the host of heaven[4]
and served Baal.

17 They made their sons and daughters pass
through the fire, practised divination and sorcery,
and sold themselves to do what was evil in the
sight of the LORD, provoking Him to anger.

18 So the LORD was very angry with Israel and
removed them from His presence. Only the tribe
of Judah was left,

19 and even Judah did not keep the commandments
of the LORD their God, but followed the customs
Israel had introduced.

20 So the LORD rejected all the descendants of
Israel. He afflicted them and gave them into the
hands of plunderers, until He had cast them out of
His sight.

21 When He tore Israel away from the house of
David, they made Jeroboam son of Nebat king.
Jeroboam drove Israel away from following the
LORD and caused them to commit a great sin.

22 The Israelites persisted in all the sins Jeroboam
had committed and did not turn away from them,

23 until the LORD removed Israel from His
presence, as He had foretold through all His
servants the prophets. So Israel was taken from
its own land into exile in Assyria, and is there to
this day.

24 The king of Assyria brought people from
Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath and Sepharvaim
and settled them in the towns of Samaria in place
of the Israelites. They took possession of Samaria
and lived in its towns.

25 When they first settled there, they did not fear
the LORD, so the LORD sent lions among them,
which killed some of them.

26 It was reported to the king of Assyria: "The
peoples you deported and settled in the towns of
Samaria do not know what the god of the land
requires. He has sent lions among them, which
are killing them, because the people do not know
what he requires."

27 Then the king of Assyria gave this order: "Send
back one of the priests you took captive from
there. Let him go and live there and teach the
people what the god of the land requires."

28 So one of the priests who had been deported
from Samaria came and lived in Bethel, and
taught them how to fear the LORD.

29 Nevertheless, each nation made its own gods
and set them up in the shrines of the high places
that the people of Samaria had made, each nation
in the towns where they lived.

30 The people from Babylon made images of
Succoth-benoth; those from Cuth, of Nergal; and
those from Hamath, of Ashima.

31 The Avvites made Nibhaz and Tartak, while the
Sepharvites offered their children as burnt
offerings to their gods Adrammelech and
Anammelech.

32 They feared the LORD, but they also appointed
from among themselves all sorts of people as
priests of the high places, who officiated for them
in the shrines of the high places.

33 So they feared the LORD, but they also served
their own gods, according to the customs of the
nations from which they had been deported.

34 To this day they keep to their former customs.
They do not truly fear the LORD, nor do they
follow the statutes and rules, the law and the
commandment that the LORD gave the
descendants of Jacob, whom He named Israel.

35 The LORD made a covenant with them and
commanded them: "You shall not fear other gods
or bow down to them, serve them or sacrifice to
them.

36 But the LORD, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt with great power and an outstretched arm, Him you shall fear, to Him you shall bow down, and to Him you shall sacrifice.

37 You shall always be careful to keep the statutes and the rules, the law and the commandment that He wrote for you. You shall not fear other gods.

38 Do not forget the covenant I made with you, and do not worship other gods.

39 Worship the LORD your God instead, and He will rescue you from all your enemies."

40 They would not listen, however, but persisted in their former customs.

41 So these nations feared the LORD while also serving their idols. Their children and grandchildren have continued to do as their ancestors did, to this day.

1 Perhaps 'to Sais, to the king of Egypt', So being the city of Sais in the Nile delta.

2 In 722 BC; Sargon II, Shalmaneser's successor, claims the capture in his own inscriptions.

3 Hebrew *hevel* ... *wayyehbalu*, 'they went after vapour and became vapour'; compare Jeremiah 2:5.

4 The sun, moon and stars, worshipped as gods (Deuteronomy 4:19).

Chapter 18

2 Kings 18 tells how Hezekiah son of Ahaz reigns twenty-nine years in Judah and does what is right in the sight of the LORD, as David did. He removes the high places, smashes the sacred pillars, cuts down the Asherah pole and breaks in pieces the bronze serpent Moses had made, which the people called Nehushtan. He trusts in the LORD as no king of Judah before or after him, and the LORD is with him; he rebels against Assyria and defeats the Philistines. The fall of Samaria is recalled. In Hezekiah's fourteenth year Sennacherib king of Assyria captures the fortified towns of Judah, and Hezekiah pays him heavy tribute, stripping even the temple doors. Yet Sennacherib sends his officials with an army to Jerusalem. The Rabshakeh stands by the aqueduct of the Upper Pool and mocks Judah's trust in Egypt, that broken reed, and in the LORD, claiming that the LORD sent him. When Hezekiah's officials ask him to speak in Aramaic, he shouts in Hebrew to the people on the wall, promising them a land like their own if they surrender and boasting that no god has saved any nation from the king of Assyria. The people keep silent as Hezekiah commanded, and his officials come to him with their clothes torn.

1 In the third year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, Hezekiah son of Ahaz came to the throne of Judah.

2 He came to the throne at twenty-five and ruled in Jerusalem for twenty-nine years. His mother was Abi,[1] the daughter of Zechariah.

3 He did what was right in the sight of the LORD, just as his ancestor David had done.

4 He removed the high places, smashed the sacred pillars and cut down the Asherah pole. He broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made,[2] for until that time the Israelites had been burning incense to it. It was called Nehushtan.[3]

5 Hezekiah trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel. There was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, either before him or after him.

6 He held fast to the LORD and did not turn away from following Him, but kept the commandments the LORD had given Moses.

7 And the LORD was with him; he prospered in all he undertook. He rebelled against the king of Assyria and would not serve him.

8 He defeated the Philistines as far as Gaza and its territory, from watchtower to fortified city.

9 It was in Hezekiah's fourth year, the seventh year of Israel's king Hoshea son of Elah, that Shalmaneser king of Assyria had marched on Samaria and laid siege to it.

