

Notes on 1 Kings

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Introduction

TITLE

The Books of 1 and 2 Kings received their names because they document the reigns of the 40 monarchs of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah who followed David. Israel had 20 kings, and Judah had 20, including one female who usurped the throne: Athaliah.

In the Hebrew Bible, 1 and 2 Kings were regarded as one book until the sixteenth century. The ancients viewed them as the continuation of the narrative begun in 1 and 2 Samuel. The Septuagint (Greek) translation of the Hebrew text, dating from about 250 B.C., was the first to divide Kings into two books. That division has continued to the present day. The Septuagint translators, however, called these two books 3 and 4 Kingdoms (or Reigns). First and 2 Kingdoms (or Reigns) were our 1 and 2 Samuel. Jerome's Vulgate (Latin) translation, which dates to about A.D. 400, changed the name from Kingdoms to Kings.

"The English Bible presents the books primarily as historical accounts. Their placement next to 1, 2 Chronicles demonstrates the collectors' interest in detailing all the events of Israel's history. In contrast, the Hebrew Bible places Joshua-Kings with the prophets, which highlights their common viewpoints. This decision implies that 1, 2 Kings are being treated as proclamation *and* history."¹

First and 2 Kings are the last of the Former Prophets books in the Hebrew Bible. The others are Joshua, Judges, and Samuel.

¹Paul R. House, *1, 2 Kings*, p. 70.

WRITER AND DATE

Most Old Testament scholars today believe that several different individuals wrote and edited Kings, because of theories concerning textual transmission that have gained popularity in the last 150 years.¹ However, many conservatives have continued to follow the older tradition of the church that one individual probably put Kings together.² This view finds support in the stylistic and linguistic features that run through the whole work and make it read like the product of a single writer or editor. Some of these features are the way the writer described and summarized each king's reign, the consistent basis on which he evaluated all the kings, and recurring phrases and terms. Paul House believed the same writer composed Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings.³ The father of the Deuteronomistic (or Deuteronomic) theory of authorship, Martin Noth, believed in single authorship but in an author who lived in the mid-sixth century B.C.⁴ The Deuteronomistic theory is that the writer of Kings, as well as the writer of Joshua, Judges, and Samuel, wrote using Deuteronomy as the standard by which he evaluated what Israel and its leaders did during the years that those books record.⁵ Even though many advocates of this view were and are liberal in their theology, the text supports the basic thesis of this theory.⁶

The identity of the writer is unknown today and has been for centuries. Ancient Jewish tradition suggested Ezra or Ezekiel as possible writers, since both of these men were inspired writers who lived after the Babylonian exile. The record of King Jehoiachin's release from Babylonian captivity (2 Kings 25:27-30) suggests a date of final composition sometime after that event. Jeremiah has traditional Babylonian Talmudic support as well, though Jeremiah apparently never went to Babylon but died in Egypt.⁷ Someone else could have written the last few verses of the book (i.e., 2 Kings 25:27-30), or, perhaps, all of Kings. Scholars have suggested these famous men

¹For discussion, see Tremper Longman III and Raymond B. Dillard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 171-75.

²E.g., D. J. Wiseman, *1 & 2 Kings: An Introduction and Commentary*, pp. 16, 53.

³House, pp. 38-39.

⁴Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History*, pp. 75-78.

⁵See Longman and Dillard, pp. 182-86.

⁶See David M. Howard Jr., *An Introduction to the Old Testament Historical Books*, pp. 179-82.

⁷*Baba Bathra* 15a.

because they were known writers who lived after the destruction of Jerusalem.

Most non-conservatives date Kings considerably later than the sixth or fifth centuries B.C.¹

SCOPE

The historical period that Kings covers totals about 413 years. The events that frame this period were Solomon's coronation as co-regent with David (973 B.C.) and Jehoiachin's release from Babylonian exile (561 B.C.).

However, most of Kings deals with the period that spans Solomon's coronation and the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., which is a period of 387 years. At the beginning of Kings we see the temple built and at the end the temple burnt.

"... 1, 2 Kings present Israel's history as a series of events that describe how and why the nation fell from the heights of national prosperity to the depths of conquest and exile."²

"More specifically, 1, 2 Kings explain how and why Israel lost the land it fought so hard to win in Joshua and worked so hard to organize in Judges and 1, 2 Samuel."³

"Plot relates the causes and effects in a story. Thus, the story line in 1, 2 Kings may be that Israel went into exile, but the plot is Israel went into exile because of its unfaithfulness to God. To make cause and effect unfold, plots normally have at least two basic aspects: conflict and resolution. A plot's conflict is the tension in a story that makes it an interesting account, while a plot's resolution is the way the conflict is settled. How the author develops these two components usually decides the shape and effectiveness of the plot."⁴

¹For further discussion of their theories, see Gleason Archer Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, pp. 289-91, and other Old Testament Introductions.

²House, p. 15.

³Ibid., p. 28.

⁴Ibid., pp. 61-62.

The historical period covered in 1 and 2 Kings (about 413 years) is almost three times as long as that of the period 1 and 2 Samuel covered, which was about 150 years in length. The Book of Judges covers about 300 years of Israel's history.

The dates of the kings of the nations of Israel and Judah that I have used in these notes are those of Edwin Thiele.¹ Thiele explained that Judah and Israel counted the beginning of their kings' reigns differently. Normally Judah began counting a king's reign with the first of the calendar year in which his accession to the throne fell. Israel, on the other hand, counted its kings' reigns from the time those reigns actually began. However, during one period both kingdoms used the same system.² A further complication was that these kingdoms began their *calendar* years six months apart.³ Still another complicating phenomenon was co-regencies, in which the reigns of two or more kings of the same kingdom overlapped. Thiele worked out the many problems regarding these dates more satisfactorily than anyone else, in the opinion of many scholars.⁴ Chronology is more important in 1 and 2 Kings than in any other books of the Bible.⁵

PURPOSE

The Holy Spirit led the writer of Kings to give an interpretation of history, not just a chronologically sequential record of events, as is true of all the writers of the Old Testament historical books. Some of the events in Kings are not in chronological order. They appear in the text as they do usually to make a point that was primarily theologically edifying (i.e., to emphasize a spiritual lesson from history). The writer chose the historical data that he included for this purpose, under the superintending inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21). The major lesson that Kings teaches its

¹Edwin R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*. See Appendix 1 at the end of these notes for a chart of the "Dates of the Rulers of Judah and Israel." Other charts appear in James A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Kings*, pp. 58-64; Gwilym Jones, *1 and 2 Kings*, 1:28; and John Gray, *I & II Kings*, p. 75.

²Thiele, pp. 21, 44.

³Ibid., p. 45.

⁴See *ibid.*, p. 27. For an update of Thiele's work, see Leslie McFall, "A Translation Guide to the Chronological Data in Kings and Chronicles," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 148:589 (January-March 1991):3-45. Another revision of Thiele's dates is in Wiseman, pp. 28-29.

⁵Howard, p. 182.

readers is that failure to honor and obey the revealed will of God results in ruin and destruction. For Israel the revealed will of God was the Mosaic Law and the later revelations of the prophets (i.e., the men and women who spoke for God).

"The major interests of the Deuteronomistic compiler are at once obvious, namely, first, cultic orthodoxy according to principles familiar in the Book of Deuteronomy, centred [*sic*] in the Temple in Jerusalem, as the criterion of fidelity to the will of God for Israel, secondly, the fulfilment of the word of God in prophecy, and thirdly, divine retribution occasioned by infidelity to Deuteronomistic orthodoxy, foreshadowed by the curses in the sacrament of the renewal of the covenant in the ancient tribal amphictyony (Deut. 27—28) and later in prophecy."¹

"The lesson for God's people during the period of the Exile in Babylonia and afterward—which is the time period addressed by the author of these books—is threefold: (1) that Israel should learn a lesson from the mistakes of its forebears and listen to God's mouthpieces, the prophets, in order to avoid such severe punishment again; but (2) that God nevertheless is a good and gracious God, still ready to forgive when people truly repent; and (3) that He still holds out hope for His people, regardless of how dire their circumstances."²

GENRE

Kings continues in the theological history genre (type of literature) that marks all of the historical books of the Old Testament. These books do not record all of the events in Israel's history but only those that the writers selected in order to teach theological lessons. This is especially obvious in the many chapters that the writer devoted to the ministries of Elijah and Elisha.

¹Gray, p. 9. "Cultic" refers to the ritual aspects of worship. "Amphictyony" refers to a confederation or coalition.

²Howard, p. 169.

STYLE

"By way of contrast with the other two books covering the historical details of the united and divided kingdoms, one might say that whereas Samuel's author uses a biographical style and Chronicles is written from a theological standpoint, the author of Kings employs a largely narrative-annalistic approach."¹

The writer of Kings organized his material around the reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah, beginning with David and ending with Zedekiah, the last king of Judah. Following the division of the kingdom after Solomon's death, the writer constructed a framework to enclose what he wrote about each king's reign. This framework begins with a standardized notice of the king's accession to his throne, and it ends with an equally standardized notice of the king's death, though there is some variety in these notices. The accession notice typically includes the following information: synchronization with the contemporary king or kings of the other Israelite kingdom (until Hoshea, the last king of Israel), the king's age at his accession (Judah only), and the length of his reign. It also includes his capital city, the name of the queen mother (Judah only), and the writer's spiritual assessment of the king. The death notice normally contains information about other sources of information about the king, notice of the king's death and burial, and the identification of his successor.²

THEOLOGY

All three major sections of Kings (the reign of Solomon, the divided kingdom, and the surviving kingdom) emphasize many theological lessons, but each one repeats and reinforces the main motif (theme): the importance of obeying the Mosaic Law in order to succeed. This motif stands out very clearly in the first major section dealing with Solomon's reign (chs. 1—11). The nation of Israel reached the height of its power and prestige in Solomon's day. It began to decline because of Solomon's unfaithfulness and his failure to honor the Mosaic Covenant. Other important theological emphases in Kings include: the sovereignty of God,

¹R. D. Patterson and Herman J. Austel, "1, 2 Kings," in *1 Kings-Job*, vol. 4 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, p. 8.

²See Longman and Dillard, pp. 176-79, for further discussion of the chronological notices in these books.

the kingdom of God, the Davidic kingdom, God's grace, hope for the future, judgment, and repentance.¹

OUTLINE

- I. The reign of Solomon chs. 1—11
 - A. Solomon's succession to David's throne 1:1—2:12
 - 1. David's declining health 1:1-4
 - 2. Adonijah's attempt to seize the throne 1:5-53
 - 3. David's charge to Solomon 2:1-9
 - 4. David's death 2:10-12
 - B. The foundation of Solomon's reign 2:13—4:34
 - 1. Solomon's purges 2:13-46
 - 2. Solomon's wisdom from God ch. 3
 - 3. Solomon's political strength ch. 4
 - C. Solomon's greatest contribution chs. 5—8
 - 1. Preparations for building ch. 5
 - 2. Temple construction ch. 6
 - 3. Solomon's palace 7:1-12
 - 4. The temple furnishings 7:13-51
 - 5. The temple dedication ch. 8
 - D. The fruits of Solomon's reign chs. 9—11
 - 1. God's covenant with Solomon 9:1-9
 - 2. Further evidences of God's blessing 9:10-28
 - 3. Solomon's greatness ch. 10
 - 4. Solomon's apostasy ch. 11
- II. The divided kingdom 1 Kings 12—2 Kings 17
 - A. The first period of antagonism 12:1—16:28
 - 1. The division of the kingdom 12:1-24

¹For further discussion of some of these themes, see Howard, pp. 197-203.

2. Jeroboam's evil reign in Israel 12:25—14:20
 3. Rehoboam's evil reign in Judah 14:21-31
 4. Abijam's evil reign in Judah 15:1-8
 5. Asa's good reign in Judah 15:9-24
 6. Nadab's evil reign in Israel 15:25-32
 7. Baasha's evil reign in Israel 15:33—16:7
 8. Elah's evil reign in Israel 16:8-14
 9. Zimri's evil reign in Israel 16:15-20
 10. Omri's evil reign in Israel 16:21-28
- B. The period of alliance 1 Kings 16:29—2 Kings 9:29
1. Ahab's evil reign in Israel 16:29—22:40
 2. Jehoshaphat's good reign in Judah 22:41-50
 3. Ahaziah's evil reign in Israel 1 Kings 22:51—2 Kings 1:18

(Continued in notes on 2 Kings)

One writer observed that a chiastic structure marks the Books of Kings:¹

- A Solomon/United Monarchy — 1 Kings 1:1—11:25
- B Jeroboam/Rehoboam; the division of the kingdom — 1 Kings 11:26—14:31
- C Kings of Judah/Israel — 1 Kings 15:1—16:22
- D The Omride dynasty; the rise and fall of the Baal cult in Israel and Judah — 1 Kings 16:23—2 Kings 12
- C' Kings of Judah/Israel — 2 Kings 13—16
- B' The fall of the Northern Kingdom — 2 Kings 17
- A' The Kingdom of Judah — 2 Kings 18—25.

¹George Savran, "1 and 2 Kings," in *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, p. 148. A chiasmus is a rhetorical or literary figure in which words, grammatical constructions, or concepts are repeated in reverse order, in the same or a modified form, in order to stress the unity of the material, and often to stress its central element or elements.

MESSAGE

The fact that 1 Kings opens and closes with death should be a clue to its message. It opens with David's death, and it closes with Ahab's death. The intervening period of about a century and a half is a story of national decline, disruption, disintegration, and disaster. Israel and Judah passed "from affluence and influence to poverty and paralysis." And "from splendor to squalor."¹

"In the final analysis, First Kings is the story of one people headed down two different paths. It is a story of good kings and bad kings, true prophets and false prophets, and of disobedience and loyalty to God. Most importantly, it is a story of Israel's spiritual odyssey and God's faithfulness to His people."²

There is also an emphasis in this book on thrones.

Obviously there were the thrones of Judah and Israel on earth with their kings, who succeeded one another. But there is also the throne in heaven with its one King. Rehoboam and Jeroboam had their successors: the kings who replaced one another. Yahweh also, in a sense, had His successors: the succession of prophets who replaced one another as His mouthpieces to the people. While the kings remind us of the thrones on earth, the prophets remind us of the throne in heaven. The chief character in the first part of 1 Kings is King Solomon. The chief characters in the second part of the book are the prophets Elijah and Elisha.

The thrones on earth present a story of disruption, disintegration, and disaster in both kingdoms: Judah and Israel. This trend continued despite changes in the methods that the various rulers employed to govern their people.

Solomon's method of governing was oppression. He taxed the people greatly and conscripted them into government service. The result was material magnificence. He multiplied riches and manifested great displays in the temple, the palace, and throughout his kingdom. He increased the military strength of the nation. Nevertheless, in the process, he ground down the people. He kept them under his thumb. The state became more

¹G. Campbell Morgan, *The Unfolding Message of the Bible*, p. 144.

²*The Nelson Study Bible*, p. 556.

important than the people. The testimony to this appears in 12:4. Speaking to Solomon's son Rehoboam, the people said: "Your father made our yoke hard; but now, lighten the hard labor imposed by your father and his heavy yoke which he put on us and we will serve you."¹ The result of Solomon's oppression was dissatisfaction with his method of government.

In reaction to this method, Rehoboam, in the south, chose a new method of government: autocracy. He decided to tighten his grip on the people so that he could control them (12:14). He believed the people should trust in their rulers, but he did not trust in God. Consequently he failed. Autocracy led to revolution (12:16).

Jeroboam, in the north, chose a third method of government: democracy. He let the people determine how they would live. While this resulted in more pleasant conditions for the people, it also resulted in ultimate disaster for his nation. Notice what democracy produced in Jeroboam's day: idolatry (12:27-29). People cannot rule themselves effectively. We need God to govern us. Jeroboam believed that rulers should trust in the people, but he, like Rehoboam, did not trust in God. Consequently he failed. He made religion what the people wanted, and the people became corrupt (12:30-31).

Rehoboam's successors in Judah chose a method of government that we could call government by policy. That is, they chose to follow precedent, the pattern of their predecessors, rather than getting and following God's direction for their nation. There were some exceptions to this approach, but on the whole this was Judah's method of government.

Jeroboam's successors in Israel, however, chose a different method of government: selfishness. The kings of Israel cared little for the people of Israel. What concerned them primarily was what they could get for themselves out of being king. That is why the story of the kingdom of Israel is a story of intrigue, assassinations, and much bloodshed.

In summary, every form of human government results in disastrous failure *if people do not acknowledge God's sovereignty*. People cannot govern themselves effectively. The result is always decline, disruption, and disintegration. This is one of the great revelations of 1 Kings.

¹Quotations from the English Bible in these notes are from the *New American Standard Bible* (NASB), 2020 edition, unless otherwise indicated.

"... as from the book of Genesis we may collect excellent rules of economics, for the good governing of families, so from these books [1 and 2 Kings] we may collect rules of politics, for the directing of public affairs."¹

However, there is another throne in view in this book: the throne in heaven. Whereas 1 Kings reveals that human government that disregards God always fails, it also reveals that God's government never fails. There were two ways that God exercised His kingship over His people during Israel's monarchy:

First, He broke in on human life with messages that the prophets delivered. Ahijah announced the division of the kingdom (11:26-39). Later he announced the death of Jeroboam's son (14:4-16). Shemaiah directed Rehoboam not to fight against Jeroboam (12:21-24). An unnamed prophet announced the fate of Jeroboam's altar (13:1-10). Jehu announced Baasha's doom (16:1-4). Elijah vindicated Yahweh in the days of Ahab's apostasy (departure from God; chs. 17—21). Another unnamed prophet rebuked Ahab for allowing Ben-Hadad to escape (20:35-43). Micaiah foretold Israel's scattering (22:8-28).² These interventions are all evidences that God was governing His people, independently of the kings, when they forgot Him. The heavenly throne ruled in spite of the earthly thrones.

The second way that God exercised His rule, in addition to sending messages by the prophets, was by directly and indirectly intervening in the lives of His people. He appeared and spoke directly to Solomon, which resulted in the building of the temple. He raised up an adversary to Solomon, namely, Jeroboam. He orchestrated the assassination of Abijah. He withheld rain and brought famine. He sent fire from heaven on Mt. Carmel. He sent rain. He appeared to Elijah in an earthquake. He enticed Ahab into battle through the mouths of lying prophets.

In short, God ruled by exercising influence over people by directly intervening and by controlling circumstances occasionally (i.e., providentially). He controlled history. God sits in perfect sovereignty and

¹Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, p. 362.

²For a chart of the faithful prophets who ministered during the Divided Kingdom Period, see Appendix 2 at the end of these notes.

continuity over all the human chaos caused by peoples' failure to rule themselves.

The message of the book, therefore, is that when people exclude God, any method of human government will fail. Nonetheless, God is still on His throne and is in control.

If people exclude God, their method of government ends in disaster. Even though in Solomon's reign the king emphasized religious forms and ceremonies, internal development, foreign treaties, and intellectual attainment, his oppression did not bring stability and peace. Autocracy will end in revolution eventually, as it did when Solomon died. Democracy that locks God out can result in the most terrible consequences for the people whose interests it professes to advocate. Government by policy can only deteriorate. Selfish rulers will only rape their nations.

Man cannot govern himself because he does not know himself, apart from God's Word. How can he govern others, about whom he knows even less? If people do not submit to the throne in heaven, no matter what method of government they choose, they will fail. As Christians, we must remember who is in control. We must look beyond our government to our God.

First Kings also reveals God's method in the midst of human failures:

First, when a throne on earth rebels against the throne in heaven, God abandons that throne on earth. He separates Himself from it. He allows the evil choices of the rulers to work themselves out to their inevitable consequences. Departure leads to disaster. Apostasy results in awful consequences (cf. Rom. 1).

Second, God keeps some consciousness of Himself and His government alive in the hearts and minds of a remnant (a small portion of the people). Even in Elijah's day, there were 7,000 who did not bow the knee to Baal. And the prophets spoke. All Christians exercise that ministry today: We should speak for God to our generation.

Third, God maintains ultimate control. He controls history both directly and indirectly, so His purposes do get accomplished. The Christian never needs to panic. God has revealed His plan for history in the Bible. Knowledge of the Word of God should give us stability in uncertain times.

What is true on the national level is also true on the individual level. If a person excludes God from his or her life, no matter how that person may live, he or she will fail—from God's perspective. We can resist God's authority, but we cannot overcome it. People only break themselves by refusing to submit to the throne in heaven. People need reminding of the throne in heaven. These principles have worked out throughout history. God's plan moves ahead.¹

¹Adapted from G. Campbell Morgan, *Living Messages of the Books of the Bible*, 1:1:177-90.

Exposition

I. THE REIGN OF SOLOMON CHS. 1—11

The structure of the record of Solomon's reign is as follows: Chapters 1 and 2 and 11:14 through 43 draw a frame around the whole history of Solomon's rule. Within this frame two similar sections form the body of the revelation. The first (3:1—8:66) is favorable to Solomon, and the second (9:1—11:13) is critical of him. This is the same historiographic (history writing) pattern that the writer of Samuel used to describe the reigns of Saul and David. Each of these sections begins with a dream (3:1-15; 9:1-10a), and each ends with a revelation of Solomon's attitude toward God (chs. 6—8; 11:1-13).

The section following the first dream has two parts: Part one reveals Solomon's domestic policy with sub-sections on women and wisdom (3:16-28), and administration and wisdom (4:1—5:14). Part two deals with Solomon's labor relations and has sub-sections on his contract with Hiram (5:15-27) and the *corvée* (5:28-33). The section following the second dream also has two parts: Part one gives more information about Solomon's labor relations and has sub-sections on the contract with Hiram (9:10b-14) and the *corvée* (9:15-28). Part two explains Solomon's foreign policy with sub-sections on women and wisdom (10:1-13), and wealth and wisdom (10:14-29). Thus there is both a chiastic (crossing) and an unfolding structure in chapters 1 through 11.¹

¹Kim Ian Parker, "Repetition as a Structuring Device in 1 Kings 1—11," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 42 (October 1988):19-27.

| Introduction | Favorable | | | | Unfavorable | | | | | Conclusion |
|--------------|----------------|-------------------------|-----------------|----------|-------------|-------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|------------|
| | Dream | Domestic Policy | Labor Relations | Attitude | | Dream | Labor Relations | Foreign Policy | Attitude | |
| | Women & Wisdom | Administration & Wisdom | Hiram | Corvée | | Hiram | Corvée | Women & Wisdom | Wealth & Wisdom | |

A. SOLOMON'S SUCCESSION TO DAVID'S THRONE 1:1—2:12

This first segment of the writer's story continues the history of Israel's monarchy where 2 Samuel ended. It records the final events in David's reign that led to Solomon's succession to the throne of Israel. It answers the question raised in 2 Samuel 9 through 20, namely: Who will succeed David? Similarly, Genesis 12 through 22 answers the question: Who will be Abram's heir?

1. David's declining health 1:1-4

1:1-2 It was customary in ancient times to warm an elderly person, not only by covering him or her with blankets, but also by putting a healthy person in bed with him or her.¹ The body heat of the well person would keep the older person warmer. David's physicians chose Abishag to provide nursing care for David as well as to warm him (cf. v. 15). Since David was the king, they sought and found a beautiful nurse for him. In view of David's symptoms, he may have suffered from arteriosclerosis.²

1:3-4 "Shunammite" is an alternate reading of "Shulammite," which describes a resident of Shunem in the tribal territory of

¹Wiseman, p. 67.

²Gene Rice, *Nations under God*, p. 8; Simon DeVries, *1 Kings*, p. 12.

Issachar. There is no way of telling if Abishag was the Shulammite whom Solomon loved and wrote of in the Song of Solomon (Song of Sol. 6:13). She may have been David's concubine (second-class wife).¹ The fact that David did not have sexual relations with this "very beautiful" (v. 4) young woman is significant, because it shows that his physical powers were now weak. David had been sexually active, but now his sexual powers were depleted. This shows that it was time for a more energetic man to reign.

2. Adonijah's attempt to seize the throne 1:5-53

Adonijah's desire to be king 1:5-9

1:5 Adonijah (whose name means "Yahweh is Lord") was David's fourth son (2 Sam. 3:4) and the oldest one who was alive at this time—Amnon, Chileab (also called Daniel), and Absalom having died. Nothing more than her name is known about Adonijah's mother: Haggith.

Evidently Adonijah believed that it was more important that the eldest son succeed David, as was customary in the Near East, than that the king of Yahweh's choosing should occupy that position. God had identified Solomon as David's successor even before Solomon was born (1 Chron. 22:9-10), and this revelation must have been common knowledge within the royal family. Adonijah's revolt, therefore, was primarily against the revealed will of God, secondarily against David, and also against Solomon. According to Warren Wiersbe, Solomon is mentioned almost 300 times in the Old Testament and a dozen times in the New Testament.²

Adonijah prepared to seize David's throne as Absalom had attempted to do, namely, by gathering popular support (cf. 2 Sam. 15:1).

1:6 *"His father had never interfered with him* or 'crossed him' (NASB) is more descriptive than

¹See Gray, p. 77.

²Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary/History*, p. 410.

'displeased him' (RSV), for this comment by the author (*cf.* vv. 8, 10) betrays David's weakness in his unwillingness to cause his children any physical or mental discomfort ..."¹

Also like Absalom (and Saul, and David), Adonijah was "a very handsome man" (*cf.* 1 Sam. 9:2; 16:12; 2 Sam. 14:25).

1:7 Joab, David's military commander, had long since demonstrated his disregard for God's will in many instances (2 Sam. 3:22-30; 18:5-15; 20:8-10). He evidently sided with Adonijah now because he realized that he was out of favor with David, or perhaps he thought that David was no longer competent to rule. Joab probably realized that if Solomon succeeded to the throne, he would demote him at least.

Abiathar had been the leading priest in Israel until David began to give Zadok priority. Abiathar had fled from Nob, after Saul massacred the priests there, in order to join David in the wilderness (1 Sam. 22:18-20). He had also offered sacrifices at David's tabernacle in Jerusalem while Zadok served at the Mosaic tabernacle at Gibeon. David had been showing increasing favor to Zadok (*cf.* 1 Chron. 15:11; 2 Sam. 15:24; 20:25). Abiathar was one of Eli's descendants whom God had doomed with removal from the priesthood (1 Sam. 2:30-36; *cf.* 1 Kings 2:27). Probably Abiathar saw in Adonijah's rebellion a promising opportunity to retain his position, which he must have seen that he would lose if Solomon came to power.

1:8 Zadok, Benaiah (whom David had put in charge of his bodyguard; *cf.* 2 Sam. 8:18; *et al.*), and Nathan the prophet remained loyal to David. Shimei (*cf.* 2 Sam. 16:5-13; 19:16-23) may have been truly loyal to David at this time, or he may have simply supported David for the sake of personal advantage (*cf.* 2:36-38). Rei is not named elsewhere in the Bible. Presumably he was some prominent member of David's court. David's "mighty men" also remained loyal to the king (*cf.* 2 Sam. 23:8-39).

¹Wiseman, p. 69. NASB here refers to an older edition of the *New American Standard Bible*. RSV refers to *The Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version*.

Adonijah's banquet 1:9-10

Adonijah's banquet at En-rogel, which was just a few hundred yards southeast of the city of David, was probably a covenant meal at which his supporters pledged their allegiance to David's eldest living son. If David's previous supporters had attended and eaten with Adonijah, custom would have bound them to support and protect one another.

Nathan's plan to outwit Adonijah 1:11-14

1:11-12 Nathan was a prophet (v. 8) who spoke for God. The term "prophet" occurs 94 times in Kings, and "man of God," a prophetic title, 60 times. There are four varieties of prophets in Kings: lone figures who spoke for God (e.g., Elijah), court prophets (e.g., Nathan), writing prophets (writers of the inspired Old Testament books), and prophetic groups (e.g., schools of prophets, and sons of the prophets).¹ Some prophets also led in the worship of Yahweh (1 Chron. 25:1).

Evidently God moved Nathan to inform Bathsheba of Adonijah's banquet and to secure her cooperation in thwarting his plan. Nathan's initiative was certainly in harmony with God's will (cf. 2 Sam. 12:1). Adonijah had "become king" (v. 11) only in the sense that he was the people's choice at that moment. Perhaps Nathan was trying to shock Bathsheba and David by referring to Adonijah as the king.

1:13 David had undoubtedly assured Bathsheba that Solomon would succeed him, since God had revealed that to David (1 Chron. 22:9-10). Variations of the Hebrew word translated "swore" occur four times in this passage, emphasizing David's oath that Solomon would succeed him (vv. 13, 17, 29, 30).

1:14 Nathan evidently wanted to make sure that at least two witnesses would hear David's promise that Solomon was his choice (cf. Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; 19:15). This was especially important since Adonijah's rebellion against the LORD's (Yahweh's) anointed was treason.

¹Howard, pp. 190-92.

Bathsheba's appeal to David 1:15-21

1:15-16 David was about 70 years old at this time.¹ Bathsheba approached the king with her request while he was in his bedroom and in poor health (cf. v. 1).

1:17-21 We should probably interpret Bathsheba's request as a desire that David would appoint Solomon as his co-regent, rather than that he should step down and let Solomon rule in his place.² According to Josephus, Solomon was David's youngest son.³ But this tradition seems to lack biblical support (cf. 2 Sam. 5:14-16). Normally, in the ancient Near East, a new king would execute his political enemies when he came to power (cf. 2:13-46). This was the basis for Bathsheba's fear (v. 21).

Nathan's announcement of Adonijah's rebellion 1:22-27

Nathan's news that Adonijah's feast was taking place at that very moment would have encouraged David to act at once. Nathan's behavior and his words to David were very diplomatic and appropriate for a man in his position.

"Nothing in the text suggests that David should be viewed as senile or easily manipulated."⁴

David's promise to Bathsheba 1:28-31

David then swore by the LORD to Bathsheba that, as he had previously sworn to her, Solomon would indeed succeed him on the throne, and that would happen that very day. This is undoubtedly a promise that Solomon would be David's co-regent and would rule alongside David until David died.

The clause, "May the king live forever," (vv. 31, 34; et al.) occurs often in the Old Testament. It expresses the wish that, because the king had acted or would act righteously, God would bless him with long life. God had

¹See the diagram "Chronology of 1 and 2 Samuel" in the Introduction section of my notes on 1 Samuel.

²E. Ball, "The Co-Regency of David and Solomon (1 Kings 1)," *Vetus Testamentum* 27:3 (July 1977):269; Gray, p. 88.

³Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 7:14:2.

⁴Matthew Newkirk, "Reconsidering the Role of Deception in Solomon's Ascent to the Throne," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 57:4 (December 2014):712-13.

promised righteous Israelites long life under the Mosaic Law (Deut. 4:40). It also expressed the desire that David might live forever through the lives of his descendants.

David's plan for Solomon's coronation 1:32-37

Zadok, Nathan, and Benaiah were the highest ranking priest, prophet, and soldier respectively among David's loyalists. Their leadership in the events that David ordered would have shown the people that they were acting as King David's representatives. Kings often rode on mules in the ancient Near East, symbolizing their role as servants of the people (v. 33). The Gihon ("Gusher") spring (v. 33) was the other main water source for Jerusalem besides En-rogel ("Spring of the Foot"). It was one-half mile north of En-rogel on the eastern side of Jerusalem, and it was visible from En-rogel.¹ A trumpet blast (vv. 34, 39) announced an important event and often announced God's activity in Israel throughout its history (Exod. 19:16; et al.), as it did here.

"Two terms are used for the royal office: 'king' (1 Kgs. 1:34, 35a) and 'ruler' (v. 35b). 'King' (*melek*) had a long history of usage and carried with it associations of autocracy and despotism from the practice of kingship among Israel's neighbors. 'Ruler' (*nagid*, translated elsewhere as 'prince' or 'leader'), a term unique to Israelite tradition, emphasizes that one rules at God's appointment and pleasure (cf. 1 Sam. 9:16; 10:1; 13:14; 25:30; 2 Sam. 7:8; 1 Kgs. 14:7; 16:2). These two terms anticipate the long struggle between the ideal and the practice of kingship in Israel."²

Solomon's anointing as king 1:38-40

Zadok the high priest anointed (consecrated) Solomon king of Israel at the Gihon spring (vv. 34, 39) with oil from David's tabernacle ("the tent," v. 39), symbolizing Solomon's endowment with God's Spirit for service (cf. 1 Sam. 10:1; 16:3, 12). By anointing Solomon (in 973 B.C.), the high priest identified him as David's successor.

¹See Hershel Shanks, *The City of David*, pp. 38-39.

²Rice, p. 15.

Some commentators believed that the event recorded here was Solomon's second anointing, when he became the sole king over Israel (in 971 B.C.).¹ It seems more likely, however, that David did not die for some time after the events described in chapter 1 (i.e., for two years; cf. 2:10-12).

Adonijah learns of Solomon's coronation 1:41-48

1:41-47a Adonijah and his supporters at first did not understand the reason for the commotion at the Gihon spring. But Jonathan, the son of Abiathar, brought news that Solomon had just been made king, had ridden on the king's mule, had been anointed by Nathan and Zadok, and the city had gone wild with rejoicing. Solomon had taken his seat on Israel's throne as David's co-regent. Furthermore, David's servants had blessed David for making Solomon the next king.

"His [Adonijah's] 'ten shekel a plate fund raising dinner' was going along quite smoothly until the shouts of recognition for Solomon were heard outside the building."²

"The exact relationship between David and Solomon during the period of coregency is not made clear. Normally in such coregencies, the father remained in supreme command as long as he lived, with the son more or less carrying out his directives. This probably was true with David and Solomon also, though the fact that David was bedridden during this time suggests such an arrangement may have been more theoretical than actual."³

1:47b-48 David thanked God for allowing him to live to see his successor's coronation.

"The placing of Solomon on the throne signals the beginning of the Davidic dynasty, a royal lineage that will eventually produce Jesus Christ. God has

¹E.g., H. C. M. Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, pp. 186-87.

²John J. Davis, *A History of Israel*, p. 330.

³Leon J. Wood, *Israel's United Monarchy*, p. 301.

begun to keep the promises made to David in 2 Sam 7:7-17."¹

Adonijah's flight for his life 1:49-53

1:49-51 The news of Solomon's coronation scattered Adonijah's supporters. Adonijah fled to the sanctuary courtyard, evidently the one in Jerusalem (cf. 1 Chron. 16:1, 37), and took hold of the horns on the brazen altar there. There was another place of worship in Gibeon at this time (3:4; 1 Chron. 16:39-40). In the ancient Near East, and in Israel, people customarily regarded the central sanctuary as a place of refuge (Exod. 21:14; cf. Ezek. 21:1-3). (The name "sanctuary" to describe a church originated in the Middle Ages.²) The idea behind this custom seems to have been that God had been gracious to people by accepting their offerings. Consequently, people should be gracious to the refugee who had offended his fellow man and had taken refuge in His sanctuary.

1:52-53 Solomon, like David and like Yahweh, showed mercy. Solomon required that Adonijah prove to be a "worthy man." The Hebrew word *hayil*, translated "worthy" here, and "valiant" in verse 42, really refers to a member of the nobility, not necessarily a man of moral character.³ Solomon meant that Adonijah needed to act like the nobleman that he was in order to preserve his life.

"The central truth for the throne-succession historian is that Yahweh was at work to frustrate Adonijah and to establish Solomon."⁴

Obviously Solomon's succession was not a smooth transition. Solomon was God's choice to succeed David, but he was not the oldest son of David, so his succession was not according to custom. Like so many others before him, God sovereignly chose to place an unusual choice in a position of blessing instead of what was customary (cf. Isaac over Ishmael, Jacob over Esau, Joseph over Reuben, Ephraim over Manasseh). In all these cases, and

¹House, p. 93.

²Wiseman, p. 74.

³Jones, 1:104, 105.

⁴DeVries, p. 22.

in Solomon's, various individuals resisted the will of God, because they wanted what was customary or traditional. This should be a warning to us to continually seek the will of God rather than simply perpetuating what has become traditional.

Solomon's succession was also unusual in that Solomon was the son of Bathsheba, whom David should not have married. We might think that God would have punished David for his sin with Bathsheba by choosing one of David's sons by another wife, perhaps his first wife, to succeed him. But God's choices are sovereign. He sometimes chooses to bless greatly those who have sinned greatly, in spite of their sins, provided they repent. Indeed, He seems to delight in doing this (cf. Moses, Paul). God's great grace to sinners stands out even more greatly when He blesses greatly those whom He has forgiven much. As Jesus said, it is those who have been forgiven much that love much (Luke 7:47). Perhaps we do not love the Lord as much as we could because we do not appreciate how much He has forgiven us.¹

3. David's charge to Solomon 2:1-9

These verses state succinctly the philosophy of history that the writer of Kings set forth in this book. It is the philosophy that David had learned and now commended to his son Solomon.

The most important thing 2:1-4

2:1-2 Going "the way of all the earth" means dying. David knew that he would die soon. So he charged his son and successor, Solomon, to be strong. David's words here recall Moses' final words to the Israelites (Deut. 31:6) as well as the LORD's instructions to Joshua (Josh. 1:1-9; cf. 1 Sam. 4:9). Compare other important farewell addresses such as those by Jacob (Gen. 47:29—49:33) and Joshua (Josh. 23:1-16). "Prove yourself a man" means literally "become a man." How does one

¹For an interesting study of chapter 1 as a complete story containing background, complication, climax, and denouement, see Burke O. Long, "A Darkness Between Brothers: Solomon and Adonijah," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 19 (February 1981):79-94.

become a man and so prove himself to be a man? The following verse explains how.

- 2:3 Fulfilling one's duty to Yahweh is the measure of one's manhood. One's duty to Yahweh consists of careful obedience to all that He has commanded. Careful obedience to the Law of Moses would yield success in all areas of Solomon's life. That obedience would constitute his manhood. Since God made man in the image of God, man can realize his manhood only by placing himself under God's authority. "Statutes," "commandments," "ordinances," and "testimonies" are all different kinds of precepts in the Law.

"Indeed, this consideration makes a true king: to recognize himself a minister of God in governing his kingdom. Now, that king who in ruling over his realm does not serve God's glory exercises not kingly rule but brigandage [robbery of people by ambushing them]. Furthermore, he is deceived who looks for enduring prosperity in his kingdom when it is not ruled by God's scepter, that is, His Holy Word; for the heavenly oracle that proclaims that 'where prophecy fails the people are scattered' [Prov. 29:18] cannot lie."¹

- 2:4 Solomon's faithful obedience would also make an unbroken line of Davidic rulers possible (implied in 2 Sam. 7:12-16). But Solomon's descendants on the throne would need to follow the LORD wholeheartedly for this line of rulers to continue unbroken.

The treatment of key individuals 2:5-9

- 2:5-6 David told Solomon to execute Joab for his murders (2 Sam. 3:22-30; 20:8-10). David had been merciful to Joab, who was living on borrowed time, because of his service to David. Nevertheless he deserved to die so justice would prevail.

¹John Calvin, "Prefatory Address to King Francis I of France," sec. 2, in *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.

Iain Provan deduced that the real reason that David told Solomon to put Joab to death was not religious (or moral) but political: By the actions named by David, Joab had proved himself to be a danger to Solomon's peaceful reign.¹ Both motives could have been in David's mind.

"The emphasis [in verse 6] is upon subtlety. Solomon must not act rashly, but use his brain and find some justification for removing Joab from the scene (cf. also v. 9)."²

2:7 Solomon was advised to show kindness to the sons of Barzillai because Barzillai had shown kindness to David (cf. 2 Sam. 19:31-38).

"The phrase, 'to eat at the king's table,' [which privilege Barzillai's sons enjoyed] meant 'to be pensioned'; cf. 2 Sam. 9⁷, 19²⁹, below 18¹⁹ (of the prophets at Jezebel's table), Neh. 5¹⁷."³

2:8-9 Evidently David had reason to believe that Shimei the Benjamite would threaten the throne again (cf. 2 Sam. 16:11). If he did, Solomon was to execute him (cf. vv. 36-46). Cursing the king, which Shimei had done, violated the Mosaic Law (Exod. 22:28).

We see here (vv. 1-9) another instance of the theme that punishment comes on those who resist the LORD's anointed and blessing follows those who serve him.

"David was wrong in passing on responsibility to Solomon to execute the judgment he himself should have ordered at the time. This was to cause his son and successors much trouble and feuding."⁴

¹Iain Provan, *1 and 2 Kings*, pp. 33-34.

²Ibid., p. 35.

³Montgomery, p. 90.

⁴Wiseman, p. 77.

Wiseman's judgment above is controversial. Maybe David was wrong, but there may have been other factors, not revealed, that led David to act as he did.

"In a scene that could have come straight from *The Godfather*, his [Solomon's] father, on his deathbed, transfers the authority of kingship to him with instructions to kill the rivals that could challenge Solomon's rule. The aged patriarch whispers their names with his last breath."¹

4. David's death 2:10-12 (cf. 1 Chron. 29:22b-30)

David and Saul each reigned for 40 years (cf. Acts 13:21). Some scholars take "40 years" as a round number that equals one generation.² Others, correctly I think, take the number literally, since the writer noted David's seven-year reign over Judah and his 33-year reign over Israel. The differences in David's and Saul's personal lives and administrations were not due to differences in the time they ruled. The course of their careers resulted from God's response to them, which their responses to Yahweh's will determined. David experienced God's blessing as a warrior, poet, musician, military commander, administrator, and man of God. His most significant characteristic, I believe, was his heart for God: his desire to please God.

David was 70 years old when he died (2 Sam. 5:4). Saul may have been as old as 80 when he died.³ However, the deaths of these two kings, as well as their lives, contrast dramatically. David died in peace, Saul in battle. David died in victory, Saul in defeat. When David began to reign, the Philistines dominated Israel. When Solomon began to reign, Israel was at peace with and in control of her neighbors (v. 12).

Josephus wrote that David "had great and immense wealth buried with him" and, centuries later, on more than one occasion, vast riches were removed from his tomb.⁴ But there is no biblical statement to that effect, though clearly David did die rich.

¹Craig Glickman, *Solomon's Song of Love*, p. 12.

²E.g., Montgomery, p. 90.

³See my comments on 1 Sam. 13:1.

⁴Josephus, 7:15:3. Cf. *ibid.*, 13:8:4; and *idem*, *The Wars of the Jews*, 1:2:5.

This section of 1 Kings (1:1—2:12) provides a bridge between David's and Solomon's reigns.¹ Much in it is transitional, dealing with the transfer of power. When Solomon began to reign as sole king in 971 B.C., he had a strong foundation on which to build because of the blessing that God had brought to Israel in response to David's commitment to Yahweh and His Law.²

B. THE FOUNDATION OF SOLOMON'S REIGN 2:13—4:34

The writer noted that Solomon's sole reign began well. The things most responsible for this state of affairs were his political decisions (the first section, 2:13-46), God's gift of wisdom to Solomon (the central section, 3:1-28), and his administrative ability (the third section, 4:1-34). Thus this section of text is chiasitic.

"A marked contrast existed between the kingships of Solomon and David, a contrast caused by the diverse backgrounds of the two rulers. David had been raised in the open, watching sheep, and later had experienced the rigors of a fugitive life. Solomon, however, had known only the ease of the palace, with its attendant luxuries. Accordingly, David became a king of action, aggressive and efficient, who could personally lead armies to victory. Solomon became a king of peace, happy to stay at home and content merely to retain the land his father had gained. David's court never grew larger than the requirements of his government, but Solomon's became lavish to suit his tastes. As a result, Solomon needed greater revenue than David, and he raised taxes accordingly. He also engaged more in foreign trade, showing adeptness, indeed, and enjoying marked success. David was more a man of the people; Solomon was a man of the court. More significant, David maintained a vibrant faith in God as a 'man after God's own heart,' while Solomon, though beginning well in spiritual devotion, failed to

¹For an extended treatment of the two halves of chapter 2, see Jeffrey S. Rogers, "Narrative Stock and Deuteronomistic Elaboration in 1 Kings 2," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 50:3 (July 1988):398-413.

²See Kenneth A. Kitchen, "How We Know When Solomon Ruled," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 27:5 (September/October 2001):32-37, 58.

hold this basic relationship before God, fell into sinful ways, and finally came under God's censure."¹

1. Solomon's purges 2:13-46

Solomon wrote that the fear of Yahweh is the beginning of knowledge (Prov. 1:7; cf. Eccles. 12:13; Ps. 111:10). At the very beginning of his reign he gave evidence of being wise by the way he dealt with his political enemies. His wise decisions at this time resulted in peace and prosperity for Israel for the next 40 years (971-931 B.C.).

Adonijah's execution 2:13-25

2:13-18 Adonijah approached Bathsheba with his request because she was the queen-mother, the first lady in the realm, who took precedence over any lady of the royal family while she lived.² Adonijah's professed acceptance of Solomon's succession overcame Bathsheba's initial fear of him. He convinced her that he only wanted permission to marry King David's former nurse. Perhaps Bathsheba agreed to present Adonijah's request for Abishag to Solomon knowing that Solomon would see through Adonijah's plot and deal with him appropriately.³ Even though David had not had sexual relations with Abishag (1:4), she was part of his harem, one of the women who ministered to his most intimate needs.

"Although Abishag had been only David's nurse, in the eyes of the people she passed as his concubine; and among the Israelites, just as with the ancient Persians (Herod. iii. 68), taking possession of the harem of a deceased king was equivalent to an establishment of the claim to the throne ..."⁴

¹Leon J. Wood, *A Survey of Israel's History*, p. 287.

²Gray, p. 106.

³Wiersbe, p. 408.

⁴C. F. Keil, *The Books of the Kings*, p. 32. "Herod" is a reference to Herodotus, *The Histories*.

2:19-25 But Solomon saw deeper into Adonijah's intent. Solomon correctly regarded Adonijah's request as an act of treason worthy of death. And, if Abishag was the Shulamite of the Song of Solomon, Solomon would have been deeply hurt by Adonijah's request for permission to marry her.

Verse 24 makes it very clear that Solomon, like David, had a proper view of his role under God as Israel's king. Adonijah's rebellion was not just against Solomon personally but against Yahweh and His anointed, whom He had placed on the throne.

Abiathar's dismissal 2:26-27

Solomon granted Abiathar a parole for participating in Adonijah's rebellion. But, by removing him from his office, he cut off Eli's last descendant, thereby fulfilling God's prophecy to Eli (1 Sam. 2:27-36). Eli's fertility ended because he had not obeyed God's Law faithfully. The writer of Kings drew special attention to God bringing this to pass (v. 27).

Joab's execution 2:28-35

Perhaps because Solomon had shown Adonijah mercy when he fled to the altar (1:50-52), Joab sought refuge from Solomon there too—for participating in Adonijah's rebellion. Joab, however, was a murderer as well as a rebel. Consequently Solomon had him executed in obedience to the Mosaic Law (Exod. 21:14). Manslayers, but not murderers, found sanctuary at the altar. David's house shared the guilt for Joab's murders as long as he remained alive (v. 31), because David had not given Joab justice. By executing Joab, Solomon cleared the way for God to bless him and his reign. God would punish Joab's house but bless David's house (v. 33). Solomon honored Joab for his service to David by burying him in his own land in the wilderness of Judah (v. 34; cf. 2 Sam. 2:32).