10 After three years the city fell to the Assyrians. Samaria was captured in Hezekiah's sixth year, the ninth year of Hoshea king of Israel.

11 The Assyrian king carried Israel off to Assyria and resettled them in Halah, beside the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the towns of Media,

12 because they had not obeyed the voice of the LORD their God but had broken His covenant, all that Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded. They would neither listen nor obey.

13 In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria attacked all the fortified towns of Judah and captured them.[4]

14 So Hezekiah king of Judah sent this message to the king of Assyria at Lachish: "I have done wrong. Withdraw from me, and I will pay

whatever you demand of me." The king of Assyria exacted from Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold.[5]

15 Hezekiah handed over to him all the silver to be found in the LORD's house and in the palace treasuries.

16 At that time Hezekiah stripped the gold with which he himself had overlaid the doors and doorposts of the temple of the LORD, and gave it to the king of Assyria.

17 The king of Assyria sent his commander-in-chief, his chief officer and his field commander[6] with a large army from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem. They came up to Jerusalem and took up position by the aqueduct of the Upper Pool, on the road to the Launderer's Field.

18 When they called for the king, Eliakim son of Hilkiah, the palace administrator, Shebnah the secretary and Joah son of Asaph the recorder went out to them.

19 The field commander said to them, "Tell Hezekiah, 'This is what the great king, the king of Assyria, says: What is this confidence of yours based on?

20 You say you have counsel and strength for war, but these are empty words. On whom are you relying, that you have rebelled against me?

21 Look, you are relying on Egypt, that splintered reed of a staff, which pierces the hand of anyone who leans on it. Such is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who rely on him.

22 And if you say to me, "We are trusting in the LORD our God," is He not the one whose high places and altars Hezekiah has removed, telling Judah and Jerusalem, "You must worship before this altar in Jerusalem"?

23 Come now, make a wager with my master the king of Assyria: I will give you two thousand horses, if you can put riders on them!

24 How then can you repulse even one officer among the least of my master's servants, when you rely on Egypt for chariots and horsemen?

25 Moreover, have I come up against this place to destroy it without the LORD? The LORD Himself told me, "Go up against this land and destroy it."'"

26 Then Eliakim son of Hilkiah, Shebnah and Joah said to the field commander, "Please speak to your servants in Aramaic,[7] for we understand it. Do not speak to us in the language of Judah within earshot of the people on the wall."

27 But the field commander replied, "Has my master sent me to say these things only to your master and to you, and not to the men sitting on the wall, who will have to eat their own dung and drink their own urine along with you?"[8]

28 Then the field commander stood and called out in a loud voice in the language of Judah: "Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria!

29 This is what the king says: 'Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he cannot deliver you from my hand.

30 Do not let Hezekiah persuade you to trust in the LORD by saying, "The LORD will surely deliver us; this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria."

31 Do not listen to Hezekiah, for this is what the king of Assyria says: Make peace with me and come out to me. Then each of you will eat from his own vine and his own fig tree and drink water from his own cistern,

32 until I come and remove you to a country like yours, a country of corn and new wine, of bread and vineyards, of olive oil and honey. Then you will live and not die. Do not listen to Hezekiah's lies when he tells you, "The LORD will save us."

33 Has the god of any nation ever delivered his land from the hand of the king of Assyria?

34 What has become of the gods of Hamath and of Arpad? What of the gods of Sepharvaim, of Hena and of Ivvah? Did they rescue Samaria from me?

35 Who among all the gods of these lands has delivered his land from my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem from my hand?'"

36 But the people kept silent and did not answer a word, for the king had commanded, "Do not answer him."

37 Then Eliakim son of Hilkiah, the palace administrator, Shebnah the secretary and Joah son of Asaph the recorder came to Hezekiah with their clothes torn, and told him what the field commander had said.

1 Called Abijah in 2 Chronicles 29:1.

2 See Numbers 21:8–9; compare John 3:14.

3 A play on *nehosheth*, ‘bronze’, and *nahash*, ‘serpent’; perhaps ‘a mere piece of bronze’.

4 In 701 BC. From this verse to 20:19 the account is closely parallel to Isaiah 36–39. Sennacherib’s own annals boast of shutting Hezekiah up in Jerusalem ‘like a bird in a cage’.

5 About 10 tonnes of silver and 1 tonne of gold.

6 Hebrew ‘the Tartan, the Rab-saris and the Rabshakeh’, Assyrian titles.

7 The language of diplomacy at the time; most of the people would understand only Hebrew, ‘the language of Judah’.

8 The traditional reading softens both words; the written Hebrew is coarser.

Chapter 19

2 Kings 19 tells how Hezekiah tears his clothes, puts on sackcloth and goes into the house of the LORD, and sends to the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz, asking him to pray for the remnant. Isaiah replies that Hezekiah need not fear the Assyrian insults: the LORD will make Sennacherib hear a rumour and return home, where he will fall by the sword. Sennacherib, hearing that Tirhakah of Cush is advancing, sends Hezekiah a letter boasting that no god has saved any nation from Assyria. Hezekiah spreads the letter before the LORD and prays to the God enthroned above the cherubim, the only God over all the kingdoms of the earth, to save them so that all may know it. Through Isaiah the LORD answers with a taunt song: Zion despises the king of Assyria, who has mocked the Holy One of Israel; the LORD planned all he has done, knows his every movement and will put a hook in his nose and turn him back. A remnant of Judah will again take root and bear fruit, and the king of Assyria will not enter Jerusalem or shoot an arrow there, for the LORD will defend it for His own sake and for David’s. That night the angel of the LORD strikes down a hundred and eighty-five thousand in the Assyrian camp, and Sennacherib returns to Nineveh, where his sons kill him as he worships his god.

1 When King Hezekiah heard this, he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth and went into the house of the LORD.