"Joab here was acting on the basis of Ex. 21:13-14 but apparently only thinking in terms of his involvement in the recent plot. David's charge to Solomon to take his life, however, had been on the basis of his having killed Abner (II Sam. 3:27f) and Amasa (II Sam. 20:8f), which murders were beyond any safety the altar might afford."¹

¹Wood, *A Survey ...*, p. 288, n. 1.

Shimei's execution 2:36-46

2:36-38 David had warned Solomon to keep Shimei under close observation and to eventually put him to death (vv. 8-9). Evidently David realized, because of Shimei's past actions (cf. 2 Sam. 16:5-13), that he needed to be kept on a short leash. Solomon therefore made sure that he could keep an eye on Shimei. Jerusalem at this time was only "a small acropolis city, whose circumference has been estimated at some 4500 feet."¹ Solomon kept Shimei from rabblousing with his Benjamite kinsmen, some of whom had opposed David's reign, like Shimei had, by specifying that Shimei should not cross the Kidron brook—into Benjamite territory.²

2:39-46 When Shimei left the city he flagrantly rebelled against Solomon's authority. Leaving the city in itself was no great crime, but the fact that Solomon had specifically forbidden it made it very serious. Thus Shimei's disregard for and disobedience to the will of the LORD's anointed king resulted in his death. All of these purges resulted in the firm establishment of the kingdom of Israel under Solomon's rule (v. 46).

All of Solomon's dealings with his enemies, who had conspired against the LORD's anointed and violated the Mosaic Law, also show that the new king had a firm commitment to keeping that Law. Solomon was also merciful and wise (in his dealing with Abiathar and Shimei), which are traits of God Himself, who blessed Solomon with these characteristics as His son because of Solomon's commitment to Him. This section (vv. 13-46) also vividly portrays the fate of people who oppose God: disenfranchisement (in the case of Abiathar) and death (in the cases of Adonijah, Joab, and Shimei).

"Taken as a whole, 2 Sam. 9—20; 1 Kgs. 1—2 is one of the most powerful indictments of sin in the Bible. But this material has to do with more than judgment. Running parallel to the nemesis [archrival] of judgment are the grace and providence of God. The child born of the adulterous union died, but another son was born to David and Bathsheba (2 Sam. 12:15-

¹Montgomery, p. 96.

²See Jones, 1:118.

25). David almost lost his kingdom to Absalom, but God defeated the counsel of Ahithophel and David regained his throne (2 Sam. 16:15—17:14). The ultimate good in this tangle of events was the accession of that son of David whom the LORD loved ([and chose] 2 Sam. 12:24-25), who ended the disruption in David's family and established the kingdom in strength and peace. Good and evil mingle together in these events. But God is able to achieve his purposes in the midst of and in spite of evil. Even that which is meant for evil God can turn to good (Gen. 45:8; 50:20; Ps. 76:9). The supreme example of this, of course, was the turning of Good Friday into Easter."¹

"The major canonical and theological issue this section [2 Sam. 9—1 Kings 2] raises is the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant."²

"Historically, Israel is at a crossroads. From this moment on one sees a drastic shift from semidemocratic tribal rule (maintained to some extent in David's administration) to a typical despotic city-state."³

2. Solomon's wisdom from God ch. 3

The flowing narrative of chapters 1 and 2 now gives way to reports and lists that catalogue facts about Solomon's reign.

The writer constructed the Solomon narrative (chs. 3—11), like so many others in the Old Testament, in order to draw attention to the fulfillment or lack of fulfillment of prophecies made earlier.⁴ The prophecy lies in 3:3 through 14, and we can trace the fulfillment through chapter 11.

¹Rice, pp. 27-28. For a good discussion of the "succession narrative" or "court history" that begins in 2 Samuel 9—20 and concludes with 1 Kings 1—2, see Patterson and Austel, p. 38.

²House, p. 103.

³DeVries, p. 44.

⁴Bezalel Porten gave a detailed analysis of the structure of this section that substantiates this claim in "The Structure and Theme of the Solomon Narrative (1 Kings 3-11)," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 38 (1967):93-128.

This chapter emphasizes one of the chief blessings that God bestowed on Solomon for his commitment and submission to Yahweh. By giving Solomon unusual wisdom, God also blessed the nation he served as king.

"The characteristics of Solomon's wisdom and glory were not selected just to continue the picture of an ideal king by showing him in a favourable light. Throughout, and in the epilogue on his reign (11:1-13, 33), the history comments on its deficiencies in theological terms. A similar appraisal will be used to judge successive rulers against the reigns of David and Solomon."¹

Solomon's attitudes 3:1-3

3:1 Solomon took the initiative in forming an alliance with Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, by marrying his daughter. This may have been Solomon's first marriage, though this statement may not describe something that Solomon did at the beginning of his reign.² The writer of Kings may have mentioned this alliance because his purpose in this part of his history was to show the earthly greatness of Solomon. But we see here the beginning of a policy that grew into a significant cause of Solomon's failures, namely, his decision to form alliances through marriages.

The fact that Solomon could marry such a person as an Egyptian princess shows the social and political height to which God elevated him. A descendant of former Egyptian slaves now became Pharaoh's son-in-law!

"Under Solomon, the relationship between Egypt and Israel reached an apex with the marriage alliance between the two nations (1 Kgs 3:1)."³

"This illustrates both the relative importance of Israel and the low estate to which Egypt had sunk:

¹Wiseman, p. 81.

²See the quotation of Merrill in my note on verses 16 through 28.

³James K. Hoffmeier, "Egypt As an Arm of Flesh: A Prophetic Response," in *Israel's Apostasy and Restoration: Essays in Honor of Roland K. Harrison*, p. 81.

Pharaohs of the Empire did not give their daughters even to kings of Babylon or Mitanni!"¹

At this time Israel was stronger than Egypt, as a result of David's conquests and as a result of Egypt's weakness.

"That this is the case is clear from his [probably Pharaoh Siamun's, 978-959 B.C.] willingness to provide his own daughter as a wife for Solomon, a concession almost without parallel in Egyptian history since it was a candid admission to the world of Egypt's weakness and conciliation. Normally Egyptian kings took foreign princesses but did not give up their own daughters to foreign kings."²

There is much evidence of the immense influence and prestige that Solomon enjoyed in his day.³

Solomon housed his bride in the city of David until he completed a special palace for her nearby (cf. 7:8).

Josephus commented on the writer's statement that "he [Solomon] ... finished building ... the wall around Jerusalem" as follows:

"... he ... built the walls of Jerusalem much larger and stronger than those that had been before ..."⁴

3:2 The Israelites were offering sacrifices to Yahweh on the "high places," which the Ras Shamra tablets describe as open-air sanctuaries throughout the land. The Ras Shamra tablets are important inscriptions that archaeologists discovered at the Canaanite site of Ugarit, just east of Cyprus on the

¹John Bright, *A History of Israel*, p. 191.

²Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, p. 292. Cf. Abraham Malamat, "The Kingdom of David and Solomon in Its Contact with Egypt and Aram Naharaim," *The Biblical Archaeologist* 21:4 (Dec. 1958):97; Alan Schulman, "Diplomatic Marriage in the Egyptian New Kingdom," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 38 (1979):190-91.

³See Alberto Green, "Israelite Influence at Shishak's Court?" *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 233 (1979):59-62.

⁴Josephus, *Antiquities of ...*, 8:2:1. Cf. Ps. 51:18.

Mediterranean coast. They contain much helpful information about Canaanite life and culture. These sacrificial sites were normally on hilltops, thus the name "high places." The Israelites evidently took them over from the Canaanites and converted them into places of Yahweh worship. Before the giving of the Mosaic Law, worship on high places was not evil (cf. Gen. 12:7-8; 22:2-4; 31:54). However, the Law forbade offering sacrifices at places other than those that God approved, and especially at sites of Canaanite altars, after Israel built the temple in Jerusalem (Deut. 12:1-21; 2 Chron. 7:12). Evidently at this time the people justified their practice on the ground that they did not have a permanent palace where Yahweh could dwell (i.e., a temple). Another possibility is that they did not consider worship at high places wrong until the king reunited the ark and a tabernacle in a central sanctuary (i.e., the temple; cf. 1 Sam. 9:11-25).¹ As we shall read shortly, the ark was at this time in Jerusalem (v. 15).

"Solomon was to blame for the people's continued worship at these places because of his delay in building the temple."²

3:3

"Solomon was a wise man, a rich man, a great man; yet the brightest encomium [praise] of him is that which is the character of all the saints, even the poorest, He *loved the Lord*."³

"Yet we are bound to ask: what kind of 'love' is this, that does not issue in the keeping of the Law? Certainly not a love that involves all of Solomon's heart and soul and strength (Deut. 6:4)."⁴

Solomon is the only king in the Book of Kings who is said to have loved the LORD. The only deviations from the Law that the writer ascribed to Solomon at this early time in his reign was

¹Patterson and Austel, p. 44.

²Provan, p. 45.

³Henry, p. 366.

⁴Provan, p. 46.

his worship at the high places. Otherwise Solomon followed God faithfully.

"Silently, invisibly, like an incubating virus, sin was at work throughout Solomon's reign and in the end broke out in violent, destructive force. Such is the nature of sin."¹

"Love" here does not express a feeling only but, more fundamentally, a commitment to Yahweh that manifests itself in obedience to His Word (cf. 1 John 5:3). Solomon's commitment, like David's, accounted for much of the blessing that came on the king and through him to the people. Yet his love was flawed, and that led to much trouble later on.

Solomon's prayer for wisdom 3:4-15 (cf. 2 Chron. 1:7-13)

3:4 A tabernacle, the Mosaic tabernacle, and the Mosaic tabernacle's bronze altar, still stood at Gibeon (lit. "Little Hill"; 1 Chron. 16:39-40; 21:28-29; 2 Chron. 1:3, 5-6). (However, Josephus wrote, apparently incorrectly, that the brazen altar that Moses built was at Hebron.²) The tabernacle may have been moved from Nob to Gibeon after Saul's slaughter of the priests of Nob (1 Sam. 22:18-19).³ Gibeon was one of the so-called "high places" where the people offered sacrifices to Yahweh.

Burnt offerings symbolized the dedication of the worshipper's person to God (Lev. 1). By offering 1,000 of these sacrifices Solomon was expressing his personal allegiance to Yahweh in grand style (cf. Rom. 12:1-2). Some critical scholars do not take the number 1,000 literally but as an extravagant number of sacrifices.⁴ While it may be a large rounded number, the actual number was probably close to 1,000 (cf. 8:63-64).

3:5 God responded by blessing Solomon in a way that He probably would not have blessed him had the king failed to dedicate

¹Rice, p. 31.

²Josephus, *Antiquities of ...*, 8:2:1.

³Arno C. Gaebelein, *The Annotated Bible*, 1:2:419; Wood, *A Survey ...*, p. 289, n. 4.

⁴E.g., Montgomery, p. 105.

himself to Yahweh. God's revelation to him was in response to his offerings. God's offer constituted a test for Solomon: Would he request something for his own glory or for God's glory? Solomon showed his heart for God by asking something for God's glory (cf. v. 9).

3:6-9 Solomon began his prayer by acknowledging that God had been faithful to his father David by giving him a son to sit on his throne, as God had promised David in the Davidic Covenant (2 Sam. 7:12). Solomon's words show that he viewed himself as dependent on God, not self-sufficient (v. 7), God's "servant" (vv. 8-9), and a servant of God's people rather than his people (v. 9). In verse 7 the Hebrew word *na'ar*, translated "little boy," means an immature person. Solomon acknowledged God's past action, asked for His continuing favor, expressed humility, and requested the ability to carry out his duties (cf. 2 Cor. 2:16).¹

"To go out and to come in' [v. 7] refers to life beyond the doors of one's household and the city gate in the discharge of one's duties (Deut. 31:2; 1 Sam. 18:16)."²

This is an idiom that refers to the skills of leadership (cf. Num. 27:17; Josh. 14:11; 1 Sam. 29:6; 2 Kings 11:8).³ Solomon also requested an understanding (lit. "listening" or obedient) heart (v. 9). Significantly, in Hebrew words translated "hearing" and "obeying" come from the same root word. Furthermore, Solomon viewed God as faithful, just, and gracious (v. 6), his God (v. 7), and the true King of Israel (vv. 8-9).⁴

"The heart (*leb*) in Israelite thought is the center of the psychic self. It includes especially mental activity but is broader in scope than English 'mind,' embracing the feelings and will as well. The heart is susceptible to become hardened, to be

¹Wiseman, pp. 84-85.

²Rice, p. 33.

³House, p. 110.

⁴For a good explanation of the meaning of *hesed* ("faithfulness," v. 6), see Patterson and Austel, p. 47.

made fat (Isa. 6:10), and to dwell on evil (Gen. 6:5; 8:21); indeed, it is 'deceitful above all things' (Jer. 17:9). It is over against these capabilities of the heart that Solomon's request is to be understood. A 'hearing heart' [v. 9] is one that is open, receptive, teachable (Isa. 50:4). That to which the heart of the king should be open above all else is God's *torah* [lit. instruction]. The king ideally rules not on the basis of his own understanding but administers his realm in the light of God's revealed will."¹

"The king was the supreme judge and final arbiter. Within his domain, the ideal king sought to achieve what was right, to vindicate the just, to protect the rights of the weak. And this was achieved in practice by a series of shrewd and just decisions or verdicts or judgments (*mishpatim* in the plural) all of which are examples of what our text calls 'right' (*mishpat* in the singular)."²

J. Sidlow Baxter distinguished between spiritual wisdom (insight into divine things) and practical wisdom (administrative discernment, sagacious judgment, intellectual grasp, aptitude for the acquisition of knowledge, and prudence in the directing of affairs). He claimed, and I agree, that Solomon asked for and received less of the first kind but more of the second kind.³

3:10 While Solomon's request was pleasing to the Lord, one cannot help but question if it was as good as Moses' request for an understanding of God and His ways (Exod. 33:13). In this we may see a difference between Solomon's heart and Moses' heart. Perhaps we should not be completely surprised, therefore, at the outcome of Solomon's life. He was brilliant, but he was perhaps not as godly, especially later in his life. Brilliance is good, but godliness is much better. We cannot do

¹Rice, p. 34.

²A. Graeme Auld, *I and II Kings*, p. 23.

³J. Sidlow Baxter, *Explore the Book*, 2:99. Cf. Wiseman, pp. 85-86.

much about our God-given brilliance, but we can do something about our godliness (cf. 1 Tim. 4:8). It might have been better if Solomon had included in his request a heart for God, which his father David possessed. Nevertheless, the writer said that Solomon loved the LORD and walked in the statutes of his father David (v. 3).

- 3:11-14 God promised to bless Solomon for putting His interests before his own (cf. Matt. 6:33). He promised to give him a wise and discerning heart that would surpass all other people. And God gave him much more than he asked for: riches and honor (v. 13). Furthermore, He promised to give Solomon long life if he continued to obey His Law (v. 14; cf. Ps. 91:14-16; Prov. 3:1-2).
- 3:15 Solomon's expression of gratitude, when he awoke from the dream in which God had spoken to him, included more offerings. He presented these before the ark in Jerusalem, that is, before the LORD's presence. His sacrifices expressed further personal dedication (the burnt offerings) and gratitude for fellowship with God (the peace offerings). The feast that Solomon provided for all his servant probably was a covenant renewal meal that involved the commitment of his government officials ("servants") to the Mosaic Law.

Notice that this section ends as it began: with a journey and sacrifices. This helps the reader identify it as a section, by the *inclusio*.¹

God's provision of wisdom 3:16-28

This incident demonstrates that God did indeed give Solomon the unusual wisdom that He had promised (v. 12; cf. Matt. 6:33). The writer did not specify when during Solomon's reign this event took place, but probably it occurred shortly after God appeared to the king at Gibeon (vv. 4-15).

"The chronology of the reign of Solomon does not pose nearly the difficulty as does that of David. With the exception of the narrative passages, which appear as usual to be inserted

¹In biblical studies, *inclusio* is a literary device similar to a refrain. It is also known as bracketing or an envelope structure, and consists of the repetition of material at the beginning and end of a section of text.

topically, the order found in both 1 Kings and 2 Chronicles reflects the general flow of events. It does seem, however, that Solomon's alliance with Siamun of Egypt (1 Kings 3:1) did not come to pass until after he had begun negotiations with the Tyrians to help on the temple. This in turn presupposes Solomon's having sought and been granted wisdom, for Hiram takes note of that fact (1 Kings 5:7)."¹

3:16 Two prostitutes appeared before Solomon in order to receive justice. In Israel it was much easier for ordinary citizens to gain a hearing with the king than it is today.

"The fact that the two mothers were prostitutes is important in this story ... because it shows how the wise king would act on behalf of the very lowest of his subjects ..."²

3:17-21 One of the women presented the problem to Solomon. Both women, who lived in the same house, gave birth to sons three days apart. The first mother accidentally smothered her son by laying on him during the night. She then took the second mother's son and put her own dead son at the other woman's breast. In the morning the second mother discovered that the child at her breast was dead. But on close examination she saw that the dead child was not her son but the son of the first mother.

3:22 The first mother then spoke up and claimed that the living son was hers. But the second mother insisted that the living son was hers.

3:23-25 Solomon then summarized the claims of both women and ordered that the living child be cut in two and that half be given to each mother.

3:26 The true mother of the living child then asked Solomon to give him to the other woman rather than killing him. But the other

¹Merrill, p. 290.

²DeVries, p. 61.

woman asked him to divide the child in half so that neither of them would get the child.

3:27 The true mother's reaction to Solomon's order convinced him that she was indeed the mother of the living son, and he ordered that the child be given to her.

3:28 Solomon's wise decision in this case became well known throughout Israel, and the Israelites feared (respected) the king, because they saw that God's wisdom was in him.

Solomon demonstrated insight into basic human nature, here maternal instincts. This insight enabled him to understand why people behave as they do and how they will respond. This was a gift from God and is an aspect of wisdom. Solomon became a blessing to the people because he related properly to Yahweh.

Wisdom in Israel and the ancient Near East was not synonymous with knowledge or education. It involved the ability to live life in a skillful way, so at the end, one's life would amount to something worthwhile. To the Israelites this was possible only if a person knew and responded appropriately to (i.e., feared) Yahweh.¹

3. Solomon's political strength ch. 4

God also blessed Israel through Solomon by giving him wisdom to organize and administer the affairs of the nation effectively, as this chapter records.

Solomon's chief officials 4:1-6

Delegation of authority is a mark of wisdom in a person with more to do than he or she can personally manage effectively. Azariah (v. 2) was apparently Zadok's grandson (1 Chron. 6:8-9). "The priest" is a common designation for the high priest. "Scribes" (v. 3) maintained diaries of daily events in the kingdom. "Secretaries" (v. 3) prepared official documents and acted as the king's penmen.² Benaiah, who had been in charge of David's bodyguard, was now the commander of the entire army. Even though Solomon had dismissed Abiathar (v. 4) from his official duties,

¹See James L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction*.

²Montgomery, pp. 30-31.

Abiathar retained his title and honor. Azariah (v. 5) was in charge of Solomon's 12 deputies who provided food for the royal household (v. 7). Zabud (v. 5) was probably the king's personal chaplain and adviser.¹ Ahishar (v. 6) was over the king's household. And Adoniram (v. 6) was responsible for the forced labor. "Forced labor" translates the Hebrew word *mas*, which can mean simply "labor force,"² or it could refer to non-Israelite laborers whom the king conscripted to work for the government (the *corvée*; cf. 5:13-14; 9:15; 2 Chron. 2:2; 8:8).

Solomon's district governors 4:7-19

Twelve deputies were responsible for providing for the needs of Solomon's large household, including his courtiers, and for his thousands of horses (v. 28). Two of these deputies were Solomon's sons-in-law (vv. 11, 15). The district arrangement seems to have been designed to move Israel away from tribal independence to cooperation, and taxation, under a more centralized government. Though the district boundaries approximated the tribal boundaries, they were not exactly the same.³ Clearly Solomon's kingdom had a large bureaucracy.

"... this was a radical and decisive step, and that not only because it imposed upon the people an unprecedented burden. It meant that the old tribal system, already increasingly of vestigial significance, had been, as far as its political functioning was concerned, virtually abolished. In place of twelve tribes caring in turn for the central shrine were twelve districts taxed for the support of Solomon's court!"⁴

The writer may not have included Judah and Jerusalem in this list of areas that Solomon taxed.⁵ This would have given Judah a great advantage economically. Perhaps Solomon favored Judah because it was his tribe. This

¹See A. Van Selms, "The Origin of the Title 'The King's Friend,'" *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 16 (1957):118-23.

²Jones, 1:138.

³See the map "Solomon's 12 Districts and Surrounding Nations" in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, p. 496; or the map "Solomon's Administrative Districts" in *The Nelson ...*, p. 565.

⁴Bright, p. 201.

⁵Provan, p. 56, argued that he did include Judah.

favoritism, if it existed, may have been a factor in the revolt of the northern tribes later (12:4).

Solomon's subjects 4:20

Solomon ruled over a vast number of Judeans and Israelites who were, generally speaking, well fed and happy. One explanation of the writer's unusual reference to Judah and Israel is that, when he wrote Kings, the nation had split, so perhaps the writer was using the designation that was common in his day. However years before the formal division took place, northern and southern factions had already developed (cf. 1 Sam. 11:8; 15:4; 17:52; 1 Kings 1:35; et al.).

This verse may appear to fulfill God's promise to Abraham and Jacob that He would make their descendants as numerous as the sand on the seashore (Gen. 22:17; 32:12). It does indicate a partial fulfillment, but later promises to the same effect indicate that it does not indicate a final or complete fulfillment of this promise (cf. Isa. Jer. 33:22; Hos. 1:10; also Rom. 11).

This verse ends chapter 4 in the Masoretic (Hebrew) text, and verse 21 begins chapter 5.

Solomon's prosperity 4:21-28 (cf. 2 Chron. 1:14-17)

4:21 Solomon's throne exercised four spheres of political influence:¹ First, there was the homeland. This was the geographical area that Joshua had assigned to the 12 tribes. In Solomon's day Israel occupied only this area.

Second, there were adjacent provinces (i.e., Damascus, Ammon, Moab, Edom, et al.). Solomon taxed these and conscripted their men for military service. These provinces enjoyed the protection and some other benefits of Israel's central government.

Third, there were the vassal states (i.e., Zobah, Hamath, Arabia, possibly Philistia, et al.) that Israel controlled. These enjoyed some autonomy, such as native rulers and internal fiscal policies. They recognized Solomon's authority, however,

¹Merrill, pp. 300-302.

provided some tribute, and pledged loyalty to him. Israel in return defended them from alien forces when necessary.

Fourth, there were the allied states (i.e., Phoenicia, Egypt, et al.). These countries enjoyed equality with Israel. They defended each other as needed, traded with each other, and generally cooperated with one another.

This verse, like the previous one, has been understood to indicate a final and complete fulfillment of the promise of land that God gave Abraham and his descendants (Gen. 15:18-21; Exod. 23:31; cf. 2 Chron. 9:26). But at no time did the Israelites occupy all the territory that God had promised. Since God is faithful to His promises, we should anticipate Israel's occupation of this territory in the future "forever" (Gen. 13:15; cf. 1 Kings 11:23-25).