2 He sent Eliakim the palace administrator, Shebna the secretary and the senior priests, all wearing sackcloth, to the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz.

3 They said to him, “This is what Hezekiah says: ‘This day is a day of distress, of rebuke and disgrace. It is as when children have come to the moment of birth and there is no strength to deliver them.

4 Perhaps the LORD your God will hear all the words of the field commander, whom his master the king of Assyria has sent to mock the living God, and will rebuke him for the words the LORD your God has heard. So pray for the remnant that still survives.’”

5 When King Hezekiah’s officials came to Isaiah,

6 Isaiah said to them, “Tell your master, ‘This is what the LORD says: Do not be afraid of the words you have heard, with which the underlings of the king of Assyria have blasphemed Me.

7 Listen! I am going to put a spirit in him so that, when he hears a certain report, he will return to his own land. And there I will have him cut down with the sword.’”

8 When the field commander heard that the king of Assyria had left Lachish, he withdrew and found the king fighting against Libnah.

9 Now Sennacherib received a report that Tirhakah king of Cush[1] was marching out to fight against him. So he again sent messengers to Hezekiah with this word:

10 “Say to Hezekiah king of Judah: ‘Do not let the god you trust deceive you when he says, “Jerusalem will not be handed over to the king of Assyria.”

11 You have surely heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all the lands, devoting them to destruction. And will you be delivered?

12 Did the gods of the nations that my predecessors destroyed deliver them, the gods of Gozan, Haran, Rezeph and the people of Eden who were in Telassar?

13 What has become of the kings of Hamath and Arpad, and of the king of the city of Sepharvaim, of Hena and of Ivvah?’”

14 Hezekiah received the letter from the messengers and read it. Then he went up to the house of the LORD and spread it out before the LORD.

15 And Hezekiah prayed before the LORD: “LORD, God of Israel, enthroned above the cherubim, You alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You made the heavens and the earth.

16 Turn Your ear, LORD, and hear; open Your eyes, LORD, and see. Hear the words Sennacherib has sent to mock the living God.

17 It is true, LORD, that the kings of Assyria have laid waste these nations and their lands.

18 They have thrown their gods into the fire, for they were not gods but only the work of human hands, wood and stone, and so they destroyed them.

19 Now, LORD our God, save us, I pray, from his hand, so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You alone, LORD, are God.”

20 Then Isaiah son of Amoz sent this message to Hezekiah: “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘I have heard your prayer concerning Sennacherib king of Assyria.’

21 This is the word the LORD has spoken against him: ‘The virgin daughter of Zion despises you and scorns you; the daughter of Jerusalem tosses her head at your back.

22 Whom have you mocked and blasphemed? Against whom have you raised your voice and lifted your eyes in pride? Against the Holy One of Israel!

23 Through your messengers you have mocked the Lord, and you have said, “With my many chariots I have climbed the heights of the mountains, the far recesses of Lebanon. I have cut down its tallest cedars, its finest junipers. I have reached its farthest lodging place, its densest forest.

24 I have dug wells and drunk foreign water, and with the soles of my feet I have dried up all the streams of Egypt.”

25 Have you not heard? Long ago I ordained it; in days of old I planned it. Now I have brought it to pass, that you should turn fortified cities into heaps of rubble.

26 Their people, drained of strength, are dismayed and put to shame. They are like plants in the field, like tender green shoots, like grass on the roof, scorched before it grows up.[2]

27 But I know when you sit down and when you go out and come in, and how you rage against Me.

28 Because you rage against Me and your arrogance has reached My ears, I will put My hook in your nose and My bit in your mouth, and I will turn you back by the way you came.’

29 And this will be the sign for you, Hezekiah: this year you will eat what grows by itself, and in the second year what springs from that. But in the third year sow and reap, plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

30 Once more the surviving remnant of the house of Judah will take root below and bear fruit above.

31 For a remnant will come out of Jerusalem, and survivors from Mount Zion. The zeal of the LORD of Armies[3] will accomplish this.

32 Therefore this is what the LORD says concerning the king of Assyria: ‘He will not enter this city or shoot an arrow here. He will not come before it with shield or build a siege ramp against it.

33 By the way he came he will return; he will not enter this city, declares the LORD.

34 I will defend this city and save it, for My own sake and for the sake of My servant David.’”

35 That night the angel of the LORD went out and struck down a hundred and eighty-five thousand in the camp of the Assyrians. When the people got up early in the morning, there were all the dead bodies!

36 So Sennacherib king of Assyria broke camp and withdrew. He returned to Nineveh and stayed there.

37 One day, while he was worshipping in the temple of his god Nisroch, his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer struck him down with the sword and escaped to the land of Ararat. And his son Esarhaddon succeeded him as king.[4]

1 The upper Nile region; Tirhakah belonged to the dynasty then ruling Egypt.

2 So some manuscripts and Isaiah 37:27; the Hebrew here has ‘blighted before the standing grain’.

3 So the traditional reading and Isaiah 37:32; the written Hebrew lacks ‘of Armies’.

4 About 681 BC, twenty years after the siege of Jerusalem.

Chapter 20

2 Kings 20 tells how Hezekiah falls mortally ill, and Isaiah tells him to set his house in order, for he will die. Hezekiah turns his face to the wall and prays, reminding the LORD of his faithfulness, and weeps bitterly. Before Isaiah has left the middle court, the LORD sends him back: He has heard Hezekiah's prayer and seen his tears, and will heal him and add fifteen years to his life, and will defend Jerusalem. A poultice of figs is applied to his boil, and as a sign the shadow goes back ten steps on the stairway of Ahaz. When envoys come from Merodach-baladan king of Babylon, Hezekiah shows them all his treasures. Isaiah declares that the days are coming when everything in his palace will be carried off to Babylon, and some of his own descendants will serve as eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon. Hezekiah calls the word good, thinking that there will at least be peace in his own days. The chapter records his water tunnel, and his son Manasseh succeeds him.