"A careful reading of the text ... makes clear that while Solomon put the entire area under his control in the sense that he demanded tribute from these countries, they were not actually incorporated into the state of Israel. This made their defection easy once Solomon died and the power of the kingdom began to decline [cf. 11:23-25]."¹

Usually when a great king died, the nations that were subject to his leadership would withhold taxes and rebel against his successor. The new king would then often attack those nations to establish his sovereignty over them. However, Solomon did not have to do this. God gave him a peaceful reign in which he could concentrate on building projects.²

4:22-23 Obviously Solomon's "household" (v. 7) was very large. The "kor" was a dry measure equal to what a donkey would normally carry, which was equivalent to "nearly eight bushels."³ One kor was equal to one homer, or 10 ephahs.

¹John F. Walvoord, *Major Bible Prophecies*, p. 82. See also Gray, pp. 141-42.

²Patterson and Austel, p. 53.

³*Unger's Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "Metrology," revised by M. F. Unger, p. 721.

4:24-25 "Ruling over" means that Solomon controlled the large area specified here, not that the Israelites occupied all this territory. The territory described did not lie within the geographic borders of Israel.¹ The city of Tiphseh (v. 24) stood on the banks of the Euphrates River. The area that the Israelites did occupy at this time stretched from Dan to Beersheba. Israel's geographic extent was only about 150 miles long.

Solomon's kingdom was very populous (cf. Gen. 22:17) and peaceful (cf.). Living under one's vine and fig tree is a figure for living a safe and contented life (cf. 2 Kings 18:31; Micah 4:4; Zech. 3:10). Later we will read that the Israelites rebelled against Solomon's heavy taxation policies (12:4), but that came at the end in his reign.

"To live *in safety* ["securely"], in reliance on God (LXX *elpizo*, 'hope'), echoes Deuteronomy 12:10. God alone can provide this (Ps. 4:8; Pr. 1:33; Dt. 33:12, 28)."²

4:26-28 This verse says that "Solomon had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots."³ But 2 Chronicles 9:25 says: "Solomon had four thousand stalls for horses and chariots." Four thousand is probably the correct number, since "he had 1,400 chariots" (10:26; 2 Chron. 1:14). Three horses were considered a chariot team and would have been kept in stalls together. So four thousand would be about the number of horses that Solomon needed.⁴ Horses and chariots were military machines at this time. These were Solomon's weapons.

"At Megiddo, excavations have revealed stables for some 450 horses, as well as fortifications and the governor's residence. Similar Solomonic

¹See Jones, 1:146.

²Wiseman, p. 94.

³See also Josephus, *Antiquities of ...*, 8:2:4.

⁴*The Nelson ...*, p. 566.

constructions are likewise attested at Hazor, Taanach, Eglon, and Gezer."¹

"... we have full agreement between tradition and archaeological discovery."²

Solomon violated the Mosaic Law by multiplying horses (cf. Deut. 17:16). This does not bode well for his future.

Solomon's skill 4:29-34

Here is more evidence that God gave Solomon wisdom (Heb. *hokmah*) as He had promised (3:12).

- 4:29 Solomon was one of the outstanding sages of the ancient world.³ What Solomon received from God was the ability to make correct decisions. Even though he possessed this ability he did not always choose to use it. He made some very foolish decisions in his lifetime.
- 4:30-31 The people of the East (cf. Job 1:3) and Egypt were famous for their wisdom in the ancient biblical world. The four wise men listed here were all descendants of Judah and Tamar (cf. 1 Chron. 2:6).
- 4:32-33 Solomon's literary output was prolific. His name appears on two of the psalms in the Book of Psalms (Ps. 72; 127), and he also evidently wrote the Books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon.
- 4:34 This verse is hyperbole: The writer meant that Solomon's court was open to all and that as a wise man he attracted many important visitors.⁴

¹Bright, p. 192. Cf. W. F. Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine*, pp. 124-25; Jack Finegan, *Light from the Ancient Past*, pp. 168-69; Kathleen Kenyon, *The Bible and Recent Archaeology*, p. 70.

²W. F. Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, p. 136.

³See John E. Johnson, "The Old Testament Offices as Paradigm for Pastoral Identity," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 152:606 (April-June 1995):182-200.

⁴John T. Gates, "First and Second Kings," in *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 315. Gates wrote the commentary on 1 Kings only in this volume.

This chapter shows God's response to Solomon's dedication to Yahweh (3:6-13). Even though Solomon was God's elect king, he had the opportunity either to respond properly to God's grace, and experience further blessing, or to respond improperly to it, and experience chastening. This is a choice that God gives all of His elect. Solomon made the wise choice at first, but later he did not do as well. Solomon's descendant, Jesus Christ, made the wise choice consistently.

C. SOLOMON'S GREATEST CONTRIBUTION CHS. 5—8

Solomon's outstanding contribution to the nation of Israel, I believe, was the provision that he made for its spiritual strength. The writer of Kings gave this much emphasis in his book. However, he mentioned three types of Solomon's building projects: (1) the Jerusalem Temple (6:1-28; 7:13-51; 8:1-66), (2) the palace complex (7:1-12), and (3) the construction of towns (9:15-19). These structures were all necessary in order to facilitate the worship of Yahweh, directly or indirectly.

People generally regarded their king as the representative, son, and vice-regent of their chief god in the ancient Near East.¹ This was really the true relation of Israel's king to Yahweh. People also viewed the temples of the gods as the palaces of those beings, and they regarded the magnificence of their houses as a reflection of their personal greatness. The temple, therefore, represented the god.² Consequently Solomon wanted to portray the greatness of Yahweh by building Him the most glorious temple in the ancient Near East. This would have enabled Israel to better fulfill the purpose for which God had raised her up, namely, to bring people to God (Exod. 19:6; cf. Isa. 42:6-7).

¹Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions*, 2:282-83.

²For further explanation of how ancient Near Easterners viewed their temples, see John M. Lundquist, "Temple, Covenant, and Law in the Ancient Near East and in the Old Testament," in *Israel's Apostasy and Restoration: Essays in Honor of Roland K. Harrison*, pp. 293-305.

1. Preparations for building ch. 5

Solomon's request of Hiram 5:1-6

Hiram probably reigned from about 980-947 B.C.¹ Many scholars agree that his reign overlapped David's by about nine years and Solomon's by about 24 (cf. 2 Sam. 5:11). Tyre was an important Mediterranean Sea port in Phoenicia north of Israel. Sidon (v. 6), another, more important Phoenician port city at this time, stood a few miles north of Tyre.

"A house for the name of the LORD" (v. 3) means a house for Yahweh that would communicate His reputation to the world. Cedar (v. 6) is still a favored building material because of its durability and beauty.

Solomon's treaty with Hiram 5:7-12

The fact that Hiram cooperated with Solomon and even blessed Yahweh (v. 7) shows how God brought blessing to Gentiles as well as to the Israelites through David and Solomon's godly dedication to the LORD. Juniper (vv. 8, 10) is a wood from the same family as the cedar. Twenty thousand kors of wheat (v. 11) was the equivalent of about 154,000 cubic feet of wheat. And 20 kors of oil was about 154 cubic feet of oil. The covenant between Israel and Phoenicia (v. 12) resulted in peace for many years.

"Sometimes Solomon has been criticized for entering into such an agreement with an unbelieving pagan like Hiram. Scripture says, 'Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers' (II Cor. 6:14). The principle does not apply in this case, however. Solomon did not join in a partnership with Hiram to build the temple. Solomon built it and merely purchased material and hired workers from Hiram."²

Solomon's conscription of laborers 5:13-18

5:13-16 Solomon's 30,000 "forced laborers" (v. 13) were descendants of the Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites (native Canaanites) who lived within Israel (9:20-21; 2 Chron. 8:7-8). Israelites also served in building projects, but they were

¹Frank M. Cross, "An Interpretation of the Nora Stone," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 208 (December 1972):17. Cf. Merrill, p. 239.

²Wood, *Israel's United ...*, p. 312.

not slaves (9:22).¹ "Porters" (v. 15) were "carriers" (NIV) who transported materials.²

Solomon's method of providing workers for state projects became very distasteful to the people eventually, perhaps because of how it was administered (cf. 12:18).

"He [Adoniram, also known as Hadoram, 2 Chron. 10:18] was probably one of the most hated men in Israel, an embodiment of autocracy."³

5:17-18 Solomon's temple rested on massive limestone blocks that he had dug out just north of Jerusalem, as it was in Solomon's day. Modern-day visitors to Jerusalem can visit this quarry by entering through a doorway below the Damascus Gate.

"The present-day foundation of the temple-mount has impressive squared-off stones, but these were placed by Herod."⁴

The "Gebelites" (v. 18) lived in Byblos, 13 miles north of modern Beirut and 60 miles north of Tyre.

The main emphasis in this chapter is on the favorable response of the Phoenician king, Hiram, with which God blessed Israel through Solomon's wisdom (v. 7). Solomon wrote that "when a person's ways are pleasing to the LORD, He causes even his enemies to make peace with him" (Prov. 16:7). Such was God's blessing on Solomon at this time.

2. Temple construction ch. 6 (cf. 2 Chron. 3:1-9)

After arrangements for building the temple were in order, construction began. This building took seven years to complete (v. 38).

¹See Gray, pp. 155-56.

²NIV refers to *The Holy Bible: New International Version*.

³J. Barton Payne, "Second Chronicles," in *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 399. Cf. 1 Kings 4:6.

⁴DeVries, p. 83.

"We actually possess in these chapters concerning the construction and furnishing of a temple the fullest and most detailed specifications from the ancient Oriental world."¹

The date of the commencement of construction 6:1

This verse is one of the most important verses in the Old Testament chronologically. The dates of Solomon's reign (971-931 B.C.) are quite certain. They rest on references that other ancient Near Eastern king lists confirm.² Solomon began temple construction about 966 B.C. According to this verse the Exodus took place in 1445 or 1446 B.C. Most conservative scholars who take statements in Scripture like this verse seriously hold this date for the Exodus.³

The more popular date of about 1280 B.C. rests primarily on the assumption that Ramses II was the pharaoh of the Exodus. Those who hold this view believe that historical similarities between conditions during Ramses' reign and the biblical description of the Exodus support their theory. They usually take the "480 years" as a round number representing 12 generations, or as having been arrived at by adding up the lengths of various concurrent or overlapping periods, as though they were placed in one lineal string of years. There are some first-rate otherwise conservative scholars who also hold the later (1280 B.C.) date.⁴

Why did the writer of Kings tie the building of the temple to the Exodus? It was evidently for the reason explained above: With the building of the temple Israel would have an opportunity as never before in her history to realize the purpose for which God had formed and freed the nation. That purpose was to draw all people to Himself (Exod. 19:5-6).

Josephus tied the beginning of temple construction to several other important events in Old Testament history, though his computations do not seem to be correct:

"Solomon began to build the temple ... five hundred and ninety-two years after the exodus out of Egypt, but one

¹Montgomery, p. 142.

²See also Flavius Josephus, *Against Apion*, 1:17, 18.

³E.g., Gleason L. Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, pp. 191-98.

⁴E.g., Kenneth A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament*, pp. 57-75. See Finegan, pp. 588-98, for a good discussion of the problems of biblical chronology.

thousand and twenty years from Abraham's coming out of Mesopotamia into Canaan; and after the Deluge one thousand four hundred and forty years; and from Adam, the first man who was created, until Solomon built the temple, there had passed in all three thousand one hundred and two years. Now that year on which the temple began to be built, was already the eleventh year of the reign of Hiram; but from the building of Tyre to the building of the temple, there had passed two hundred and forty years."¹

The outside of the temple 6:2-11

Even though we have some information about the general specifications and appearance of the temple, the omission of other data makes the reproduction of a complete detailed model impossible. Essentially it followed the pattern of both the Mosaic tabernacle and other ancient Near Eastern temples.²

6:2 The temple was approximately 90 feet long, 30 feet wide, and 45 feet high. These are probably external dimension, though some believe they are internal.³ Thus the temple proper had about 2,700 square feet of floor space.

6:3 Its large open front porch added 15 more feet to its length. So the footprint of the temple was about twice the size of the Mosaic tabernacle. It was three times as high, and it faced east, as did the tabernacle and other ancient Near Eastern temples. In the ancient world, people were east-oriented, due to the rising of the sun in the east, rather than north-oriented, as we are today.

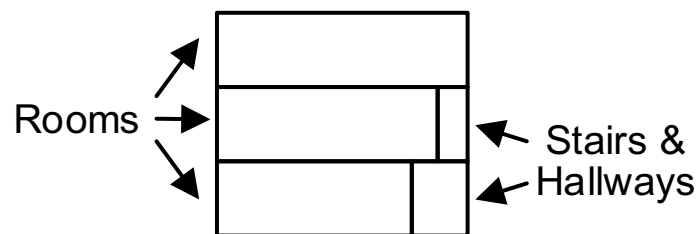
6:4-6 On the two sides, and possibly on the back, there were "narrow clerestory windows" (NIV) above the rooms ("side chambers,"

¹Josephus, *Antiquities of ...*, 8:3:1. See *Dissertation 5: Upon the Chronology of Josephus*, pp. 849-72, in the edition of Josephus' Works cited in the bibliography of these notes.

²See Albright, *Archaeology and ...*, pp. 142-56. V. Hurowitz, *I Have Built You an Exalted House: Temple Building in the Bible in Light of Mesopotamian and Northwest Semitic Writing*, is a thorough survey of ancient temple buildings. See also B. Halpern, *The Constitution of the Monarchy in Israel*, pp. 19-24.

³E.g., Jones, 1:163. Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Practical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, p. 253.

v. 5) that projected out from the outer walls of the temple proper. The priests probably used these side rooms for storage and service purposes.¹ They were apparently smallest on the first floor, where there were also hallways and stairways, larger on the second floor, that also had halls and stairs, and largest on the third floor. Another view is that the walls may have narrowed as they ascended from floor to floor.² The offset ledges (v. 6) were apparently on the exterior walls of temple proper and supported the upper floors of the side chambers.



CROSS SECTION OF
SIDE ROOMS

Josephus' descriptions of the temple's dimensions appear to be inaccurate and confusing. For example:

"He also built round about the temple thirty small rooms ... Every one of these rooms had five cubits in breadth, and the same in length, but in height twenty. Above these were other rooms, and others above them, equal, both in their measures and number; so that these reached to a height equal to the lower part of the house ... and truly every one of these rooms had a roof of their own, that was not connected with the other rooms ..."³

¹Patterson and Austel, p. 63.

²Jamieson, et al., p. 253.

³Josephus, *Antiquities of ...*, 8:3:2.

Josephus also wrote that there was another building over the temple, equal to it in its dimensions, and that the entire height of the complex was 120 cubits.¹

6:7 Evidently Solomon wanted to preserve the sanctity of the temple even while it was under construction by eliminating as much noise as possible (cf. Deut. 27:5-6).

"... God's work should be done with as much care and as little noise as may be."²

6:8 A doorway into the adjoining side chambers was on the south side of the building. Access to the upper side chambers was by a "winding staircase" or "stairway" (NIV). Spiral staircases were not unknown in the ancient Near East, and access to these side rooms was probably from inside this adjoining structure.³

6:9-10 Solomon covered the stone exterior of the temple and its ceiling with planks (or rows) of cedar. He also built the side chambers ("stories") against the exterior of the temple and attached them to the walls of the temple with cedar beams. Each of the rooms in this three-story structure was about seven and one-half feet high.

God's promise to bless Solomon's obedience 6:11-13

Probably this word from the LORD came to Solomon during temple construction. Note that this was a conditional promise based on obedience to the Mosaic Covenant. God would establish Solomon's kingdom forever (i.e., it would remain intact as long as Solomon lived; 2 Sam. 7:13). He would also continue to dwell among the Israelites and not forsake them. Unfortunately, because Solomon did not remain faithful to the covenant completely, God divided his kingdom after he died. Because the nation forsook the covenant, God ceased to dwell among the people and forsook them temporarily to captivity.

¹Ibid.

²Henry, p. 370.

³Gray, p. 166.

"Throughout the Solomon stories the author presents an activity, then waits until later to state God's approval or disapproval of it. For example, 3:1-15 expresses approval of Solomon's rise to power in chaps. 1—2, and 5:12 explains that the decisions in 5:1-7 demonstrate God-given wisdom. This strategy continues here, where, through some unspecified manner, Solomon receives God's word about the temple."¹

The writer evidently inserted these verses in his description of Solomon's building activities in order to emphasize the centrality of obedience to the overall success of the project.

The inside of the temple 6:14-36

6:14 This verse is a summary statement, with exactly how he built the temple following.

6:15-18 The entire temple proper was made of limestone overlaid on the inside with cedar paneling on the walls and juniper flooring. Solomon partitioned off about 30 feet at the rear of the temple with cedar boards making it a separate room. This became the most holy place (the Holy of Holies). The rest of the interior of the temple was about 60 feet long. This was the holy place. Both rooms were completely covered with cedar paneling decorated with carvings of gourds and open flowers; no stone was seen inside the temple.

6:19-22 The inner sanctuary (the Holy of Holies), which was 30 feet by 30 feet by 30 feet, was not only paneled with cedar but also overlaid with gold, as was the holy place. Solomon also hung gold chains across the front of the inner sanctuary. The "altar" refers to the altar of incense (cf. 7:48). This altar evidently stood at the west end of the holy place, not the Holy of Holies (cf. Exod. 30:6; 40:5; Lev. 16:2; Heb. 9:4, 7). Solomon paneled this altar with cedar and overlaid it with gold as well.

One problem that continues to puzzle scholars is the difference in height between the holy place (30 cubits or 45 feet, v. 2) and the most holy place (20 cubits or 30 feet, v. 20). Was the floor of the most holy place higher, and were

¹House, pp. 127-28.

there steps up to it from the holy place? Or was the ceiling of the most holy place lower than that of the holy place? Or was the most holy place perhaps a room within the holy place?¹ We do not know, though the last suggestion seems unlikely.

6:23-28 The "cherubim" were figures of angels carved out of olive wood (vv. 23-28). They may have resembled "winged sphinxes."² Since there were cherubim attached to the mercy seat of the ark, the cherubim mentioned here were two additional freestanding cherubim.

6:29-30 In addition to the carvings of gourds and open flowers (v. 18), there were also engravings of cherubim and palm trees on the walls of both the inner and outer sanctuaries (the most holy place and the holy place). The juniper boards on the floor of both sanctuaries were overlaid with gold.

6:31-35 There were two olive wood doors hung on five-sided doorposts that led from the holy place into the most holy place. Doorposts (or doorjambs) are the upright parts of a doorframe. Above them was a lintel of olive wood. The lintel was a horizontal support across the top of the doors. There were also two juniper wood doors hung on four-sided doorposts that led into the holy place from the front porch of the temple. Each of these doors was bifold: hinged ("turned on pivots") in the middle, probably to make the entrance into the temple larger or smaller as needed. All of these doors had carvings of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers on them, and they were overlaid with gold.

Why there were five-sided doorposts on the inner sanctuary doors and four-sided doorposts on the outer sanctuary is unknown. Perhaps the five-sided ones were more decorative or ornate and would have been more suitable for the Holy of Holies.

6:36 Solomon built the inner courtyard that surrounded the temple with three rows of cut stone and one row of cedar beams.

¹Jean Ovellette, "The Solomonic *Debir* according to the Hebrew Text of I Kings 6," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 89:3 (September 1970):338-43.

²Auld, p. 44.

Scholars also debate what relationship the row of cedar beams had to the three rows of cut stone (cf. Ezra 6:4).¹ The cedar beams may have been cedar coping on top of the stone. That is, they may have been atop the cut stone wall. Or they may have been cedar beams that paneled the stone wall on the courtyard side. Perhaps the cedar beams stood vertically between the horizontal courses of stone. Possibly cedar beams alternated horizontally with rows of stone. Or maybe there were multiple courses of wood and masonry, one course of cedar for every three courses of stone.² All of these suggestions are possibilities.

In addition to the "inner courtyard" there was also an outer one (2 Chron. 4:9) that was slightly lower in elevation (Jer. 36:10).

Summary of the construction 6:37-38

Seven years is a round number here (966-959 B.C.). Actually, completion took seven and one-half years, since the Hebrew month Ziv (lit. "Flowers") is late March and early April, and Bul (lit. "Moisture") is late October and early November. Probably since most ancient Near Easterners regarded seven as a number symbolic of perfection, the Israelites viewed their temple as a perfect structure.

"In an earlier era scholars debunked the reality of a temple in Israel like Solomon's because nothing similar was known from the ancient Near East. However, at 'Ain Dara (and earlier in Tall Ta'yinat), Syria, a temple from the tenth century B.C. came to light that bore a remarkable similarity to the temple of Jerusalem. The size is approximately the same; it consists of two chambers, the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place; and it clearly accommodated cultic features like those described in the Bible. Thus the notion that Israel had a temple in the tenth century rests on firm ground."³

¹H. C. Thomson, "A Row of Cedar Beams," *Palestinian Exploration Quarterly* 92 (1960):57-63.

²Montgomery, p. 159.

³Eugene Merrill, "The Veracity of the Word: A Summary of Major Archaeological Finds," *Kindred Spirit* 34:3 (Winter 2010):13. See also Hurowitz, pp. 251-546.

This is an example of acculturation: God giving revelation of Himself in forms that were familiar to the original recipients of that revelation. The temple was small and was not designed to accommodate a large number of people. The Israelite congregation assembled in the large open courtyard around the temple proper.

Why did God not give us more detail, and why did he give us the detail that he did? All that the writer recorded of the temple tells us two things about it: We have enough information about the structure so that we can find our way around it as we continue reading about it. And its magnificence as a fitting house for Yahweh, the only true and great God, should impress us.

Some expositors have been critical of Solomon's temple, believing that it was a poor substitute for the tabernacle.¹ The argument is mainly that the simple is better than the complex and ornate. The Bible itself makes no direct evaluation by way of comparison.

Archaeologists have never been able to pinpoint the exact location of Solomon's temple on Mt. Moriah. Since Herod built his temple on the site of Nehemiah's temple, and since Nehemiah built his temple on the site of Solomon's temple, there is little question about the general site. It must have been somewhere on the esplanade on which the Dome of the Rock (Mosque of Omar) now stands.

Modern Jews pray at the wailing (western) wall because they believe it is the closest site to the holy of holies that is presently accessible to them. Their rabbis discourage them from walking on the temple esplanade for fear of unintentionally treading on the actual site of the holy of holies.

One writer believed that the site of the second temple was just north of the Dome of the Rock. The "second temple" refers to Nehemiah's temple, which Herod renovated, in contrast to the first or Solomonic temple. This writer concluded that the site of the holy of holies corresponds to that of the present Dome of the Tablets (also called the Dome of the Spirits).² Others believe that it was closer to the site of the Dome of the Rock.

How should what Solomon did in building the temple affect our thinking about modern church architecture? Since there is no earthly central

¹E.g., J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee*, 2:260-63.

²Asher Kaufman, "Where the Ancient Temple of Jerusalem Stood," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 9:2 (March-April 1983):40-59.

sanctuary for all of Christianity, as there was for ancient Israel, there is no structure that corresponds to Solomon's temple today. But should local churches spend vast quantities of money to build magnificent buildings to honor God? The New Testament does not comment on this, leaving it in the area of freedom for Christians. However, the New Testament teaches that now the universal church, the local congregation, and believers' bodies are all temples of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 2:21; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19). We should adorn these temples with conduct that glorifies our God in the sight of onlookers.

3. Solomon's palace 7:1-12

7:1 Solomon's palace complex took longer to build than the temple—13 years as opposed to seven—and it was much larger. In view of the time that he devoted to their construction, their materials, and their sizes, Solomon may have been more concerned about his palace than he was about the temple.¹ Or it may simply have taken him longer to build the palace complex because it required more structures and facilities. The king evidently completed the temple and then began work on his palace (cf. 9:10).

"Palace and temple complexes are the most important visual symbols of royal power and indicate more precisely the location of the center within a stratified society."²

7:2-5 Solomon built his palace ("house") out of the same wood that he received from Hiram to build the temple. Its length was about 150 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high. Four rows of 15 cedar columns supported trimmed cedar beams on top of which was a cedar roof (NIV). Evidently three windows, three paces apart, were located high on two of the walls, and these windows faced each other. There were also two sets of three rectangular doorways toward the front of the building that also faced each other.

¹Provan, pp. 69-70.

²Keith Whitelam, "The Symbols of Power," *Biblical Archaeologist* 49:3 (September 1986):170.

7:6 Another part of Solomon's palace complex was "the hall of pillars." This may have been a separate building that was about 75 feet long and 45 feet wide with a porch (or portico) supported by pillars and a threshold leading into it. The NIV translators understood this structure to be a roofed colonnade.

"The Pillared Hall (called the *Palace of the Forest of Lebanon*) was used as an audience chamber or throne hall, and ... was larger than the temple. It also served as a state treasury, displaying selected precious objects received as tribute (*cf.* 10:16-17)."¹

7:7 A third structure was "the hall of judgment," where Solomon sat on his throne and dispensed justice. It was paneled with cedar from floor to ceiling (NIV).

7:8 Apparently Solomon's palace complex included a separate house (or apartment?) where he lived and a house where his wife, Pharaoh's daughter, lived. These houses were built along the same lines as the other structures: with dressed stone and cedar wood.

7:9-11 All of these structures, and the exterior courtyard that evidently surrounded them, were made of cut stone (undoubtedly limestone), and then the interiors of the buildings were paneled with cedar. The foundation of the palace complex was also large stones: about 15 feet long by 10 feet wide.

7:12 Evidently a large courtyard surrounded both the temple, with its courtyard, and the palace complex. The wall around it was identical to the wall that surrounded the temple courtyard ("the inner courtyard," *cf.* 6:36).

Solomon seems to have built several separate but connected buildings. A large common courtyard evidently surrounded the temple and the palace.

¹Wiseman, p. 111.

A similar view is that the palace was one structure and the other buildings were really sections of it.¹

The size of Solomon's palace complex was much larger than that of the temple, which was separated from the palace by an open courtyard. Thus the temple corresponded to a relatively small royal chapel.² Some of the government building complexes in England have separate churches connected with them (e.g., the Palace of Westminster and St. Margaret's Church). Similarly, some of the castles and large family estates in England have chapels connected with, but often separate from, the main buildings.

The geographical proximity of the temple and the palace visualized the fact that the king was acting for God. We do not know exactly where Solomon placed the palace buildings in relation to each other or to the temple.³

"It [the temple] was not in the midst of the city, like most heathen temples of the time. Its isolation symbolized the uniqueness of the deity to whom it was dedicated."⁴

The city of David was just south of and topographically lower than the temple and palace complexes.

Ancient Near Easterners did not view a king's sovereignty as established until he had built a palace for himself.⁵ Solomon's palace, therefore, further enhanced his prestige. God blessed Solomon and Israel by allowing him to build it.

"He did everything imaginable to show that, as Yahweh was a great God, he was a great king. What is displayed here is far more Solomon's 'riches and honor' than his 'wisdom.' His was undoubtedly the piety of worldly success."⁶

¹Wood, *Israel's United ...*, p. 291, n. 17.

²Gray, p. 162.

³See David Ussishkin, "King Solomon's Palaces," *Biblical Archaeologist* 36 (1973):78-105, for discussion of similar temple palace complexes in the ancient Near East.

⁴DeVries, p. 97.

⁵A. Leo Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, pp. 95-98.

⁶Devries, p. 103.

4. The temple furnishings 7:13-51 (cf. 2 Chron. 3:10-22)

The writer now resumed describing the temple, having finished his description of Solomon's palace. The people also saw the glory of Yahweh reflected in the furnishings of the temple. These furnishings came from several sources, but all contributed to the proper worship of Yahweh.

Solomon's primary craftsman 7:13-14

The Hiram of verse 13 was obviously a different person from the King of Tyre (5:1). God evidently guided this Hiram as he fashioned the temple furnishings (cf. Exod. 31:1-11; 2 Chron. 2:13-14).¹ He was "a widow's son from the tribe of Naphtali" (v. 14).

"In II Chronicles 2:14 his mother is said to have been of the daughters of Dan. The apparent discrepancy may be reconciled thus: Hiram's mother, though belonging to the tribe of Dan, had been married to a Naphtalite, so that when married afterwards to a Tyrian, she might be described as a widow of the tribe of Naphtali. Or, if she was a native of the city Dan (Laish), she might be said to be of the daughters of Dan, as born in that place; and of the tribe of Naphtali, as really belonging to it."²

Furnishings outside the temple 7:15-47

The two bronze pillars 7:15-22

7:15 The two pillars on the temple porch were common features that flanked the main entrances to temples in Syria, Phoenicia, Cyprus, Assyria, and elsewhere in the ancient Near East at this time.³ Some of these pillars supported the porch roof, but others were freestanding, as these probably were.⁴ Each of these bronze pillars was about 27 feet high and 18 feet in circumference.

¹See Allen S. Maller, "Hiram from Tyre," *Journal of Reform Judaism* 29:2 (Spring 1982):41-42.

²Jamieson, et al., p. 254.

³Albright, *Archaeology and ...*, p. 144; Volkmar Fritz, "Temple Architecture," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 13:4 (July-August 1987):38-49.

⁴Albright, *The Archaeology ...*, p. 144.

7:16-20 Hiram made two "capitals" out of bronze. These were separate pieces of cast bronze that were placed on top of the pillars and capped them. Each of these capitals added an additional 7 and a half feet to the height of each pillar. Seven networks of interwoven chains (NIV) adorned each capital. Two rows of 100 bronze pomegranates also encircled each capital. The general shape of the capitals was that of lilies (or lotuses), though perhaps only the top part of the capital, the top 6 feet, looked like lilies.

This amount of detail is unusual, and it was probably included in the text to enhance the reader's appreciation for the beauty and glory of the pillars. The lily and pomegranate designs probably symbolized the fertility and fruitfulness of God's blessing and presence, pomegranates being known fertility symbols in the ancient Near East, and the lotus was a symbol of life.¹

7:21-22 Having completed the construction of the pillars, Hiram set them up on the front porch of the temple. He also gave them names. In various countries temple pillars symbolized various things.² In Israel their purpose seems to have been to remind the Israelites of Yahweh's establishment of Israel and strength for Israel. Jachin (or Jakin) means "He shall establish," and Boaz means "In Him is strength."³ The pillars may have symbolized the presence and permanence of Yahweh and the king.⁴ Jones argued that they stood for the covenant between Yahweh and His people, especially between Him and the Davidic dynasty.⁵ R. B. Y. Scott proposed the following expanded meaning of the two pillars as: "He (Yahweh) will establish the throne of David, and his kingdom to his seed for ever" and "In the strength of Yahweh shall the king rejoice."⁶

¹Gray, pp. 185-186.

²William F. Albright, "Two Cressets From Marisa and the Pillars of Jachin and Boaz," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 85 (February 1942):18-27.

³Cf. Auld, pp. 52-53.

⁴Gray, p. 187.

⁵Jones, 1:183.

⁶R. B. Y. Scott, "The Pillars Jachin and Boaz," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 58 (1938):143-47, cited in Gray, p. 188.

"The Jachin formula may have been 'Yahweh will establish (*yakin*) thy throne for ever' (or the like) and the Boaz formula may have run 'In the strength of Yahweh shall the king rejoice,' or something similar."¹

The Sea 7:23-26

7:23-24 The "Sea" was a round metal reservoir designed to hold water, so called because of its largeness, according to Josephus.² It was about 15 feet in diameter, 7 and a half feet high, and 45 feet in circumference.³ Under the brim it had two rows of metal gourds all around, 10 gourds every 18 inches, that were cast as part of the Sea. Gourds were symbols of fertility (cf. 6:18). The metal used was probably bronze, since other articles in the temple courtyard were made of bronze (cf. vv. 15, 16, 27, 30, 38, 45, 47).

7:25 The Sea rested on a base composed of cast metal likenesses of oxen (or bulls, NIV), the traditional burden bearers (or symbols of virility), three oxen facing in each of the four compass directions. Thus it rested on symbols of strength and service (cf. the priests). The 12 oxen may have represented the 12 tribes or Solomon's 12 administrative districts.⁴

7:26 The Sea was about three inches thick, and its brim was like that of a cup, which probably means that it was rounded.

Some believe that the Sea had a total capacity of 18,000 gallons (2 Chron. 4:5) but that it normally held about 12,000 gallons, as stated here.⁵ Others believe that the Sea itself held 12,000 gallons, and that the Sea plus the ten movable basins (vv. 27-40a) held a total of 18,000 baths.

¹Albright, *Archaeology and ...*, p. 139.

²Josephus, *Antiquities of ...*, 8:3:5.

³See Albert Zuidhof, "King Solomon's Molten Sea and (pi)," *Biblical Archaeologist* 45:3 (Summer 1982):179-84; Archer, *Encyclopedia of ...*, pp. 198-99.

⁴Jones, 1:184.

⁵E.g., Arno C. Gaebelin, *The Annotated Bible*, 1:2:423.

"... the value of the *bath* has been variously calculated between 20.92 and 46.6 litres. ... [T]he proposal of 22 litres [5.81 gallons] in biblical times (Albright) and 21.5 litres in Hellenistic times is usually adopted as a basis for calculation ..."¹

If one bath equaled 5.81 gallons, and the sea held 2,000 baths (v. 26), the Sea probably held about 11,620 gallons. Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown's calculations are different:

"The molten sea was an immense semicircular vase, measuring seventeen and a half feet in diameter, and being eight and three-fourths feet in depth. This, at three and a half inches in thickness, could not weigh less than from twenty-five to thirty tons in one solid casting—and held from 16,000 to 20,000 gallons of water."²

The ten stands 7:27-37

The commentators and translators have had great difficulty interpreting the descriptions that follow, because many of the Hebrew words that were used occur nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible.

Hiram also made 10 stands of bronze. These stands were the bases that supported 10 bronze basins (vv. 38-39). Each stand was about six feet square and four and a half feet high. Each one had paneling that was attached to the upright legs. Images of lions, oxen (or bulls), cherubim, and palm trees decorated the panels, and beneath them were wreaths, which may have been representations of flowers, leaves, and stems arranged in a circle (vv. 29, 36).

"On the inside of the stand there was an opening that had a circular frame one cubit [18 inches] deep. This opening was

¹ *The New Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "Weights and Measures," by D. J. Wiseman and D. H. Wheaton, p. 1324.

² Jamieson, et al., p. 254.

round, and with its basework it measured a cubit and a half [27 inches]."¹

Each stand had four cast metal wheels that were 27 inches, probably in diameter, that were attached to the stands with axles, like chariot wheels. Apparently each stand had four handles, one on each corner, that projected from the stand (v. 34). Evidently a band of bronze ran around the top of each stand, and the panels were attached to them. All ten stands were identical.

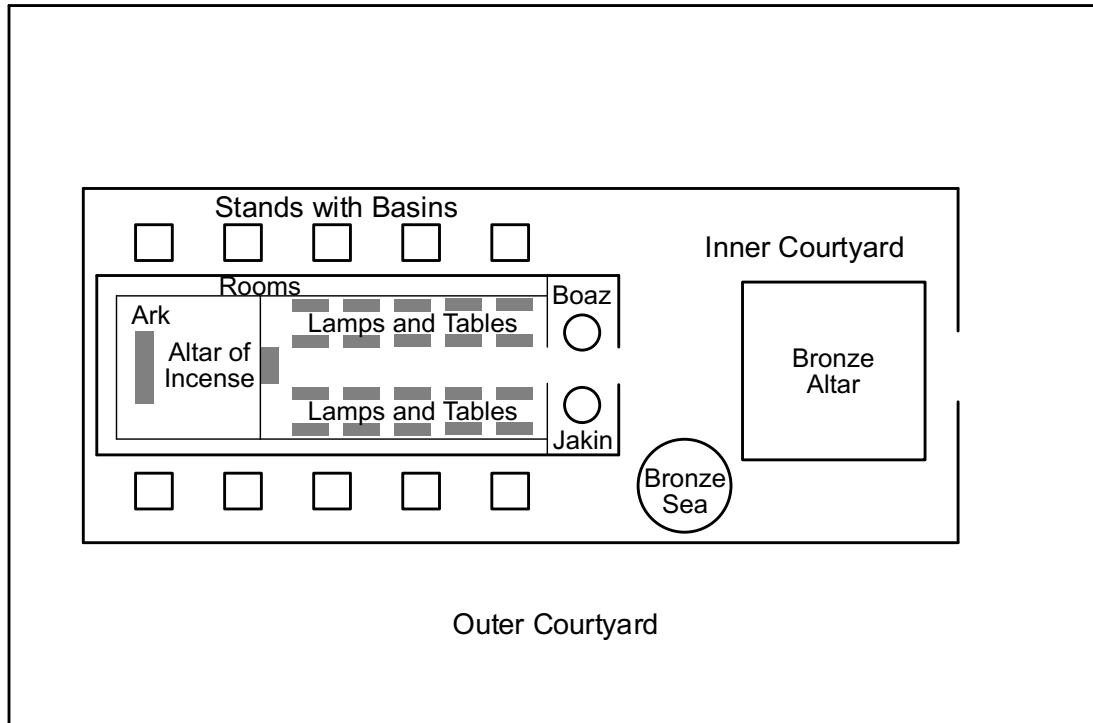
The ten basins 7:38-39

7:38 The priests evidently used the 10 bronze basins, that rested on top of the 10 stands, to wash when they butchered sacrificial animals. Each basin was six feet square, five and one-half feet high, and held about 240 gallons of water. Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown estimated that each movable stand held 300 gallons of water and weighed two tons when full.²

7:39 Hiram placed five of the stands and basins on the south (right) side of the temple and five on the north (left) side. He also placed the Sea on the southeast side of the temple.

¹The NIV translation of verse 31a and b.

²Jamieson, et al., p. 254.



Summary of the external furnishings 7:40-47

7:40-44 These verses summarize what was describe in more detail in the preceding verses.

7:45-47 Hiram also made buckets, shovels, bowls, and utensils that were used in connection with these furnishings. They were all bronze articles that were molded in the clay of the Jordan Valley and were polished. There were so many of these articles that Solomon did not bother to weigh them all.

The amount of detail that the biblical writer included gives us some appreciation of the beauty, symmetry, glory, and value of the temple's external furnishings. All of this contributed to the greater glory of Yahweh and helped the Israelites appreciate His greatness.

Furnishings inside the temple 7:48-50

As in the Mosaic tabernacle, the metals used expressed the glory of God. The closer to the ark, the "throne" of Yahweh, the more valuable was the metal used. Everything inside the temple was gold or gold plated, and outside the temple there was bronze. While the ordinary Israelite did not

see the inside of the temple, he or she would have known of its glory. Perhaps this section of verses is shorter than the former one (vv. 13-47) because the majority of the people, who were not priests, did not see these furnishings.

"The candelabra ["lampstands"] were arranged down the length of the main sanctuary [the holy place] to give light on these tables (Ex. 25:31-40)."¹

David's accessories 7:51

The priests probably placed the treasures that David had collected in the rooms of the structure that surrounded the temple (6:5-6) for use in Israel's worship as needed. The temple, then, became a treasury of Israel in that it housed some of the nation's greatest treasures and wealth.

The writer gave us extensive information about the temple furnishings in order to increase our awe, not only of the temple itself, but also of Yahweh's greatness. The temple and all it contained reflected the God who met with His people there.

Perhaps Solomon's greatest contribution to Israel's life was the building of the temple. He glorified Yahweh in the eyes of his own people, and in the eyes of his non-Israelite neighbors, by building a magnificent house for the LORD. The amount of text given to the description of the temple and Solomon's palace complex illustrates the importance of these buildings in ancient Near Eastern culture.

5. The temple dedication ch. 8 (cf. 2 Chron. 5:2—7:10)

This chapter climaxes the writer's emphasis on the greatness of Yahweh as Israel's God and Solomon's greatness. It is the most detailed account of a dedication service in the Bible. It is also one of the most theologically significant texts in 1 and 2 Kings.

The entrance of the ark 8:1-11

8:1 The Israelites regarded the ark of the covenant as the throne of Yahweh. It was the place where He manifested His presence in a localized way and where He received the blood that atoned

¹Wiseman, p. 116.

for the Israelites' sins on the Day of Atonement. The ark had rested in David's tabernacle in the city of David, which was below and just south of the temple/palace complex, since David had brought it from the house of Obed-edom (2 Sam. 6:17). It was the only item in the temple that was not new. Perhaps God did not change it in order to help the people realize that He, symbolized by the ark, had not changed. His person and methods of dealing with them at the mercy seat were the same as they had always been.

8:2 The ceremony of installing the ark in Solomon's temple took place during the Feast of Tabernacles. This was one of the feasts that the Mosaic Law specified that all Israelite males had to attend (Lev. 23:33-36). This feast was a commemoration of the LORD's faithfulness during His people's wilderness wanderings. It looked back to their slavery in Egypt and forward to their establishment in the Promised Land.

8:3-8 The bringing of the ark into the temple symbolized the fulfillment of that hope. Evidently Solomon waited for this feast in order to celebrate the dedication of the temple, and he used the months following the completion of construction to furnish it and to prepare for the celebration.

What these verses picture is the symbolic enthronement of Yahweh as Israel's King. Israel's God now entered into His "house." As mentioned above, the people did not regard the sovereignty of a human king as firmly established until he built a palace for himself. Now they saw the sovereignty of the divine King established over Israel.

Evidently the poles that carried the ark (vv. 7-8), and were fastened to the sides of the ark (cf. Exod. 25:15), were oriented so that they ran east and west. They were so long (more than 30 feet long; cf. 6:20) that they evidently extended out of the most holy place ("the inner sanctuary") into the holy place. Apparently the veil that separated the holy place from the most holy place hid the ark from sight, but not the eastern ends of the poles. They were visible from the holy place, but not from "outside" the temple building.

"To this day" (v. 8) shows that the writer wrote this part of Kings before 586 B.C., when the Babylonian army destroyed this temple (cf. 9:13, 21; 10:12, 20; 2 Kings 2:22; 8:22; 10:27; 14:7; 16:6; 17:23, 34).

8:9 The ark housed the tablets of the Decalogue (the Ten Commandments; Heb. 9:4). The presence of these stone tablets in the ark reemphasized the importance of the Israelites submitting to the whole Mosaic Covenant, which these tablets represented. That obedience would be the key to Israel's future success (Josh. 1:8).

8:10-11 The shekinah (from the Hebrew root translated "to dwell") cloud (Exod. 19:9; 24:15-16), symbolic of Yahweh's presence, filled the temple. It had also filled the tabernacle at its dedication (Exod. 40:34-35).¹ The cloud enabled the Israelites to understand that the same God who had led their forefathers through the wilderness had come to dwell among them and to bless them with His presence. Even priestly ministry was impossible during this glorious revelation of Yahweh. All that the people could do was worship.

Josephus described the cloud as "diffused and temperate,—not such a rough one as we see full of rain in the winter season."²

Solomon's address to the people 8:12-21

8:12-13 God previously said that He would dwell in the cloudy pillar in the wilderness (Lev. 16:2). Solomon hoped that God would now dwell in the temple forever (i.e., from then on). Sanford Yoder considered verses 12 and 13 to be the only poetry in 1 Kings.³

8:14-21 In his address to the gathered Israelites, Solomon emphasized the desire of David's heart to build the temple (vv. 17-18). But God raised up Solomon to do that, as He had promised to

¹See George R. Berry, "The Glory of Yahweh and the Temple," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 56 (1937):115-17.

²Josephus, *Antiquities of ...*, 8:4:2.

³Sanford C. Yoder, *Poetry of the Old Testament*, pp. 62, 76.

do. The temple was a house for the reputation (name) of Yahweh; it made a statement about Him. "Name" occurs 14 times in verses 16 through 20. The Mosaic Covenant was the basis of Israel's ongoing fellowship with God (v. 21). Solomon demonstrated humility and gratitude in what he said.

Solomon's prayer of dedication 8:22-53

This great prayer centers on the Mosaic Covenant. That is its heart. It is the longest prayer in the Bible. Solomon introduced seven petitions with a backward look, emphasizing God's faithfulness (vv. 23-26). He concluded with a forward look, stressing God's mercy (vv. 52-53). Solomon referred to himself as God's "servant" five times in this prayer (vv. 28 [twice], 29, 30, and 52).

"... the main subjects of the dedicatory prayer, as well as its main divisions, are dependent on the list of curses in Dt. 28:15-68."¹

8:22 It is significant that Solomon himself prayed this prayer in the presence of the people, personally leading them in worship; he did not delegate it to a priest or prophet.

"The attitude of Solomon in this ceremony is to be noted. Here he is describes as *standing*, an attitude of prayer which is illustrated by sculptures from all over the ancient Near East, the attitude being that of an inferior before the deity, who is represented as seated."²

8:23-26 Solomon began his prayer by praising Yahweh, the God of Israel, for His faithfulness to his covenant with David thus far (vv. 23-24). He then asked Yahweh to continue to be faithful to His covenant with David by allowing one of David's descendants to rule over Israel forever (vv. 25-26).

8:27 Solomon's expressed his amazement that the transcendent God would dwell in the temple that he had built. He did not

¹Jones, 1:197.

²Gray, pp. 218-19.

confuse the symbol of God's presence, the temple, with God Himself (cf. 1 Sam. 4:3).

8:28-30 Then Solomon requested that God would listen to the prayer that he would pray, and to the prayers that His people would pray in the future, and that He would hear and forgive them. Praying "toward this place" (v. 30) involved praying toward the temple where God was. It became traditional for the Jews to pray facing toward Jerusalem even after the temple was destroyed (cf. Dan. 6:10).

8:31-53 Solomon then specified seven situations in which the Israelites might pray to Yahweh in the future. These seven situations represented every situation in which the Israelites might find themselves, seven representing completeness. He prayed that Yahweh would grant them mercy when His people turned to Him in situations involving violations of the covenant.

These included personal sins, represented by swearing falsely (vv. 31-32), defeat in battle (vv. 33-34), drought (vv. 35-36), and famine (vv. 37-40). He next asked for God's grace on God-fearing foreigners (vv. 41-43), as well as on the Israelites in battle (vv. 44-45) and after captivity (vv. 46-53; cf. Dan. 6:10). All the calamities that Solomon mentioned in his prayer are curses that God promised to send on Israel if the Israelites broke the Mosaic Covenant (cf. Lev. 26:16-39; Deut. 28:22, 25, 38, 42, 59; 31:17, 29; 32:24).

As Hannah's prayer (1 Sam. 2:1-10) set the tone for all that followed in 1 and 2 Samuel, so Solomon's prayer here does the same for 1 and 2 Kings. The remainder of 1 and 2 Kings shows how God answered Solomon's prayer. That is why this chapter is so significant theologically. All of the possible misfortunes that the king mentioned here eventually took place in Israel's history, culminating in the Babylonian Captivity. Later in Israel's history, the writing prophets frequently alluded to conditions that Solomon mentioned in this prayer, which came to pass in the prophets' days because of Israel's sins.