1 In those days Hezekiah became mortally ill. The
prophet Isaiah son of Amoz came to him and said,
"This is what the LORD says: 'Set your house in
order, for you are going to die; you will not
recover.'"

2 Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and
prayed to the LORD:

3 "Please, LORD, remember how I have walked
before You faithfully and with a whole heart, and
have done what is good in Your sight." And
Hezekiah wept bitterly.

4 Before Isaiah had left the middle court,[1] the word
of the LORD came to him:

5 "Go back and tell Hezekiah, the leader of My
people, 'This is what the LORD, the God of your
ancestor David, says: I have heard your prayer
and seen your tears. I will heal you. On the third
day you will go up to the house of the LORD.

6 I will add fifteen years to your life. I will deliver
you and this city from the hand of the king of
Assyria, and I will defend this city for My own
sake and for the sake of My servant David.'"

7 Then Isaiah said, "Bring a cake of figs." They
brought it and laid it on the boil, and he
recovered.

8 Hezekiah had asked Isaiah, "What sign will show
that the LORD is going to heal me, and that in
three days I shall go up to the LORD's house?"

9 Isaiah answered, "This is the sign to you from the
LORD that the LORD will do what He has
promised: shall the shadow go forward ten steps,
or go back ten steps?"

10 "It is an easy thing for the shadow to lengthen
ten steps," said Hezekiah. "Rather, let the shadow
go back ten steps."

11 Then the prophet Isaiah called on the LORD, and
the LORD made the shadow go back the ten steps
it had gone down on the stairway of Ahaz.[2]

12 At about this time Merodach-baladan[3] son of
Baladan, the king of Babylon, sent Hezekiah
letters and a present, having heard of his illness.

13 Hezekiah welcomed[4] the envoys and showed
them his whole treasure house: the silver, the
gold, the spices and the fine oil, his armoury and
everything found in his storehouses. There was
nothing in his palace or in all his kingdom that
Hezekiah did not show them.

14 Then the prophet Isaiah came to King Hezekiah
and asked him, "What did these men say, and
where have they come from?" "They came from a
distant land," Hezekiah replied. "They came from
Babylon."

15 Isaiah asked, "What have they seen in your
palace?" "They have seen everything in my
palace," Hezekiah answered. "There is nothing
among my treasures that I did not show them."

16 Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of
the LORD.

17 The days are surely coming when everything in
your palace, and all that your ancestors have
stored up until this day, will be carried off to
Babylon. Nothing will be left, says the LORD.

18 And some of your own descendants, who will be
born to you, will be taken away, and they will
become eunuchs in the palace of the king of
Babylon."

19 Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "The word of the LORD
you have spoken is good." For he thought, "Will
there not be peace and security in my lifetime?"

20 The other events of Hezekiah's reign, all his
achievements, and how he made the pool and the
tunnel[5] and brought water into the city, are
recorded in the Book of the Chronicles of the
Kings of Judah.

21 Hezekiah rested with his ancestors, and his son
Manasseh succeeded him as king.

1 So the traditional reading; the written Hebrew has ‘the middle of the city’.

2 Probably a stairway used to tell the time by the sun’s shadow.

3 So some manuscripts and Isaiah 39:1; most Hebrew manuscripts have ‘Berodach-baladan’.

4 So some manuscripts and Isaiah 39:2; the Hebrew here has ‘listened to’.

5 The tunnel bringing water from the Gihon spring into the city; its builders’ inscription survives (compare 2 Chronicles 32:30).

Chapter 21

2 Kings 21 tells how Manasseh becomes king at twelve and reigns fifty-five years, doing evil like the nations the LORD drove out. He rebuilds the high places his father destroyed, sets up altars to Baal and an Asherah pole as Ahab did, worships the host of heaven and builds altars to them in the courts of the LORD’s house, sacrifices his son in the fire, practises sorcery and consults mediums, and sets a carved Asherah image in the very house where the LORD had put His name. He leads Judah into worse evil than the nations. Through His prophets the LORD declares that He will bring such disaster on Jerusalem that every ear will tingle, measure it with the line used for Samaria, wipe it as one wipes a dish, and abandon the remnant of His inheritance to their enemies. Manasseh also fills Jerusalem with innocent blood. His son Amon reigns two years and does evil, until his officials kill him; the people of the land kill the conspirators and make his son Josiah king.

1 Manasseh came to the throne at the age of twelve and ruled in Jerusalem for fifty-five years. His mother was Hephzibah.

2 He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, following the detestable practices of the nations the LORD had driven out before the Israelites.

3 He rebuilt the high places that his father Hezekiah had destroyed. He set up altars to Baal and made an Asherah pole, as Ahab king of Israel had done. He bowed down to all the host of heaven and served them.

4 He even built altars inside the LORD’s house, the house of which the LORD had said, “Jerusalem is where I will put My name.”

5 In both courts of the house of the LORD he built altars to all the host of heaven.

6 He made his son pass through the fire. He practised soothsaying and divination, and dealt with mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him to anger.

7 He took the carved Asherah image he had made and set it up in the house of which the LORD had told David and his son Solomon, “This house and Jerusalem, the city I chose from all Israel’s tribes, are where I will put My name for all time.

8 I will not again make the feet of Israel wander from the land I gave to their ancestors, if only they will be careful to do all that I have commanded them, and keep the whole law that My servant Moses commanded them.”

9 But they did not listen. Manasseh led them astray, so that they did more evil than the nations the LORD had destroyed before the Israelites.