"Solomon's prayer is essential to comprehend the message of the book. The author of the Book of Kings intended for the words of Solomon to be heard at a key point in the relationship

between God and His people, that is, at the time the temple in Jerusalem was dedicated. The following words of Solomon's prayer [vv. 47-48] would appeal to the exiles and would be a specific plea for repentance because of the hope of returning to the motherland. This is the essence of the book's message."¹

Solomon's benediction on the people 8:54-61

- 8:54-55 Evidently Solomon began his prayer standing (v. 22), and he concluded it on his knees (v. 54). Solomon's posture of kneeling with open hands uplifted to heaven symbolized his heart attitude, as posture often does in prayer.² By kneeling, Solomon, the earthly king, placed himself in a supplicant's position before the heavenly King, dependent and eager to receive the blessings that he requested.
- 8:56-59 This benediction began with a review of God's past faithfulness (v. 56). Solomon then voiced three wishes (vv. 57-59). The three desires of Solomon's heart were, first, that God would bless his generation with His divine presence (v. 57). Second, he asked that He would give His people the will to walk in obedience to His covenant (v. 58). Third, he prayed that God would keep Solomon's requests dear to His heart (v. 59).
- 8:60-61 Solomon concluded his benediction with an explanation of his motive in asking for these things, namely, the universal glorification of Yahweh (v. 60). He concluded with a challenge for the future (v. 61). Solomon's final appeal to the people was that they would devote themselves to Yahweh wholeheartedly and express that commitment by obeying His Law. Unfortunately, Solomon himself failed to do this completely.

Solomon's sacrifices 8:62-66

- 8:62 As a royal priest, Solomon led the "kingdom of priests" (Israel, Exod. 19:6) in making an immense sacrifice to Yahweh.

¹Gershon Galil, "The Message of the Book of Kings in Relation to Deuteronomy and Jeremiah," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 158:632 (October-December 2001):408.

²See Thomas L. Constable, *Talking to God*, pp. 72, 159-60.

"This unique position of the king [as a priest] is not to be ascribed to foreign ideas; rather it was the genuine development of the natural priesthood of the father of the family, its representative before Deity."¹

8:63-64 The sacrifices were all offerings of worship. The burnt offering represented the dedication of the worshipper's person to God, and it secured forgiveness. The grain offering pictured the dedication of his work to God. The peace offering expressed the joy that resulted from the fellowship that God had made possible with Himself and with the worshipper's fellowman (cf. Lev. 1—3).

The number of offerings that Solomon offered seems incredibly large, but contemporary extra-biblical records of other sacrifices that involved thousands of animals are extant.

8:65 The feast that accompanied these sacrifices lasted 7 days. Perhaps the priests made sacrifices at other places outside the temple courtyard. People came from the far Northeast (Hamath) and the extreme Southwest (the Wadi el-Arish) to this feast, namely, from all over Israel.

8:66 This verse is very significant because it shows that because of Israel's rededication in this covenant renewal ceremony, King Solomon enjoyed blessing from his people on whom he had brought blessing. The result was joy and gladness of heart for everyone. These are what God had promised in the Mosaic Law as consequences of commitment to His will. God blessed Solomon personally, and he became a channel of blessing to the nation he served, because he committed himself to obeying God's Word.

This dedication ceremony was the biggest event in Israel, in terms of its theological significance, since God gave Israel the Law at Mount Sinai. Israel was finally in the Promised Land with her God "enthroned" in a place of great honor. Now Israel was in position to fulfill her calling as a nation in the world as never before in her history (cf. Exod. 19:5-6). The significance of

¹Montgomery, p. 192.

this chapter becomes clearer when we read the Prophets section of the Old Testament, because the writing prophets alluded to it often.

D. THE FRUITS OF SOLOMON'S REIGN CHS. 9—11

The writer next recorded what happened to Solomon and to Israel as a result of the king's provision to exalt the reputation of Yahweh among His people. He narrated God's covenant with Solomon (9:1-9), further evidences of Yahweh's blessing (9:10-28), Solomon's greatness (ch. 10), and Solomon's apostasy (ch. 11).

1. God's covenant with Solomon 9:1-9 (cf. 2 Chron. 7:11-22)

- 9:1-2 God responded to Solomon's dedication of himself and his nation as He had responded to David (2 Sam. 7) and to Solomon earlier (ch. 3): He offered Solomon continued blessing for continued faithfulness.
- 9:3-5 First, God promised that He would do what Solomon had asked in his dedicatory prayer (8:22-53; 9:3). Second, He said that He would provide a continuous line of descendants from Solomon to sit on Israel's throne if Solomon would continue to follow God faithfully (cf. 2:1-4). The alternative would have been cutting off Solomon's descendants and replacing them with descendants from another branch of David's family (cf. the fate of Eli's house). God maintained Solomon's line because, generally speaking, Solomon remained faithful to the LORD.
- 9:6-9 Third, if Solomon, the subsequent kings, or the people abandoned the LORD's covenant, He would do three things: He would remove the people from their land, abandon the temple, and make Israel a byword instead of a blessing. This, too, God did for Israel, because overall, Israel did not remain faithful.

"The rest of Kings will be preoccupied with the blessing which follows obedience and the curses enacted after any failure to

obey. The reference point will be to God's revealed word and the language is that of Deuteronomy."¹

2. Further evidences of God's blessing 9:10-28 (cf. 2 Chron. 8)

Sometime after the mid-point of Solomon's 40-year reign, God was blessing him for his faithfulness. What the writer described in this section of text took place after Solomon had completed his major building projects in Jerusalem, which took about 20 years.

Solomon's gifts to Hiram 9:10-14

Solomon gave 20 Galilean towns (settlements) that bordered Phoenicia to Hiram. This arrangement compensated Hiram for all the lumber and four and one-half tons of gold that he had sent to Solomon for his building projects. The gift of these towns had the effect of bringing the border of Phoenicia farther south.

"Apart from the fact that Solomon shouldn't have been so extravagant in building his 'palace,' he didn't have the right to give twenty cities away just to pay his debts. All the land belonged to the Lord and could not be deeded away permanently (Lev. 25:23)."²

Hiram may have called these towns "Cabul" (v. 13), a word that sounds like the Hebrew word for "good for nothing," because they were not in a productive region. This cheap gift did not contribute to ongoing good relations between Israel and Phoenicia. Josephus wrote that ancient Tyrian records mentioned these things.³

"The border villages may have been fortified for defence [*sic*] purposes and seem to have been redeemed later (2 Ch. 8:2), perhaps following successful trade (v. 14) or tribute brought from Sheba (*cf.* 10:10)."⁴

¹Wiseman, p. 125.

²Wiersbe, p. 435.

³Josephus, *Against Apion*, 1:18.

⁴Wiseman, p. 126.

"This episode shows a conniving side of Solomon."¹

Leon Wood believed that Hiram had loaned Solomon the gold, and that these towns were payment for that loan.² Montgomery agreed:

"The bargain between the two kings was a loan to replenish Solomon's empty treasury, for which the latter pawned twenty cantons in Galilee."³

Solomon's public works 9:15-19

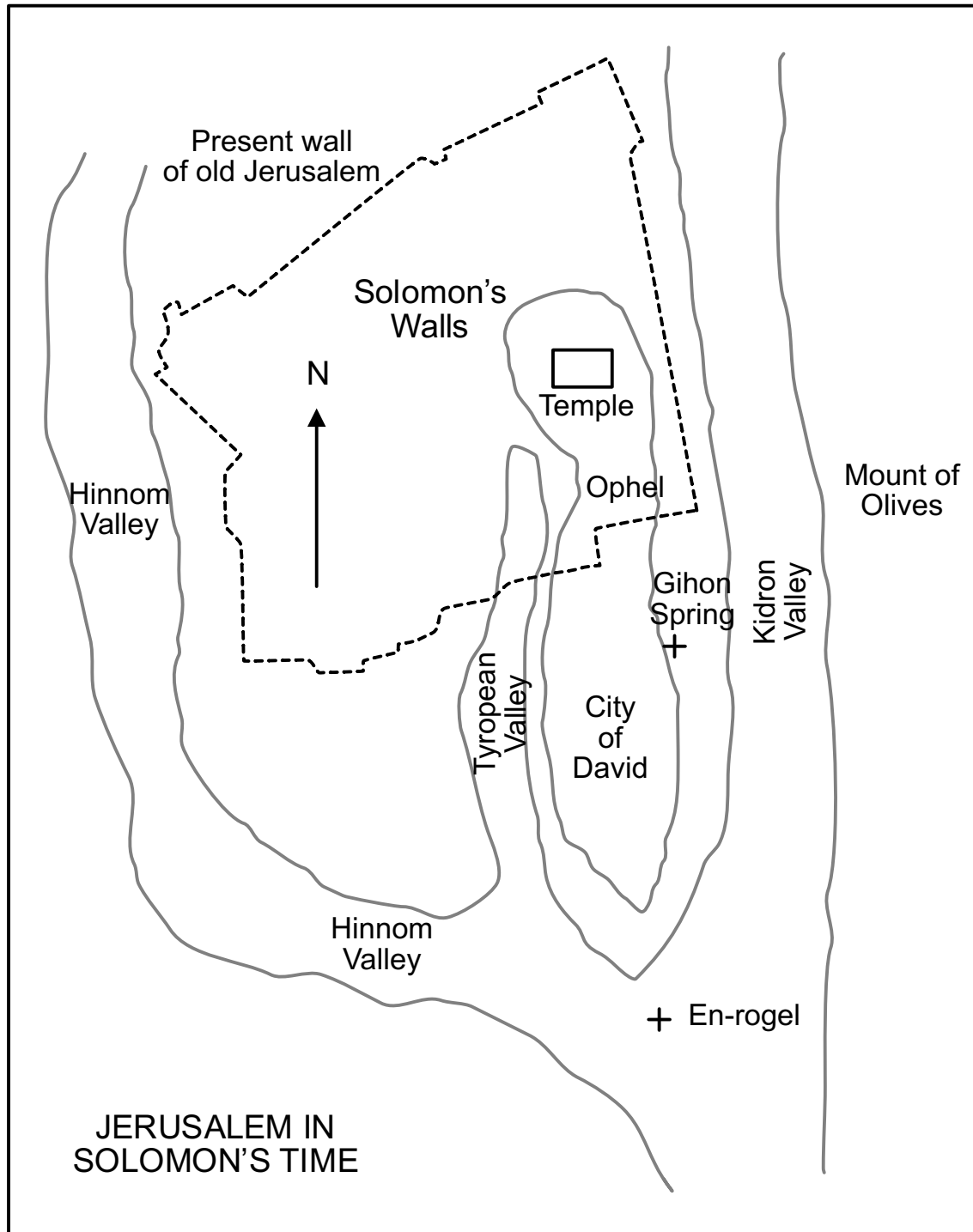
Solomon was powerful enough to force laborers to build the Millo and a wall around Jerusalem. The Millo (lit. "Filling") evidently refers to the terraces on the east side of Mt. Zion (cf. 2 Sam. 5:9).⁴ Solomon enlarged these so they connected the city of David with the temple and palace site. He also expanded the wall that encircled the city of David so it included the temple and palace complex to the north thus doubling the size of the city (v. 15).

¹House, p. 157.

²Wood, *A Survey ...*, p. 294.

³Montgomery, p. 204.

⁴See Jones, 1:215, for other suggestions as to its location and function.



Solomon also rebuilt and fortified three large strategic defense centers: Hazor in the North (cf. Josh. 11:1), Megiddo in the Jezreel Valley (cf. Josh. 17:11), and Gezer in the West (v. 15). Lower Beth-horon stood on a major western approach route to Jerusalem. He also fortified Baalath (site

uncertain) and Tamar, south of the Salt (Dead) Sea, in Judah,¹ and he strengthened other towns (2 Chron. 8:2-6). Solomon developed these towns in order to defend Jerusalem and Israel and to control the major routes into and through his empire.² Were these projects partially flawed by dependence on the flesh? Possibly they were. David had evidently built defensive border cities during his reign as well.³

"The excavation of Megiddo by the University of Chicago has revealed a section of extensive stone stables from the level of Solomon's time. This particular stable has been estimated to have been capable of housing from three to five hundred horses and illustrates in part the type of stable referred to in the Bible."⁴

¹See Rudolph Cohen, "The Fortresses King Solomon Built to Protect His Southern Border," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 11:3 (May-June 1985):56-70; and idem., "Solomon's Negev Defense Line Contained Three Fewer Fortresses," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 12:4 (July-August 1986):40-45.

²Bright, p. 192.

³Y. Aharoni, "The Building Activities of David and Solomon," *Israel Exploration Journal* 24:1 (1974):13-16.

⁴Joseph P. Free, *Archaeology and Bible History*, p. 169.



Solomon's forced labor 9:20-23

Solomon put the defeated native Canaanites to work on government projects (cf. Gen. 9:25-26). However, this plan proved to be a source of major dissatisfaction in Israel (cf. 12:4). There was a distinction in Solomon's day between Israelites whom the king conscripted for temporary service and non-Israelites who were permanent slave laborers. The former served as military supervisors over civil forced labor gangs. The latter were the native Canaanites who enjoyed no rights as free persons.¹

Solomon's house for Pharaoh's daughter 9:24

Solomon was able to provide lavishly for his Egyptian wife, but he probably should not have married her in the first place, since she was a non-Israelite (cf. 11:1-2).

Solomon's annual offerings 9:25

The king offered sacrifices of worship three times a year, probably at the required feasts of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost (also called Harvest or Weeks), and Tabernacles (also called Booths or Ingathering).

"Solomon officiates at the three major festivals because in ancient Israel the king was a religious as well as a political leader. The king was God's son by adoption (Ps. 2:7), a priest after the order of Melchizedek (Ps. 110:4), and his chief responsibilities were to defend the powerless and to maintain justice, righteousness, and peace (e.g., Ps. 72; Isa. 9:7; 11:2-5)."²

"Not only did Solomon show himself a faithful spiritual shepherd by leading His [*sic* his] people in worship, but continual attention to prescribed religious duties would keep the temple 'finished,' or properly maintained."³

¹J. Alberto Soggin, "Compulsory Labor Under David and Solomon," in *Studies in the Period of David and Solomon and Other Essays*, p. 266.

²Rice, p. 76.

³*The Nelson ...*, p. 578.

Solomon's navy 9:26-28

God blessed Solomon with an effective navy that brought added wealth into Israel from the south and the east.

"The Bible records that Solomon had a seaport, named Ezion-geber, on the eastern arm of the Red Sea. Archaeological light and confirmation was found in the excavation by Nelson Glueck, 1938-1940, in which he unearthed this compact but important town, revealing the smelting furnaces used by Solomon's workmen to produce the copper for his trade."¹

Ophir (v. 28) evidently was in southeast Arabia (modern Oman and/or the United Arab Emirates; 10:11; Job 22:24; 28:16). Other less likely sites that various scholars have proposed are southwest Arabia (modern Yemen), Somaliland (Somalia),² and Supara in India.

The writer documented in this section further evidence of God's blessing on Solomon, which came to him for his dedication to God. The fertility motif stands out strongly here. Blessing in many different forms came to Solomon and Israel. Montgomery judged Solomon's yearly income of gold from Ophir (about 16 tons, v. 28) an "extravagant figure."³

"Solomon's defense works and monumental buildings drained the nation's wealth while providing only a temporary appearance of strength and grandeur [cf. 12:4]."⁴

3. Solomon's greatness ch. 10

This chapter summarizes, with illustrations and statistics, the wisdom, acceptance, and riches with which God blessed Solomon.

The Queen of Sheba's visit 10:1-13 (cf. 2 Chron. 9:1-12)

The writer seems to have included this event here in order to support his claim that Solomon's reign was so glorious that rulers came from all over the world to meet him (4:34; cf. 3:16-18). It also shows that some of

¹Free, p. 169. See Finegan, pp. 181-82, for archaeological information about Ezion-geber.

²Albright, *Archaeology and ...*, p. 133.

³Montgomery, p. 211.

⁴DeVries, p. 133.

Solomon's wealth came to him as voluntary gifts from admirers. Jesus used this queen's example to challenge His hearers to listen to God's wisdom through someone greater than Solomon, namely, Himself (Matt. 12:42).

10:1 The site of Sheba was about 1,200 miles southeast of Israel (present Yemen and/or Oman).¹ A traditional site of the Queen of Sheba's castle is Salalah, in southern Oman. Sheba had come to dominate the spice and incense trade that had made that region of Arabia famous.²

The queen's primary purpose in visiting Solomon seems to have been to make a treaty with him. Before she did so she wanted to make sure that he really was as wise and rich as she had heard. Testing with questions ("riddles") was a challenging activity among ancient Near Eastern monarchs.³

"The *hard* ('enigmatic', REB) *questions* (*hidot*) were not just 'riddles', as in Judges 14:12, but included difficult diplomatic and ethical questions. According to Josephus, Hiram had made similar approaches. The test was not an academic exercise but to see if he would be a trustworthy business partner and a reliable ally capable of giving help."⁴

10:2-3 The queen brought with her a large number of attendants and many expensive gifts in order to honor Solomon. She then discussed with him all that was in her heart, and Solomon, in his wisdom, explained everything that she wanted to know.

10:4-7 The queen marveled at Solomon's wisdom, palace, affluence, and his court. She testified that she had not believed the stories that she had heard about Solomon, but when she

¹See Free, p. 171.

²G. W. Van Beek, "Frankincense and Myrrh," *Biblical Archaeologist* 23:3 (September 1960):70-95.

³See Harry Torcszyner, "The Riddle in the Bible," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 1 (1924):125-49; Gates, p. 321; Gray, p. 260.

⁴Wiseman, p. 129. REB refers to *The Revised English Bible*.

actually saw his greatness for herself she confessed that it was twice as much as she had heard.

- 10:8-10 She also noted that God had made Solomon a blessing to those around him, as God had promised that He would do for those who obeyed His covenant. And she blessed Yahweh, the God under whom Solomon reigned. Her gifts, which included four and one-half tons of gold, appear to have been part of a covenant treaty that she negotiated with Solomon for her country (cf. v. 13).
- 10:11-12 These verses add additional information about more riches that came into Israel during Solomon's reign. Almug trees were probably sandal-wood trees.¹
- 10:13 Solomon gave the queen everything that she asked of him plus many gifts. She then returned to her own country.

"All her desire has been romantically interpreted by Jewish legend as of the queen's desire for offspring by Solomon, and so [the Middle Ages Jewish commentator] Rashi comments: 'He went in unto her, and there was born to her Nebuchadnezzar.'"²

The name of this queen in Arabian history is Balkir.

"The royal family of Ethiopia claimed descent from Solomon and the queen of Sheba. It was asserted that the queen gave birth, as a result of her visit, to Menelik I, the traditional founder of the Ethiopian royal line. This is difficult to prove, but it is also difficult to disprove. Though the queen of Sheba did not come from Ethiopia, it is quite clear that Ethiopia was colonized by Sabeans from South Arabia, crossing the Red Sea. Her

¹ *The New Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "Trees," by F. N. Hepper, p. 1292.

² Montgomery, p. 218. He cited as sources: Targum 2 to Esther, ch. 2; J. A. Fabricius, *Codex Pseudepigraphicus Veteris Testamenti*, p. 1013ff.; and L. Ginsberg, *Legends of the Jews*, vol. 4. For a survey of the traditions connected with the Queen of Sheba, see Edward Ullendorff, "The Queen of Sheba," *Bulletin of John Rylands Library* 45:2 (1963):486-504.

descendants could have gone to Ethiopia, and Arabic legends give details regarding the queen who married Solomon. It may be added that Josephus speaks of a relationship which the queen of Sheba had with Ethiopia (*Antiq.* II. 10. 2; VI. 5. 6)."¹

Other scholars are less sure of this connection.² Josephus called her the "queen of Egypt and Ethiopia," but that identification is probably incorrect.³

In the queen's visit we see Israel fulfilling its God-given purpose of bringing the Gentiles to Yahweh (Exod. 19:5-6).

Solomon's wealth 10:14-29 (cf. 2 Chron. 9:13-28)

10:14 This pericope (section of text) summarizes Solomon's wealth like the previous one summarized his wisdom. God brought much wealth to Solomon, almost 25 tons of gold a year (v. 14), plus many other riches.

"Those who would consider his income of *666 talents* (*ca.* 21.6 tons) of *gold* exaggeration should compare this with amounts registered in ancient Egypt about this time, 'where gold is like dust in the land' and Osorkon I in his first four years (*ca.* 924-920 BC) accumulated eighteen tons of gold, to which some of the loot taken by his father Shishak from Jerusalem should be added (*cf.* 14:25-27). Similar large-scale acquisition and use of gold in temple building is attested from Mesopotamia."⁴

I do not believe that we should criticize Solomon simply for being wealthy, since God promised to make him rich (3:13). And much of his wealth came to him as gifts. Neither should we blame a person who receives a fortune as an outright gift

¹Wood, *Israel's United ...*, p. 328.

²E.g., Patterson and Austel, p. 102; Rice, p. 81.

³Josephus, *Antiquities of ...*, 8:6:2, 5-6.

⁴Wiseman, pp. 131-32.

for having money. It was the accumulation of riches and ornaments in order to become materially secure and independent that God forbade (Deut. 17:16-17). To the extent that Solomon did this—and he evidently did it extensively—he was guilty of violating God's Law.¹

- 10:15 Solomon served as an international broker. He capitalized on Israel's strategic geographic location as the land bridge that connected three continents: Europe, Asia, and Africa. He made Israel a clearinghouse through which merchandise passed and charged custom taxes as goods entered and left his country.² "Traders" probably refers to business people who passed through Israel, and "merchants" refers to those who did business in Israel.³ Solomon was probably history's most successful Jewish businessman.
- 10:16-17 The gold shields that Solomon hung in the palace armory were evidently for parade use. Gold is a very soft metal and would have been inappropriate for shields that soldiers used for defense in battle. These shields were evidently ornaments.
- 10:18-21 Perhaps the 12 lions surrounding Solomon's throne represented Israel's 12 tribes. John Gray believed that they may have been sphinxes or possibly representations of the emblem of Judah.⁴
- 10:22 Tarshish (lit. "Refinery"; cf. Jonah 1:3) may have been in Spain or possibly Sardinia.⁵ "Ships of Tarshish" may have been large ocean-going vessels, not necessarily ships from Tarshish.⁶
- 10:23-25 These verses summarize Solomon's unique greatness. People from all over the known world who heard of Solomon's wealth

¹See Provan, pp. 86-87.

²See Carl Rasmussen, "The Economic Importance of Caravan Trade for Solomon's Empire," in *A Tribute to Gleason Archer*, pp. 153-66.

³Rice, p. 82.

⁴Gray, p. 266.

⁵See Free, pp. 172-73.

⁶Gray, p. 267.

and wisdom visited him with valuable gifts in order to honor him and win his favor.

- 10:26-29 Solomon's accumulation of horses and precious metals made him famous and secure. David, in contrast to Solomon, did not rely on horses (cf. 2 Sam. 8:4). Material prosperity and security often lead people to conclude that they have no needs, when really our need for God never diminishes. Solomon fell into this trap. Wealth is not sinful in itself, but it does bring temptations with it (cf. James 5:1-6).

Though Solomon experienced great blessings from his faithful God, he fell prey to the sins that these blessings make easier, as the writer explained in the next chapter.

"My friend, what are you busy doing today? Are you getting out the Word of God or are you in the business of gathering a bunch of apes [v. 22]? Do you pay more for entertainment than you do for the Word of God? How about the peacocks [v. 22] for beauty? More money is spent today on beauty preparations than is given to the Lord's work. What about gold, silver, and precious stones [v. 22]? Are you so busy making money that you have no time left for the Lord? Oh, my friend, we are called to witness to the world. God have mercy on us for going into the business of apes and peacocks. How frivolous!"¹

4. Solomon's apostasy ch. 11

The writer brought Solomon's weaknesses and sins, to which he only hinted previously, into the light in this chapter. Solomon had sowed some seeds of departure from God and His Word early in his reign. They bore bitter fruit as he grew older.

Solomon's foreign wives 11:1-8

- 11:1-2 The writer's condemnation of Solomon in these verses rests on Deuteronomy 23:3 through 9 as well as Deuteronomy 7:3 and 4 (cf. Prov. 31:3). The phraseology goes back to 23:3

¹McGee, 2:269-70.

through 9 and the motive to 7:3 and 4 (cf. Exod. 23:31-33; 34:15-16; Ezra 9:1; Neh. 13:26). Solomon's foreign wives were of two categories: Canaanites (prohibited in Deuteronomy 7), and women from other nations (prohibited in Deuteronomy 23).¹ Furthermore, God specifically forbade the multiplying of wives by Israel's kings (Deut. 17:17). Solomon violated both the letter and the spirit of the Law.²

Some writers argued that because God gave legislation in the Mosaic Law governing the conduct of polygamous Israelite men (Exod. 21:10; Deut. 21:15), He therefore approved of polygamy. Yet God had made His will concerning monogamy clear from the very beginning of human history (Gen. 2:24). Both Jesus (Matt. 19:5; Mark 10:7-8) and Paul (1 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 5:31) reaffirmed monogamy as God's will. The legislation cited in Deuteronomy is only one example of many laws that regulated the conduct of disobedient Israelites.

One of the things that we need to learn to do as we read 1 and 2 Kings is to evaluate what was going on in Israel's history in the light of the Mosaic Covenant. The writer helps us do this at points, but we must do it constantly, or we may conclude that things are just fine, when they are really contrary to God's will and headed for trouble. This is good training for living and ministering, because we need to develop the habit of evaluating all of life, as we observe it, through the lens of God's will as it is revealed in His Word.

11:3 Solomon's harem of 700 wives and 300 concubines (secondary wives, not mistresses in the modern sense) was the largest of any Israelite king. Concubines were slaves who had sexual relations with their masters, according to custom. Their children sometimes became equal heirs with the children of primary wives.

"Your father-in-law is not apt to make war against you. So this was one of the ways in which Solomon

¹See Shaye Cohen, "Solomon and the Daughter of Pharaoh: Intermarriage, Conversion, and the Impurity of Women," *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 16-17 (1984-85):23-27.

²See Montgomery, pp. 234-35, for examples of other rulers who had huge families.

brought peace to the land. A man would not come up to fight against a country in which his daughter was the queen."¹

The next largest harem, according to Scripture, belonged to Solomon's son Rehoboam who had 18 wives and 60 concubines (2 Chron. 11:21). David had 15 wives (2 Sam. 3:2-5; 5:13-16; 11:27; 1 Chron. 3:1-9) and several concubines (2 Sam. 15:16). Apparently only one of David's wives was a foreigner (2 Sam. 3:3; 1 Chron. 3:2).

"The large number resulted from political alliances, sealed by marriage, with neighbouring [*sic*] states: Moab, Ammon and Edom to the east; Sidon, through the treaty with Hiram (5:1), and Syria ('Hittites' and Arameans, 10:22) to the north. ... These are cited as examples ..."²

11:4-6 Solomon did not abandon Yahweh, but he worshipped the gods of the nations along with Yahweh, which is syncretism. His sin was that his "heart" (affections) went after false gods. He did not follow the LORD fully (exclusively, v. 6; cf. Exod. 20:3; Deut. 30:15-20). Solomon was noteworthy for his love for God when he began reigning (3:3), but at the end of his reign, love for women characterized him.

"... in spite of his pious hope that God would always turn Israelite hearts towards God (1 Kgs. 8:58), we read that in his old age, the king's wives turned *his* heart in the opposite direction—after other gods (v. 4)."³

"How strange ... that one who had so often and so plainly warned others of the danger of the love of women should himself be so wretchedly bewitched with it; it is easier to see a mischief,

¹McGee, 2:423.

²Wiseman, p. 134.

³Provan. P. 91. Bold type omitted.

and to show it to others, than to shun it ourselves."¹

McGee regarded the expression "his father David" (vv. 4, 6) as the theme of 1 and 2 Kings, because it occurs often as the benchmark of godly leadership by which the writer evaluated many of the succeeding kings.²

Ashtoreth was the Canaanite fertility goddess whose worship involved licentious rites and the worship of the stars. The name "Ashtoreth" is "the deliberate Hebrew misvocalization of the name of the Canaanite fertility-goddess Attarat, known in the Ras Shamra texts and later Phoenician inscriptions, Greek Astarte."³ The worship of Milcom (another deliberate misvocalization for "their [the Ammonites'] king," Greek Molech) included human sacrifice, even the sacrifice of children (cf. Lev. 18:21; 20:1-5).

11:7 Chemosh worship was equally cruel. Milcom and Chemosh were also astral deities.⁴ Solomon at least tolerated idolatrous worship if he did not actively promote it.

The mountain east of (lit. before) Jerusalem, to which verse 7 refers, was traditionally south of the Mount of Olives and is elsewhere called "the mount of destruction" (2 Kings 23:13). Since the Mount of Olives is a two-mile-long ridge, it seems best to view "the mount of destruction" as the southern part of the Mount of Olives. Another name for "the mount of destruction" is "the hill of evil council." Ironically, today a United Nations building stands atop this hill.

11:8 Evidently Solomon felt compelled to support the pagan worship of his foreign wives whom he had married in order to secure political alliances. One sin led to others, as often happens.

¹Henry, p. 377.

²McGee, 2:244.

³Gray, p. 275.

⁴Ibid., p. 278. See any good Bible Dictionary for more information about these pagan deities.

"In the ancient world polytheists tended to worship the gods of nations who had conquered their armies or at least the gods of countries more powerful than their own. Ironically, Solomon worships the gods of people he has conquered and already controls. What could he possibly gain from such activity? The whole episode makes no sense, just as idolatry itself makes no sense."¹

Solomon's sentence from God 11:9-13

11:9-10 Solomon's sin in going after other gods was the quintessence of covenant infidelity. David had sinned against God deliberately on occasion when tempted (2 Sam. 11), but his heart remained devoted to Yahweh. His sin was not as serious as Solomon's was (cf. Deut. 6:5).

"One of the most puzzling aspects of the life of Solomon was the fact that he, the wisest of all men, could be so foolish, particularly in the last years of his reign. What must be understood is that the very basis, in fact, the essence of biblical wisdom is to fear God (Prov. 1:7). It was precisely when Solomon neglected this principle that he began the slippery slope to folly (1 Kings 11:9)."²

11:11-13 As God had "torn the kingdom" from Saul, for Saul's disobedience, and given it to David (1 Sam. 15:28), so He would "tear the kingdom" from Solomon, for Solomon's disobedience, and give it to Solomon's servant (cf. v. 30). The one tribe that Solomon's heir would retain was Judah. Judah had absorbed the tribe of Simeon almost entirely by this time, though some Israelites from Simeon had moved north (2 Chron. 15:9; 34:6).

"A divided heart will lead to a divided kingdom ..."³

¹House, p. 167.

²Eugene H. Merrill, "1 Kings," in *The Old Testament Explorer*, p. 257.

³Provan, p. 94.

This was the third time that God gave Solomon a special revelation (cf. 3:5; 9:2).

Solomon's external adversaries 11:14-25

Hadad the Edomite 11:14-22

- 11:14-18 The LORD raised up an adversary against Solomon because He intended to tear the kingdom away from him (v. 11). This adversary was Hadad, who was evidently a member of the royal household in Edom (cf. Gen. 25:15; 1 Chron. 1:43-51). Hadad hated Solomon because of Joab's severe treatment of the Edomites (cf. 2 Sam. 8:2). Hadad had escaped this purge by fleeing to Egypt as a young boy by way of Paran, which was south of the Salt (Dead) Sea. Pharaoh then gave Hadad asylum in Egypt.
- 11:19-20 Hadad became a favorite of Pharaoh's, and he gave him his sister-in-law in marriage. So Hadad became a relative of Solomon's by marriage. Pharaoh Siamun, of dynasty 21, gave his daughter to Solomon in marriage (3:1), and he gave his sister-in-law to Hadad in marriage. Hadad's son Genubath is not mentioned elsewhere in the Bible.
- 11:21-22 When Hadad heard that David and Joab were dead he decided to leave Egypt and return to Edom.

"The result of Hadad's opposition was not only that it lost Solomon the full control of a satellite neighbor [i.e., Edom], but it cut off his southern route for trade. If he maintained his shipping out of Ezion-geber at all, it was probably on a greatly reduced scale, and it is even possible that it stopped entirely before his death."¹

Rezon the Aramean 11:23-25

Rezon also had reason to oppose Solomon. David had defeated the Arameans and made them serve him (2 Sam. 10:6-19).

¹Wood, *Israel's United ...*, p. 336.

"The result of Rezon's opposition was that it cut off all contact with the satellite countries of the north. Damascus was the key to control over Zobah, Hamath, and the fortified city of Tadmor. With full control gone in Damascus, there was no possibility of maintaining supervision in these other areas."¹

| KINGS OF ARAM (SYRIA) IN 1 KINGS | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Kings | Dates | References |
| Rezon (Hezion) | ca. 940-915 B.C. | 1 Kings 11:23, 25; 15:18 |
| Tabrimmon | ca. 915-900 B.C. | 1 Kings 15:18 |
| Ben-Hadad I | ca. 900-860 B.C. | 1 Kings 15:18, 20 |
| Ben-Hadad II | ca. 860-841 B.C. | 1 Kings 20; 2 Kings 6:24; 8:7, 9, 14 |

Solomon's internal adversary 11:26-40

Jeroboam's background 11:26-28

Jeroboam's name can be translated "May the People Be Great." He would become the first king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. He was from Ephraim, the most prominent tribe in the North. The reason that Jeroboam rebelled against Solomon was that Solomon expanded Jerusalem (9:24) and thus threatened the Ephraimites.² Jeroboam was a valiant warrior and industrious. Solomon observed his ability and put him in charge of the forced laborers from the house of Joseph (i.e., the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh) who were involved in building up Jerusalem.

"Jeroboam did not deserve so good a post, but Israel deserved so bad a prince."³

¹Ibid.

²Wiseman, p. 138.

³Henry, p. 378.

Ahijah's prophecy 11:29-40

11:29-30 The prophet Ahijah met Jeroboam as he was leaving Jerusalem one day. Ahijah proceeded to tear his new cloak into 12 pieces in order to use it as an object lesson.

11:31-33 "When Ahijah first spoke to Jeroboam concerning the division, he mentioned only one tribe as remaining loyal to Solomon's descendant (1 Kings 11:31). At the time, however, he gave Jeroboam only ten of the twelve pieces of the rent garment in symbol of the tribes he would rule, implying that another tribe would be added to Judah. Benjamin was that added tribe, though at first her loyalty was likely with the seceders (1 Kings 12:20). Historically, Benjamin had always aligned herself with the northern group [cf. 2 Sam. 2:9; 20:1-22]. But now she came to follow Rehoboam and was soon referred to regularly as part of the southern nation [e.g., 1 Kings 12:21-23; 2 Chron. 11:1, 3, 10, 12, 23; 14:8; 15:2, 8, 9, et al.]."¹

"A question arises regarding the tribe of Simeon, to whom Joshua had allotted eighteen cities within the area of Judah (Josh. 19:1-9; 1 Chron. 4:28-33). Why were her people not included in the southern nation? The answer is best found in an apparent movement of many (perhaps most) Simeonites, some time prior to the division of the kingdom, north to the region of Ephraim and Manasseh, perhaps more specifically northern Manasseh. In both II Chronicles 15:9 and 34:6 Simeon is mentioned along with Ephraim and Manasseh in a way suggesting that all three tribes were then (time of Asa and following) geographically linked together."²

¹Wood, *A Survey ...*, p. 335.

²Ibid., p. 336.

"Rationale for Simeon's move lies in Simeon's humbled situation in being assigned only cities when all other tribes had been assigned territories. This humbled status was no doubt related to Jacob's prediction that Simeon would [*sic* would] be scattered in Israel (Gen. 49:5-7) and Simeon's small number upon entering Canaan (only 22,000, the smallest tribe.)"¹

"*Ten* as the number of completeness and totality is placed in contrast with *one*, to indicate that all Israel was to be torn away from the house of David, as is stated in ch. xii. 20 ..."²

11:34-36 David's "lamp" (v. 36) refers to his descendant on the throne (cf. 2 Sam. 21:17).³ The Hebrew noun *nir*, translated "lamp," can also mean "yoke," and that may be a better translation here.⁴

"A yoke naturally symbolizes control and possession (e.g., Genesis 27:40; Exodus 6:6-7; Numbers 25:3; Deuteronomy 28:48; 1 Kings 12:9-14; Isaiah 9:4; Jeremiah 27:2-12; and others), and its use in the five Old Testament passages mentioned above [i.e., Num. 21:30; 1 Kings 11:36; 15:4; 2 Kings 8:19; and 2 Chron. 21:7], particularly the four that refer to David, connotes the fact that David, his descendants, and the ultimate Davidic king after him would all be God's chosen servants, kings by divine decision with a divinely-ordained purpose to their reigns, with a chosen people and promised land to rule over, the final reign being an unending one and by far the best of all, under a perfect, eternal king—

¹Ibid., n. 4.

²Keil, p. 179. See also Jones, 1:244, for other explanations.

³Keil, p. 181.

⁴Paul D. Hanson, "The Song of Heshbon and David's Nir," *Harvard Theological Review* 6 (July 1968):297-320.

the ultimate Davidic king, Jesus Christ, who is perfectly yoked to His people."¹

11:37-39 God's conditional promise to Jeroboam (vv. 38-39) was similar to His promises to Saul (1 Sam. 13:13), to David (2 Sam. 7:11, 27), and to Solomon (9:4-7). God would "oppress" the descendants of David (v. 39) until He raised up Messiah, when all Israel would come under His authority, as it had been under David and Solomon's authority.

11:40 Evidently Ahijah's prophecy became known to Solomon, because Solomon then tried to put Jeroboam to death. So Jeroboam fled to Egypt where he remained until Solomon's death. The reference to Shishak king of Egypt is the first to identify a Pharaoh by name in the Bible. Shishak later invaded Jerusalem during Rehoboam's reign (14:25-26).²

Solomon's death 11:41-43 (cf. 2 Chron. 9:29-31)

The writer of Kings sometimes referred to other ancient records (v. 41; cf. 14:19, 29). "The Acts of Solomon" was the first of these.³ It is no longer extant (still in existence). Solomon's long reign of 40 years (971-931 B.C.) ended with the king in decline both spiritually and politically.⁴ Josephus, incorrectly, wrote that Solomon reigned 80 years and died at the age of 94.⁵

"What is the image of Solomon which emerges from the narrative? He was the divinely chosen descendent (8:20) of a divinely chosen ruler (8:16), reigning in a divinely chosen city (8:44, 48). He was a righteous judge (chap. 3) and an efficient administrator (chap. 4). He ruled extensive territory and promoted the peace of his realm and the prosperity of his

¹Douglas K. Stuart, "David's 'Lamp' (1 Kings 11:36) and 'a Still Small Voice' (1 Kings 19:12)," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 171:681 (January-March 2014):8-9.

²For a good literary analysis of the chiasmic structure of the Jeroboam narrative (11:26—14:20), see Robert L. Cohn, "Literary Techniques in the Jeroboam Narrative," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 97 (1985):23-35.

³J. Liver, "The Book of the Acts of Solomon," *Biblica* 48:1 (1967):75-101.

⁴See Rodger C. Young, "When Did Solomon Die?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 46:4 (December 2003):589-603.

⁵Josephus, *Antiquities of ...*, 8:7:8.

people (4:20-5:8 [4:20-28]). His building projects were on a grand scale, encompassing sanctuary and palace (chap. 6), fortress and store-city (9:15-19). He pursued an active commercial policy and indulged in a conspicuous display of wealth (chap. 10). The key to his success was his divinely endowed wisdom. He was wiser than all men and all came to see and behold and leave their tribute (5:9-14 [4:29-34], chap. 10)."¹

"Few figures are more difficult to evaluate than Solomon, and that not merely because the records concerning him are neither so full as could be wished nor in chronological order. He was obviously a man of great astuteness who was able to realize to the fullest the economic potentialities of the empire created by David. At the same time, he exhibited in other areas a blindness, not to say a stupidity, that hastened that empire toward disintegration."²

"Solomon brought great blessing to the nation as he followed the Lord, but he also set the nation up for great suffering because of his sinful lifestyle, especially as he grew older (chap. 11). Much of the nation's suffering occurred after his death. But his excessive spending, lack of preparation for transition, poor modeling in many areas—all these affected the next generation. Some suffering seems delayed in the normal course of events, and natural consequences sometimes take time to develop."³

"I shall summarize my own conviction by saying that I do not know a more disastrous failure in all the pages of the Old Testament than that of Solomon."⁴

Solomon, Saul, and David each reigned 40 years. Since "40" is often a time of testing in Scripture (e.g., Israel's years in the wilderness, Elijah's 40-day sojourn at Mt. Horeb, Jesus' days of testing before His temptation by Satan), it is tempting to think that the 40-year reigns of Saul, David, and

¹Porten, pp. 113-114.

²Bright, p. 190.

³Stephen J. Bramer, "Suffering in the Historical Books," in *Why, O God? Suffering and Disability in the Bible and the Church*, p. 106.

⁴Morgan, *The Unfolding ...*, p. 145.

Solomon were also years of testing for Israel. Would these kings and the nation remain faithful to the LORD during the United Monarchy? Israel did not, and consequently the nation split into two factions.

Saul was God's anointed viceregent only because the people demanded a king. David and Solomon were God's anointed viceregents because the LORD chose them as His sons. Saul never really appreciated his role as Yahweh's servant. David and Solomon both appreciated their servant roles, but Solomon acted as though he appreciated his less than David did his. David had a heart for God that he maintained throughout his lifetime. Solomon also had a heart for God, but he failed to maintain it throughout his lifetime. Saul's reign was a tragedy, David's was a triumph, and Solomon's was both.

"If he [Solomon] partly escapes Saul's *condemnation*, he quite fails of David's *commendation*."¹

In the lives of all three men, the writers of Scripture have carefully pointed out how their responses to God's grace and His Law determined their destinies. Because they were the leaders of the nation, what befell them also affected their kingdoms.

The man best qualified to live life successfully, Solomon, chose not to do so. Success in life from God's viewpoint does not come automatically with the gift of wisdom, but when one applies wisdom to one's life. Spiritual success depends on choices as well as understanding. Solomon's life teaches us to avoid syncretism and to guard our hearts (cf. vv. 4, 6).

"King Solomon was among the wisest fools who ever wore a crown."²

II. THE DIVIDED KINGDOM 1 KINGS 12—2 KINGS 17

The second major part of the Book of Kings records the histories of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah.³ During

¹Baxter, 2:87.

²Frederick Buechner, *Peculiar Treasures*, p. 161.

³See the charts "Dates of the Rulers of Israel and Judah" in Edwin R. Thiele, *A Chronology of the Hebrew Kings*, p. 75; "Kings of Judah and Israel and the Preexilic Prophets" in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, p. 513; and "Chronology in Kings" in

this period of 209 years (931-722 B.C.) the two kingdoms experienced differing relations with one another. For 57 years (931-874 B.C.) they were antagonistic (12:1—16:28). Then for the next 33 years (874-841 B.C.) they were allies (1 Kings 16:29—2 Kings 9:29). Then renewed antagonism erupted and continued for the final 119 years of the divided kingdom (841-722 B.C.; 2 Kings 9:30—17:41).

Throughout this history the writer's purpose continued to be what it had been, namely, to demonstrate that failure to honor the Mosaic Covenant brings ruin and destruction, but obedience brings blessing. This is clear from the material he chose to record. While he gave a basic historical record of the period, he departed often from official matters to record events that have theological and practical significance. He also gave more information about the Northern Kingdom of Israel than he did about the Southern Kingdom of Judah. The reverse emphasis appears in 1 and 2 Chronicles.

"Though the northern tribes broke away from Solomon's son Rehoboam in protest against the exactions of the central government, archaeological evidence shows that it was in the northern kingdom that royal luxury and the trappings of central government continued to flourish. It was in fact inevitable that Judah should become the poor relation. The agricultural land lay in Israel, with much of Judah poor hill country or semi-desert. Israel, moreover, could trade freely by land or sea with the rest of western Asia, whereas Judah was encircled by unfriendly countries with which she was often at war."¹

"In the books of Kings in general there are some forty instances where a prophet or prophetess plays a part in the narrative or delivers a message from Yahweh."²

It is interesting that there were also 40 kings in the two kingdoms. Forty kings and 40 prophets. It is as though God was testing His people to see if they would remain faithful to him. Forty is sometimes a period of testing in

Wiseman, pp. 28-29. See also the map "The Divided Monarchy" in Merrill, *Kingdom of ...*, p. 317, for the locations of many places referred to in the text.

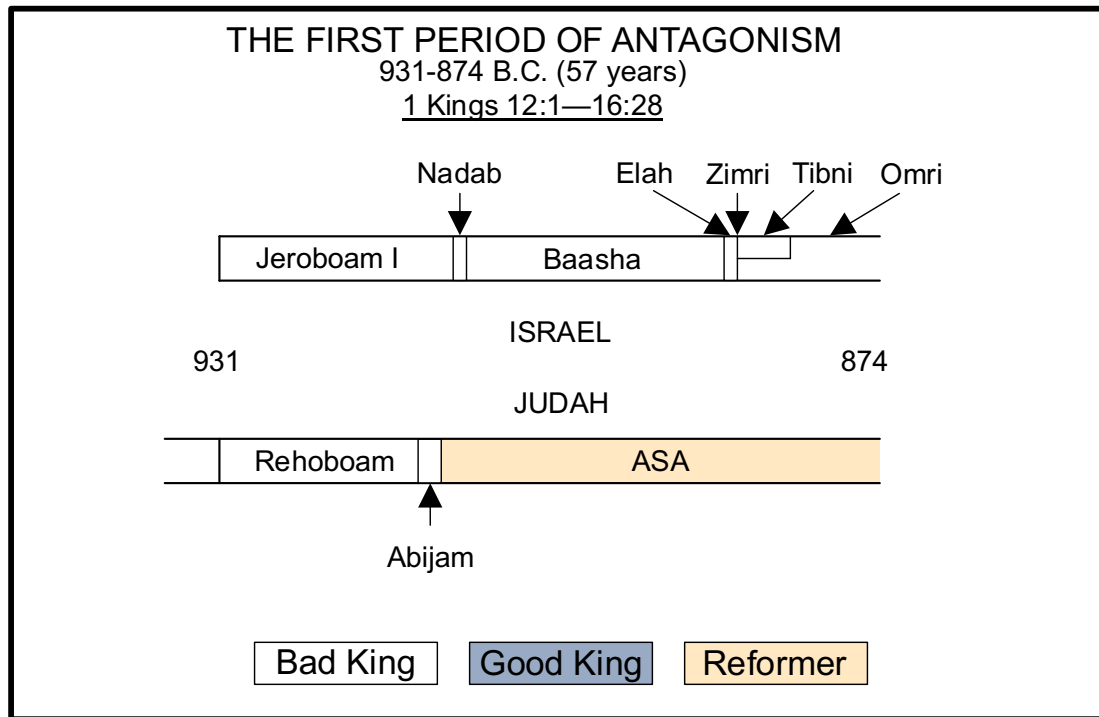
¹Kenyon, p. 67.