10 The LORD spoke through His servants the prophets:

11 “Because Manasseh king of Judah has committed these detestable sins, doing more evil than all the Amorites who were before him, and has led Judah into sin with his idols,

12 therefore this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘I am bringing such disaster on Jerusalem and Judah that the ears of everyone who hears of it will tingle.

13 I will stretch over Jerusalem the measuring line used against Samaria and the plumb line used against the house of Ahab.[1] I will wipe Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down.

14 I will forsake the remnant of My inheritance and give them into the hands of their enemies. They will become plunder and spoil for all their enemies,

15 because they have done what is evil in My sight and have provoked Me to anger from the day their ancestors came out of Egypt until this day.’”

16 Moreover, Manasseh shed so much innocent blood that he filled Jerusalem from one end to the other,[2] besides the sin he caused Judah to commit, so that they did what was evil in the sight of the LORD.

17 The other events of Manasseh’s reign, all that he did and the sin he committed, are recorded in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah.[3]

18 Manasseh rested with his ancestors and was buried in the garden of his palace, the garden of Uzza. And his son Amon succeeded him as king.

19 Amon was twenty-two years old when he
became king, and he reigned two years in
Jerusalem. His mother's name was Meshullemeth
daughter of Haruz; she was from Jotbah.

20 He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD,
as his father Manasseh had done.

21 He walked in all the ways of his father, served
the idols his father had served and worshipped
them.

22 He forsook the LORD, the God of his ancestors,
and did not walk in the way of the LORD.

23 Amon's officials conspired against him and killed
the king in his palace.

24 But the people of the land struck down all who
had conspired against King Amon, and they made
his son Josiah king in his place.

25 The other events of Amon's reign, and what he
did, are recorded in the Book of the Chronicles of
the Kings of Judah.

26 He was buried in his tomb in the garden of
Uzza, and his son Josiah succeeded him as king.

1 Builders' tools, used here for demolition: Jerusalem will be judged by the standard applied to Samaria (compare Amos 7:7–9).
2 Jewish tradition holds that Isaiah was among his victims; compare Hebrews 11:37.
3 2 Chronicles 33:10–17 adds that he was taken captive to Babylon, repented and was restored.

Chapter 22

2 Kings 22 tells how Josiah becomes king at eight and reigns thirty-one years, doing what is right and walking in all the ways of David, turning neither to the right nor to the left. In his eighteenth year he sends Shaphan the secretary to have the money in the temple paid to the workmen repairing it. Hilkiah the high priest tells Shaphan that he has found the Book of the Law in the house of the LORD, and Shaphan reads it to the king. When Josiah hears its words, he tears his clothes and sends Hilkiah and his officials to enquire of the LORD, for the LORD's anger burns against them because their ancestors did not obey the book. They consult the prophetess Huldah, who declares that the LORD will bring on Jerusalem all the disaster written in the book, because the people have forsaken Him; but because Josiah's heart was tender and he humbled himself and wept, he will be gathered to his grave in peace and will not see the disaster.

1 Josiah was eight years old when he became king,
and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. His
mother's name was Jedidah daughter of Adaiah;
she was from Bozkath.

2 He did what was right in the sight of the LORD
and walked in all the ways of his ancestor David,
turning neither to the right nor to the left.

3 In the eighteenth year of his reign,[1] King Josiah
sent Shaphan son of Azaliah, son of Meshullam,
the secretary, to the house of the LORD, saying,

4 "Go up to Hilkiah the high priest and have him
count the money that has been brought into the
house of the LORD, which the doorkeepers have
collected from the people.

5 Let it be handed over to the men appointed to
supervise the work on the house of the LORD, and
let them pay it to the workmen who are repairing
the house of the LORD:

6 that is, to the carpenters, builders and masons,
and to buy timber and cut stone for the repairs.

7 But they need not account for the money
entrusted to them, for they act faithfully."

8 Hilkiah the high priest told Shaphan the
secretary, "In the LORD's house I have come upon
the Book of the Law."[2] He handed it to Shaphan,
who read it.

9 Then Shaphan the secretary went to the king and
reported to him: "Your servants have emptied out
the money that was found in the house and have
handed it over to the men appointed to supervise
the work on the house of the LORD."

10 And Shaphan the secretary told the king,
"Hilkiah the priest has given me a book." And
Shaphan read it aloud before the king.

11 As the king listened to what the Book of the Law
said, he tore his clothes.

12 He gave these orders to Hilkiah the priest,
Ahikam son of Shaphan, Achbor son of Micaiah,
Shaphan the secretary and Asaiah the king's
servant:

13 "Go and enquire of the LORD for me and for the
people and for all Judah about the words of this
book that has been found. Great is the wrath of
the LORD that is kindled against us, because our

ancestors did not obey the words of this book, to do all that is written concerning us.”

14 Hilkiah the priest went with Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan and Asaiah to consult the prophetess Huldah. She was married to Shallum son of Tikvah, son of Harhas, who kept the wardrobe, and she lived in the Second Quarter[3] of Jerusalem.

15 She said to them, “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘Tell the man who sent you to me,

16 This is what the LORD says: I am going to bring disaster on this place and its inhabitants, all the words of the book that the king of Judah has read.

17 Because they have forsaken Me and burned incense to other gods, provoking Me to anger by all the work of their hands, My wrath will be kindled against this place and will not be quenched.’

18 But to the king of Judah, who sent you to enquire of the LORD, say this: ‘This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says concerning the words you have heard:

19 Because your heart was tender and you humbled yourself before the LORD when you heard what I spoke against this place and its inhabitants, that they would become a desolation and a curse, and because you tore your clothes and wept before Me, I also have heard you, declares the LORD.

20 So I will gather you to your ancestors, and you will be laid in your grave in peace.[4] You will not live to see all the disaster I am about to bring on this place.’” And they carried her reply back to the king.

1 About 622 BC.

2 Probably the book of Deuteronomy, or part of it; compare its warnings (Deuteronomy 28) and the reforms of chapter 23.

3 A newer district of the city, probably to the north-west.

4 That is, before the disaster comes; Josiah in fact died in battle (23:29).

Chapter 23

2 Kings 23 tells how Josiah gathers the elders and all the people at the house of the LORD and reads them the Book of the Covenant, then stands by the pillar and makes a covenant before the LORD to keep His commandments with all his heart and soul, and all the people join in it. He removes from the temple everything made for Baal, Asherah and the host of heaven, deposes the idolatrous priests, burns the Asherah pole, tears down the quarters of the shrine prostitutes, defiles the high places from Geba to Beersheba and Topheth in the Valley of Ben-hinnom, and removes the horses and chariots dedicated to the sun. He destroys the high places Solomon built for foreign gods, and at Bethel he pulls down Jeroboam’s altar and burns bones on it, as the man of God from Judah had foretold, but leaves that prophet’s tomb untouched. He does the same throughout Samaria. He keeps a Passover such as had not been kept since the days of the judges, and removes mediums and idols, so that there is no king like him who turned to the LORD with all his heart, soul and strength. Yet the LORD’s anger against Judah because of Manasseh does not turn away. Josiah is killed at Megiddo by Pharaoh Neco. His son Jehoahaz reigns three months before Neco deposes him and makes Eliakim king, renaming him Jehoiakim, who taxes the land to pay Pharaoh.

1 Then the king sent word, and all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem gathered to him.

2 With him to the LORD’s house went all the men of Judah and everyone living in Jerusalem, priests and prophets and the whole population, from the least to the greatest. There he read aloud to them everything written in the Book of the Covenant found in the LORD’s house.

3 Standing beside the pillar, the king renewed the covenant in the LORD’s presence: to follow the LORD, to keep His commandments, testimonies and statutes wholeheartedly and with all his soul, and so to fulfil the terms of the covenant written in this book. And the whole people committed themselves to the covenant.

4 The king ordered Hilkiah the high priest, the priests next in rank and the doorkeepers to remove from the temple of the LORD all the articles made for Baal, for Asherah and for all the host of heaven. He burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of the Kidron and carried their ashes to Bethel.

5 He did away with the idolatrous priests[1] whom the kings of Judah had appointed to burn incense at the high places in the towns of Judah and around Jerusalem, and those who burned incense

to Baal, to the sun and moon, to the constellations and to all the host of heaven.

6 He brought the Asherah pole out of the house of the LORD to the Kidron Valley outside Jerusalem. He burned it there, ground it to dust and scattered the dust over the graves of the common people.

7 He tore down the quarters of the male shrine prostitutes that were in the house of the LORD, where women wove hangings[2] for Asherah.

8 He brought in all the priests from Judah's towns and made unclean the high places where they had burned incense, from Geba to Beersheba. He also demolished the shrines at the gates, the one at the entrance to the Gate of Joshua, the city governor, on the left of the city gate as one goes in.

9 The priests of the high places did not go up to the altar of the LORD in Jerusalem, but they ate unleavened bread among their fellow priests.

10 He defiled Topheth,[3] which is in the Valley of Ben-hinnom, so that no one could make his son or daughter pass through the fire for Molech.

11 He removed from the entrance to the house of the LORD the horses that the kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun. They were in the court near the room of Nathan-melech the official. And he burned the chariots of the sun.

12 The king pulled down the altars that the kings of Judah had made on the roof by the upper room of Ahaz, and the altars Manasseh had made in the two courts of the house of the LORD. He smashed them[4] there and threw their dust into the Kidron Valley.

13 The king also defiled the high places east of Jerusalem, south of the Mount of Destruction,[5] which Solomon king of Israel had built for Ashtoreth the detestable goddess of the Sidonians, for Chemosh the detestable god of Moab, and for Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites.

14 He broke the sacred pillars, cut down the Asherah poles and covered their sites with human bones.

15 Even the altar at Bethel, the high place made by Jeroboam son of Nebat, who made Israel sin, even that altar and the high place he pulled down. He burned the high place, ground it to dust, and burned the Asherah pole.

16 Then Josiah looked round and noticed the tombs on the hillside. He had the bones taken out of them and burned on the altar to defile it, fulfilling the word of the LORD that the man of God had announced when he foretold these events.[6]

17 "What is that grave marker over there?" the king asked. The townsmen answered, "That is where the man of God from Judah is buried, the one who predicted the very things you have now done to the altar at Bethel."

18 "Leave it alone," he said. "Let no one disturb his bones." So they left his bones alone, along with the bones of the prophet who had come from Samaria.[7]

19 Josiah also removed all the shrines on the high places in the towns of Samaria that the kings of Israel had made, provoking the LORD to anger. He did to them just as he had done at Bethel.

20 He slaughtered all the priests of those high places on the altars and burned human bones on them. Then he returned to Jerusalem.

21 The king then gave orders to all the people: "Celebrate the Passover to the LORD your God, as this Book of the Covenant prescribes."

22 Not since the time when the judges led Israel, nor in all the reigns of the kings of Israel and of Judah, had a Passover like it been celebrated.

23 It was in Josiah's eighteenth year that this Passover was held in Jerusalem in honour of the LORD.

24 Furthermore, Josiah got rid of the mediums and spiritists, the household gods,[8] the idols and all the detestable things that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, so that he might carry out the words of the law written in the book that Hilkiah the priest had found in the house of the LORD.

25 Before him there was no king like him, who turned to the LORD with all his heart, with all his soul and with all his strength,[9] in keeping with all the law of Moses; nor did any like him arise after him.

26 Yet the LORD did not turn from the fierceness of His great wrath, which burned against Judah because of all that Manasseh had done to provoke Him.

27 So the LORD said, "I will remove Judah also from My presence, as I removed Israel, and I will reject this city I chose, Jerusalem, and the house of which I said, 'My name shall be there.'"

28 The other events of Josiah's reign, and all that he did, are recorded in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah.

29 In his days Pharaoh Neco king of Egypt went up to the king of Assyria at the River Euphrates.[10] King Josiah went out to meet him, and when Neco saw him, he killed him at Megiddo.

30 His officers brought his body back from Megiddo by chariot to Jerusalem and buried him in his own tomb. The people of the land then chose Josiah's son Jehoahaz, anointed him and crowned him king in his father's place.

31 Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he became king, and he reigned three months in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hamutal daughter of Jeremiah; she was from Libnah.

32 He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, just as his ancestors had done.

33 Pharaoh Neco put him in chains at Riblah in the land of Hamath, so that he might not reign in Jerusalem, and he imposed on the land a levy of a hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold.

34 Pharaoh Neco made Eliakim son of Josiah king in place of his father Josiah, and changed his name to Jehoiakim. But he took Jehoahaz and brought him to Egypt, and he died there.

35 Jehoiakim paid Pharaoh the silver and the gold, but to meet Pharaoh's demand he taxed the land, exacting the silver and gold from the people of the land, from each according to his assessment, to give to Pharaoh Neco.

36 Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Zebidah daughter of Pedaiah; she was from Rumah.

37 He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, just as his ancestors had done.

1 Hebrew *kemarim*, a word used only for priests of false gods (Hosea 10:5; Zephaniah 1:4).

2 Hebrew 'houses'; perhaps woven tents or garments for the goddess.

3 The place of child sacrifice in the valley south of Jerusalem (Jeremiah 7:31–32). The valley's name, Ge-hinnom, later gave the word 'Gehenna'.

4 Or 'he hurried from there'; the Hebrew is uncertain.

5 A scornful play on the Mount of Olives, perhaps 'Mount of Anointing'.

6 See 1 Kings 13:2.

7 The old prophet of Bethel (1 Kings 13:31), here described as from the region later called Samaria.

8 Hebrew *teraphim*; compare Genesis 31:19 and 1 Samuel 19:13.

9 The words of Deuteronomy 6:5.

10 In 609 BC Neco marched to support the last king of Assyria against Babylon.

Chapter 24

2 Kings 24 tells how, in Jehoiakim's days, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon invades and makes him a vassal for three years, until he rebels. The LORD sends raiding bands of Chaldeans, Arameans, Moabites and Ammonites against Judah to destroy it, as His prophets had foretold, because of Manasseh's sins and the innocent blood he shed, which the LORD would not pardon. Egypt is now shut out of the region by Babylon. Jehoiakim's son Jehoiachin reigns three months and does evil. Nebuchadnezzar besieges Jerusalem, and Jehoiachin surrenders with his mother, officials and servants. The king of Babylon carries off the treasures of the temple and palace and cuts up Solomon's gold vessels, and deports to Babylon all Jerusalem's leaders, warriors and craftsmen, ten thousand in all, leaving only the poorest people of the land. He makes Jehoiachin's uncle Mattaniah king, renaming him Zedekiah. Zedekiah reigns eleven years and does evil, and because of the LORD's anger he rebels against the king of Babylon.

1 In Jehoiakim's days Nebuchadnezzar[1] king of Babylon invaded, and Jehoiakim became his vassal for three years. Then he turned against him and rebelled.

2 The LORD sent against him raiding bands of Chaldeans, Arameans, Moabites and Ammonites. He sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word the LORD had spoken through His servants the prophets.

3 Surely this came on Judah at the LORD's command, to remove them from His presence because of the sins of Manasseh, all that he had done,

4 and also because of the innocent blood he had shed. For he had filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and the LORD was not willing to forgive.

5 The other events of Jehoiakim's reign, and all that he did, are recorded in the Book of the

Chronicles of the Kings of Judah.

6 Jehoiakim rested with his ancestors, and his son Jehoiachin succeeded him as king.

7 The king of Egypt did not march out of his land again, because the king of Babylon had taken all his territory, from the Brook of Egypt to the River Euphrates.

8 Jehoiachin[2] was eighteen years old when he became king, and he reigned three months in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Nehushta daughter of Elnathan; she was from Jerusalem.

9 He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, just as his father had done.

10 At that time the officers of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon marched up to Jerusalem, and the city came under siege.

11 While his troops were laying siege to the city, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon arrived there himself,

12 and Jehoiachin king of Judah surrendered to the king of Babylon, he and his mother, his servants, his officials and his eunuchs. In the eighth year of his reign the king of Babylon took him prisoner.[3]

13 He carried off from there all the treasures of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the royal palace, and he cut in pieces all the gold vessels that Solomon king of Israel had made for the temple of the LORD, just as the LORD had foretold.

14 He deported all Jerusalem: all the officials and all the leading warriors, ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and metalworkers. No one was left except the poorest people of the land.

15 He deported Jehoiachin to Babylon. He also took from Jerusalem to Babylon the king's mother, the king's wives, his eunuchs and the leading men of the land.

16 The king of Babylon also brought into exile in Babylon all the fighting men, seven thousand of them, and the craftsmen and metalworkers, a thousand, all of them strong and fit for war.[4]

17 In Jehoiachin's place the king of Babylon installed his uncle Mattaniah as king, renaming him Zedekiah.

18 Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hamutal daughter of Jeremiah; she was from Libnah.

19 He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, just as Jehoiakim had done.

20 Because of the LORD's anger it came to this in Jerusalem and Judah, until He cast them out of His presence. And Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

1 Nebuchadnezzar II, king of Babylon from 605 to 562 BC.

2 Also called Jeconiah (Jeremiah 24:1; Matthew 1:11) and Coniah (Jeremiah 22:24).

3 In 597 BC; the date is confirmed by the Babylonian Chronicle.

4 Verses 14 and 16 probably give two different counts of the same deportation; compare Jeremiah 52:28.

Chapter 25

2 Kings 25 tells how Nebuchadnezzar besieges Jerusalem in Zedekiah's ninth year, and after a year and a half of famine the wall is breached. Zedekiah flees by night but is captured on the plains of Jericho; at Riblah his sons are killed before his eyes, his eyes are put out, and he is taken in bronze chains to Babylon. Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, burns the house of the LORD, the palace and every great house in Jerusalem, breaks down its walls and carries the people into exile, leaving only the poorest to tend the vineyards and fields. The Babylonians break up the bronze pillars, the stands and the Sea and carry off the bronze, gold and silver. The chief priest and other leaders are executed at Riblah. So Judah goes into exile from its land. Gedaliah is appointed governor at Mizpah and urges the remaining officers to serve the king of Babylon, but Ishmael, of the royal line, murders him, and the people flee to Egypt for fear of the Babylonians. In the thirty-seventh year of his exile, Jehoiachin king of Judah is released from prison by Evil-merodach king of Babylon, given a seat of honour above the other kings, and eats at the king's table for the rest of his life.

1 In the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, on the tenth day of the tenth month,[1] Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came against Jerusalem with his whole army. He encamped against it and built siege works all round it.

2 The city was under siege until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah.

3 By the ninth day of the fourth[2] month the famine in the city had become so severe that there was no

food for the people of the land.

4 Then the city wall was breached, and all the soldiers fled by night through the gate between the two walls near the king's garden, though the Chaldeans were all round the city. They[3] went in the direction of the Arabah.

5 The Chaldean forces chased the king and caught up with him in the plains near Jericho; his troops had all deserted him.

6 They captured the king and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah, where sentence was passed on him.

7 They slaughtered Zedekiah's sons before his eyes. Then they put out Zedekiah's eyes, bound him in bronze shackles and took him to Babylon.

8 On the seventh day of the fifth month, in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard, an official of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem.[4]

9 He burned down the house of the LORD, the royal palace and all the houses of Jerusalem; every important building he burned with fire.

10 The whole Chaldean army under the captain of the guard broke down the walls all round Jerusalem.

11 Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard took into exile the rest of the people who were left in the city, the deserters who had gone over to the king of Babylon, and the rest of the population.

12 Only some of the very poor were left behind by the captain of the guard, to tend the vines and till the soil.

13 The Chaldeans broke up the bronze pillars, the stands and the bronze Sea that were in the house of the LORD, and carried the bronze to Babylon.

14 They also took away the pots, the shovels, the snuffers, the dishes and all the bronze articles used in the temple service.

15 The captain of the guard took away the firepans and the bowls, whatever was made of gold and whatever was made of silver.

16 As for the two pillars, the one Sea and the stands that Solomon had made for the house of the LORD, the bronze of all these articles was beyond weighing.

17 Each pillar was eighteen cubits high, with a bronze capital on top. The capital was three cubits[5] high, with a network and pomegranates of bronze all round it. The second pillar, with its network, was the same.

18 The captain of the guard took as prisoners Seraiah the chief priest, Zephaniah the second priest and the three doorkeepers.

19 From those still in the city he took the officer who had commanded the troops, five of the king's counsellors[6] who were discovered there, the secretary to the army commander, whose task was to call up the people of the land for war, and sixty of the common people found in the city.

20 Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, led them all away to the king of Babylon at Riblah.

21 There at Riblah, in the land of Hamath, the king of Babylon struck them down and put them to death. So Judah went into exile from its land.

22 Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon appointed Gedaliah son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan, as governor over the people he had left behind in the land of Judah.

23 When all the army commanders and their men heard that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah as governor, they came to Gedaliah at Mizpah: Ishmael son of Nethaniah, Johanan son of Kareah, Seraiah son of Tanhumeth the Netophathite, and Jaazaniah the son of the Maacathite, together with their men.

24 Gedaliah swore an oath to them and their men. "Do not be afraid of the Chaldean officials," he said. "Settle down in the land and serve the king of Babylon, and it will go well with you."

25 But in the seventh month Ishmael son of Nethaniah, son of Elishama, who was of royal descent, came with ten men and struck Gedaliah down, and he died, together with the Judeans and the Chaldeans who were with him at Mizpah.[7]

26 Then all the people, from the least to the greatest, together with the army commanders, set out and went to Egypt, for they were afraid of the Chaldeans.

27 In the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin king of Judah, on the twenty-seventh day of the twelfth month, Evil-merodach[8] king of Babylon, in the year he became king, released Jehoiachin king of Judah from prison.

28 He spoke kindly to him and gave him a seat of honour higher than those of the other kings who were with him in Babylon.

29 So Jehoiachin put aside his prison clothes, and for the rest of his life he ate regularly at the king's

table.

30 A regular allowance was given him by the king,
a portion for each day, for as long as he lived.

1 January 588 BC. The account in verses 1–21 is repeated in Jeremiah 52:4–27; compare Jeremiah 39:1–10.

2 ‘Fourth’ is supplied from Jeremiah 52:6; the Hebrew here gives no month.

3 So the Greek and Jeremiah 52:7; the Hebrew has ‘he’, apparently the king.

4 August 587 or 586 BC. Jeremiah 52:12 has ‘the tenth day’.

5 1 Kings 7:16 and Jeremiah 52:22 have ‘five cubits’.

6 Hebrew ‘men who saw the king’s face’; Jeremiah 52:25 has ‘seven’.

7 Told more fully in Jeremiah 40:7–41:18.

8 Amel-Marduk, Nebuchadnezzar’s son, who reigned 562–560 BC. Babylonian ration lists mention ‘Yaukin, king of Judah’ and his sons.