²N. H. Wallace, "The Oracles Against the Israelite Dynasties in 1 and 2 Kings," *Biblica* 67:1 (1986):21. See Appendix 2: "Faithful prophets who ministered during the divided monarchy" at the end of these notes.

Scripture, as noted above. The Israelites failed this time of testing, and God sent them into captivity.

A. THE FIRST PERIOD OF ANTAGONISM 12:1—16:28

After the division of the kingdom, the kings of Israel and Judah were hostile to one another for 57 years.



1. The division of the kingdom 12:1-24 (cf. 2 Chron. 10:1—11:4)

This section of text contains the account of the split of the United Kingdom into the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

Rehoboam's dilemma 12:1-5

12:1 It is not clear why "all Israel" had chosen the northern town of Shechem as the place to make Rehoboam king. Jerusalem was the natural coronation site. One view is that the Israelites in the north may have chosen Shechem for his coronation over their tribes, whereas Rehoboam may have had a separate

coronation over the tribe of Judah in Jerusalem.¹ Another view is that the whole populace, both northern and southern Israelites, may have invited him to go there for his coronation over the entire nation (cf. 2 Sam. 3:17-21; 5:1-3). Shechem was an understandable location because of its historical significance as a covenant receiving and renewing site (cf. Gen. 12:6-7; 33:18-20; Josh. 8; 24), as well as its central location in Israel. Whatever the reason for choosing Shechem, it turned into the site of a confrontation, rather than a coronation, on this occasion.

- 12:2-3 As the coronation of Rehoboam in Shechem drew near, the men of the northern tribes of Israel sent for Jeroboam, who was then living in Egypt. They were preparing to confront Rehoboam with the problem of Solomon's oppression of them, and they evidently anticipated Rehoboam's refusal to lighten their load. They apparently wanted Jeroboam to be ready to lead them in a revolution.

Rehoboam's name means "The People Are Wide" or "May the People Be Extended." If this was Rehoboam's throne name, it appears that Jeroboam's (throne) name (meaning "May the People Be Great") may have been a deliberate attempt to raise himself to the level of Rehoboam in the minds of the people and thus snub Rehoboam.

"The similarity [between Jeroboam and Moses] even extends in the MT [Masoretic Text] (cf. the NIV footnote to v. 2) to a certain reluctance to take on such a role (cf. Exod. 4:1-17). He [Jeroboam] remains in Egypt, we are told, and has to be sent for."²

- 12:4-5 The hard, heavy "yoke" that Solomon had imposed on the Israelites consisted of taxation, forced labor, and other uncomfortable burdens. If Solomon had exempted Judah from these,³ the spokesmen were probably speaking for the

¹Jacob Myers, *II Chronicles*, p. 65; Bright, p. 210.

²Provan, p. 104.

³See my note on 4:7-19.

northern tribes rather than for all the Israelites and were demanding similar favors.¹ But since "all Israel" was involved (v. 1), it seems more likely that all the tribes were suffering under Solomon's heavy hand.

Rehoboam's decision 12:6-15

12:6-11 Rehoboam first consulted with the elders who had advised Solomon and received their advice: View yourself as the servant of the people and speak gently to them. But he ignored their advice and then consulted with the young men who had grown up with him and served him and received their advice: Threaten the people with even greater burdens if they do not submit to your authority. "Scorpions" (v. 11) were a particularly cruel kind of whip that contained sharp pieces of metal (1 Macc. 6:51). In view of the contrast with "whips," it is quite clear that animal scorpions are not meant here.

12:12-14 Rehoboam's response to the request of the Israelites, to lighten their load, was the same as Pharaoh's just before the Exodus: He consulted with his counselors and then refused to ease their burden but determined to increase it.

Rehoboam's choice was whether he would regard himself as the people's servant under Yahweh's authority, as David and Solomon had done, or as the supreme authority in Israel, as Saul had done. His pride led to his downfall.

"Given the location of the loins in the lower part of the body, and the fact that power and sexual potency were very much associated in the ancient Near East ... it may well be that the 'little one [finger, v. 10]' is in fact the male sexual organ. ... Whatever is the case, the claim is that Rehoboam is a bigger man than his father—a power to be reckoned with."²

¹Moshe Weinfeld, "The Counsel of the 'Elders' to Rehoboam and Its Implications," *MAARAV* 3:1 (January 1982):27-53.

²Provan, p. 107.

"Rehoboam chooses slogans over wisdom, machismo over servanthood."¹

"Rehoboam is harsh, despotic, and autocratic, but the worst part is that he is also stupid and incompetent."²

12:15 Rehoboam's decision resulted in what God had predicted to Solomon (11:11-13), Ahijah (11:29-39), and Jeroboam (11:31-39).

Many leaders of God's people have repeated Rehoboam's foolish response to the elders of Israel. Ask, with Solomon, "What is best for the people I serve?" Jesus is our greatest example (cf. Mark 10:45).³

Israel's secession 12:16-20

"As Moses led his people out from slavery under the house of the Egyptian Pharaoh, so Jeroboam will lead Israel out from 'slavery' under the house of David; as God hardened Pharaoh's heart in order to accomplish all his will, so the hardness of Rehoboam's heart will precipitate this schism also. The exodus will take Israel towards a new promised land, but they will soon be led off their path, as 'Jeroboam as Moses' is transformed into 'Jeroboam as Aaron,' who fashions golden calves for them to worship."⁴

12:16-19 The northern tribes' dissatisfaction with the rule of David's house that had been brewing for years (cf. 2 Sam. 20:1) finally boiled over. Perhaps Rehoboam sent Adoram to pacify the angry mob (v. 18). Whatever his reason, Adoram's appearance proved to be "the straw that broke the camel's back." The Israelites' revolutionary cry (v. 16) recalls Sheba's similar cry (2 Sam. 20:1). Note that the majority of the Israelites ("all Israel") voiced this cry, rejecting the house of David (vv. 16,

¹R. D. Nelson, *First and Second Kings*, p. 79.

²DeVries, p. 159.

³See also R. Scott Rodin, *The Steward Leader*.

⁴Provan, p. 103.

19, 20). Rehoboam was only able to retain the support of one tribe: Judah (vv. 17, 20).

Rehoboam lacked wisdom because he did not give God the place He deserved in his life. Because he revolted against God, the people revolted against him. In rebelling against Rehoboam, however, the Israelites were rebelling against God's anointed king. That action could only bring divine discipline on them, and it did. This rebellion continued throughout the history of the divided kingdom, and it accounts for much of the misery that the Northern Kingdom experienced.¹ Rehoboam's coronation turned into a stoning and inspired the coronation of his rival. Rehoboam barely saved his own life by fleeing back to Jerusalem.

"Just by one insolent and swaggering word King Rehoboam lost for ever the ten tribes of Israel. And all Rehoboam's insane and suicidal history is written in our Bibles for the admonition and instruction of all hot-blooded, ill-natured, and insolent-spoken men among ourselves."²

12:20 Undoubtedly it took some time for the northern Israelites to make Jeroboam king over "all Israel," that is, over the rebellious tribes. Only the tribe of Judah remained loyal to the house of David (i.e., Rehoboam).

Rehoboam's reprisal 12:21-24

12:21-23 Rehoboam's pride led him into further trouble: He wanted to start a civil war in order to recapture the rebellious tribes. Benjamin joined with Judah at this time and remained allied from then on (cf. 2 Sam. 19:16-17). God had to intervene through Shemaiah to get Rehoboam to turn back. The term "man of God" (v. 22) is synonymous with "prophet" (cf. 13:18; 2 Kings 5:8; 2 Chron. 12:5).³

¹On "to this day" (v. 19), see my comment at 8:8.

²Alexander Whyte, *Bible Characters*, 1:352.

³See Wiseman, pp. 142-43, for a short note on the term "man of God" as it appears in Scripture.

12:24 To his credit Rehoboam obeyed God and dropped his plan to go to war with Jeroboam. Since Shemaiah appealed to all the people, as well as to Rehoboam, it may be that the people saw the wisdom in not attacking a superior army in the north and refused to follow Rehoboam into battle.

"Shemaiah's message goes against the perceived national interest, opposes a popular cause, and stifles the impulse to avenge wounded pride. But Shemaiah was a man of God before he was a man of Judah. His loyalty to God transcended that to king and country. His identity came from his relationship to God, not from society. He served God rather than the state. In short, he was a prophet."¹

There were several reasons for the division of the kingdom. The primary one was Solomon's apostasy (departure from beliefs previously held). However, tribal jealousy, sectionalism, and Solomon's exploitation of the people were contributing causes.²

2. Jeroboam's evil reign in Israel 12:25—14:20

Jeroboam was the first of 20 kings who ruled the Northern Kingdom during its 209-year history. He reigned for 22 years (931-910 B.C.). Not one of the kings of Israel, the Northern Kingdom, turned the people back to a serious recommitment to the Mosaic Covenant. Consequently the writer judged all of them evil.

Jeroboam's idolatry 12:25-33

12:25 During its history the Northern Kingdom had three capitals: first Shechem (v. 25), later Tirzah (14:17; 15:33), and finally Samaria (16:23-24). Perhaps the king strengthened Penuel, in west-central Gilead, as a Transjordanian provincial center. Like Shechem, Penuel (or Peniel) was an important site in patriarchal times (Gen. 32:30). By strengthening these sites,

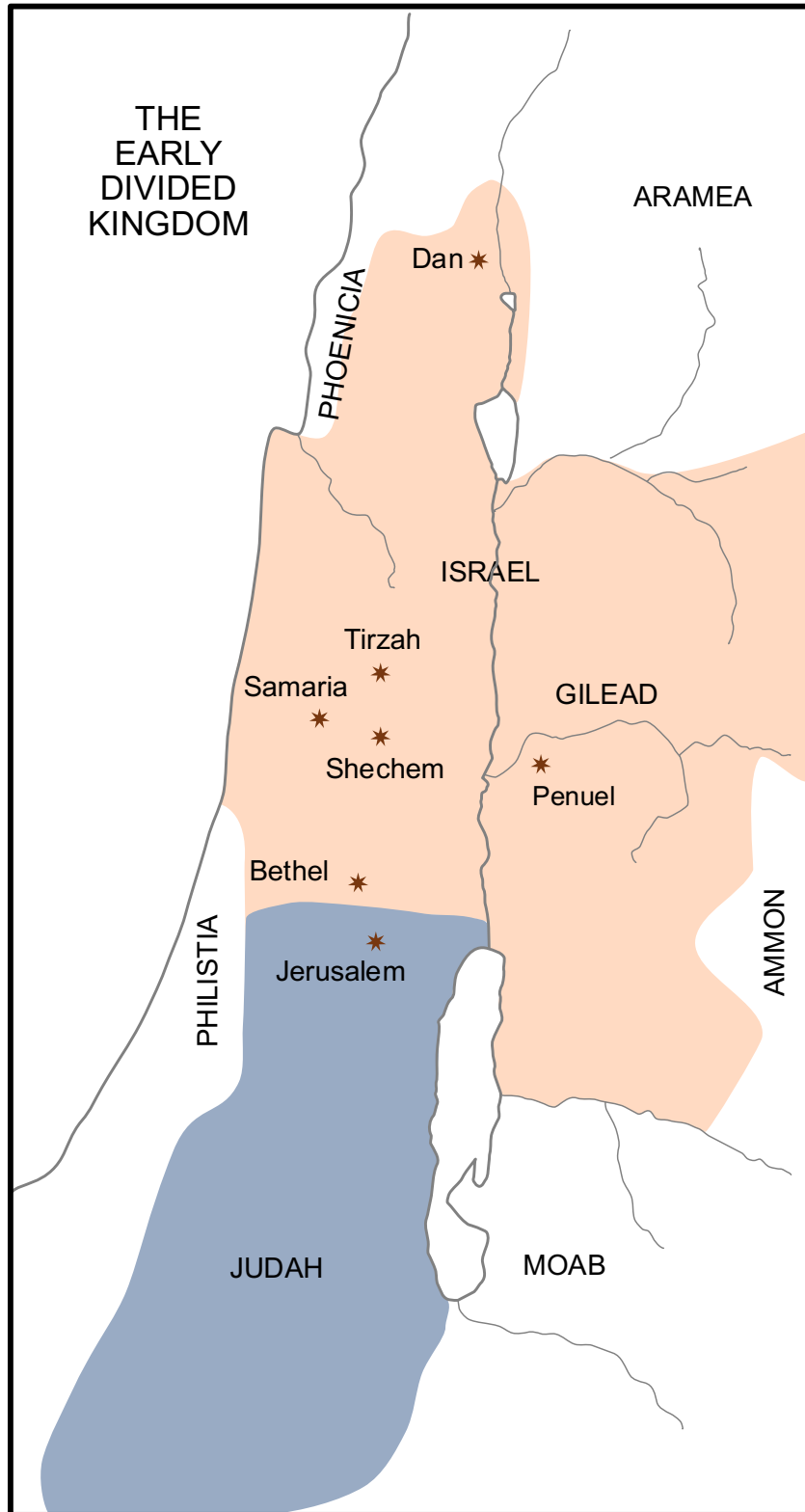
¹Rice, p. 103.

²Wayne Brindle, "The Causes of the Division of Israel's Kingdom," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 141:563 (July-September 1984):223-33.

Jeroboam appears to have been trying to get the residents of his kingdom to view their nation as the continuation of what God had begun in patriarchal days.

One writer suggested that Jeroboam may have abandoned Shechem and moved to Penuel because Shechem was a divided city. Levitical priests who would have opposed his religious reforms lived there.¹ Many of the Levitical priests moved to Judah at this time, because Jeroboam excluded them from serving as priests. (2 Chron. 11:14).

¹Nigel Allen, "Jeroboam and Shechem," *Vetus Testamentum* 24:3 (July 1974):353-57.



- 12:26-27 Jeroboam's fears that his subjects would kill him and return to Rehoboam were due to disbelief in God's promises that the prophet Ahijah had announced to him (11:31, 37-38).
- 12:28-30 Jeroboam seems to have designed his substitute religious system in order to offer the Israelites convenient "improvements" in the Mosaic system that tied in with certain events in their history.

The golden calves, for instance, recall the golden calf in the wilderness. The apis bull was a common religious symbol in Egypt. The golden calf in the wilderness and these calves may have been similar symbols. There is some question among scholars whether the people regarded calves of this type as idols or as pedestals on which the gods stood.¹ One writer made a good case for their being idols (cf. 14:9).² They certainly became idols to the Israelites, as was the case in the wilderness (cf. Deut. 4:15-24). However it has seemed to some that Jeroboam conceived of them as the symbols and supporters of Yahweh.³ Archaeologists have discovered the remains of a high place at Dan that they date from the time of Jeroboam.⁴

"With the division of the kingdom, the chief symbol of God's presence, the ark and the cherubim, was left to Judah. Needing a comparable symbol for his new state, Jeroboam chose the bull, universally admired for its strength and procreative power (Deut. 33:17; Isa. 10:13 [*sic*]; 34:7; Ps. 68:30; 1 Kings 7:25). It is probable that Jeroboam meant the bull to serve the same function as the ark and cherubim, that is, as the throne or footstool of the invisibly present God.⁵

¹W. F. Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*, pp. 197-98; Stephen Von Wyrick, "Israel's Golden Calves," *Biblical Illustrator* 13:1 (Fall 1986):3, 9-12.

²John Oswalt, "The Golden Calves and the Egyptian Concept of Deity," *Evangelical Quarterly* 45 (1973):13-20.

³See Albright, *Archaeology and ...*, p. 156; Bright, p. 218; and Merrill, "1 Kings," p. 260.

⁴See Wiseman, p. 144..

⁵Rice, p. 106.

"The adoption of the bull as a cult object may have been an effort to adapt the ark and cherubim to the culture of the northern tribes, especially since the bull was an indigenous symbol to the Canaanite element of the population. Archaeological finds in Palestine-Syria of statues depicting a god astride a bull point to a function for the bull similar to that of the ark and cherubim (*ANEP* [*The Ancient Near East in Pictures*, ed. James B. Pritchard], nos. 470-501, 522-538)."¹

After making the calves, Jeroboam said exactly the same thing the Israelites in the wilderness had said (v. 28; cf. Exod. 32:4). This is the first time that the Bible records any deliberate attempt to establish a heterodox cult as the religion of Israel.

How could Jeroboam have hoped to win the support of the Israelites since he revived the practice of worshipping a calf?

"I suggest that the motivation behind Jeroboam's action may have been an intense animosity toward the Levites. It was the Levites who had taken sword in hand to slay the worshippers of Aaron's golden calves. Jeroboam now bypassed the Levites by appointing his own priests and, in a supreme irony, manufactured his own golden calves as a symbol of his disdain for the Levitical priesthood. Had not Moses' own grandson, Jonathan, anticipated Jeroboam by serving as the first priest of the competing shrine at Dan [Judg. 17—18]? Besides according a measure of legitimacy to Dan, this story revealed that even within Moses' family there was room for diversity in religious practice. How could Jeroboam be faulted for his golden calves when Moses' own grandson had officiated over a cult at Dan which

¹Ibid., p. 107. See also Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 1:117.

worshipped idols having no connection at all with the exodus?"¹

This theory may also explain Jeroboam's choice of Dan as one of his cultic centers. But why did he select Bethel? Jacob had met God at Bethel twice (Gen. 28:10-22; 35:1-7). Perhaps Jeroboam promoted it as the birthplace of Israel's faith. Geographically, Bethel stood on the main highway that led into Judah just north of the border between the two nations. It was a convenient gathering place for Israelites who lived in the southern and central parts of the Northern Kingdom. Since they would have had to pass through Bethel if they wanted to go south to worship in Jerusalem, Jeroboam's priests could have discouraged them from doing so there.

12:31 Jeroboam also followed up the making of the calves with making houses (temples) on various high places in the land and appointing priests from among any of the people, not just Levities.

12:32-33 He also instituted a feast similar to the Feast of Tabernacles, only a month later than the one that God had prescribed (Lev. 23:33-44). Furthermore, Jeroboam followed Aaron's example of setting himself up as covenant mediator, in Moses' absence, and as head of the cult ("he went up to the altar"). In this he was quite clearly identifying his cult with the Exodus.² Jeroboam assumed the role of the Davidic monarch who was the LORD's anointed and, as such, both the political and the religious leader of Israel.

Thus it seems clear that Jeroboam had no regard for the will of God as expressed in the commands of the Mosaic Covenant. He viewed himself as a king like all the other kings of the ancient Near East. To establish himself and the Northern Kingdom as independent from Judah, he combined

¹Merrill, *Kingdom of ...*, p. 328.

²Baruch Halpern, "Levitic Participation in the Reform Cult of Jeroboam I," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 95:1 (1976):39-40.

commonly accepted religious concepts that the surrounding pagan nations held with elements from Israel's history.¹

"... Jeroboam deliberately set out to lead his people (back) into Canaanite worship, and chose his symbols carefully with that end in mind."²

"... Jeroboam's sins are so far-reaching and repulsive that the author uses him as the example of how to define a morally deficient king (cf. 1 Kgs 16:7, 9 [*sic* 19], 26)."³

All of Jeroboam's so-called "reforms" involved religious apostasy. He set up new objects of worship, new places of worship, new leaders of worship, and new times of worship. These "reforms" proved to be the undoing of the Northern Kingdom. All the kings who followed Jeroboam perpetuated this idolatry.

Christian leaders need to make sure that the changes they initiate have firm rooting in biblical teaching and do not lead people to depart from it.

Calvin compared the Roman Catholic Church of his day to the religious system that Jeroboam set up in Israel.⁴

The prophecy of judgment on Jeroboam's religious system 13:1-32

"This long chapter is not about young and old prophets; it's about King Jeroboam and his sins."⁵

The young prophet's mission 13:1-10

13:1 God sent a Judahite prophet to Bethel, in the Northern Kingdom of Israel, to announce a prophecy that God would judge Jeroboam for his apostasy. Josephus wrote that this prophet's name was Jadon.⁶ Seven times the phrase "by the word of the LORD" appears in this story, emphasizing that

¹For further discussion, see Eva Danelius, "The Sins of Jeroboam Ben-Nebat," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 58 (1967-68):95-114 and 204-23.

²Provan, p. 111.

³House, p. 178.

⁴Calvin, 4:2:7-11.

⁵Wiersbe, p. 456.

⁶Josephus, *Antiquities of ...*, 8:8:5.

Yahweh was giving instructions (vv. 1, 2, 5, 9, 17, 18, 32). When the prophet arrived in Bethel, Jeroboam was exercising his priestly function at the Bethel altar. He may have been dedicating the altar to his gods, as Solomon had previously done (8:22).¹

"Though kings could function as priests in certain circumstances (2 Sam. 6:12-15), it was strictly forbidden for them to offer incense for this was limited to the Aaronic priests alone (Num. 16:39-40; 2 Chron. 26:16-18)."²

13:2 "The prophet spoke to the altar, not to the king, as though God no longer wanted to address Jeroboam, a man so filled with himself and his plans that he had no time to listen to God."³

The prophet predicted Josiah by name 290 years before Josiah became king of Judah (cf. Isa. 44:28; 45:1). God fulfilled this prophecy when Josiah destroyed Jeroboam's religious system (2 Kings 23:15-20).

13:3 The sign that the prophet gave was a miracle designed to prove the truthfulness of the prophecy to those who heard it. According to the Mosaic Law, the priests were to carefully carry away the ashes from the altar to a clean place for disposal (Lev. 1:16; 4:12; 6:10-11). The pouring out of them there, along with the destruction of this altar, symbolized God's control of Jeroboam and His rejection of this sacrificial system.

13:4-5 Jeroboam stretched out his hand in a gesture of authority. By incapacitating his hand, a symbol of power, God showed that He had greater authority than the king and was sovereign over him. This was another sign to Jeroboam that God was at work. How God destroyed the altar is a mystery, but it happened immediately.

¹Provan, p. 113.

²Merrill, "1 Kings," p. 260.

³Wiersbe, p. 456.

- 13:6-7 We can see that Jeroboam had no regard for Yahweh when he called the LORD the prophet's God ("appease the LORD your God," v. 6) rather than his own God. By offering the prophet hospitality and a reward ("a gift"), Jeroboam was seeking to compromise him. If the prophet had gone to Jeroboam's house and accepted his reward, there would have been a question in the minds of onlookers concerning whether he was in Yahweh's service or in Jeroboam's.
- 13:8-10 The man wisely declined even to eat with the king. Accepting such an invitation in that culture implied mutual affection and protection. He explained to Jeroboam that the LORD had commanded him not to eat bread or drink water on his mission, nor was he to return home to Judah by the same way that he had come to Bethel. Having said this, the prophet began to return home as Yahweh had instructed him.

The old prophet's deception 13:11-19

- 13:11 The sons (lit. son, in Hebrew) of an old prophet who lived in Bethel had observed what the young prophet from Judah had said and done, and they reported these things to their father. If this old prophet had been faithful to Yahweh he might have left Bethel and Israel when Jeroboam brought his nation under a humanly devised system of worship. Many of the faithful in Israel did this (cf. 2 Chron. 11:13-17). However, several other faithful prophets lived and ministered in the Northern Kingdom (e.g., Hosea, Jonah, Ahijah, Elijah, Elisha, Micaiah, et al.).
- 13:12-15 The old prophet then pursued and caught up with the young prophet and tried to turn him away from what God had told him to do, namely, not eat bread on his mission.
- 13:16-19 The young prophet explained what Yahweh had commanded him to do on his mission. But the old prophet explained that he too was a prophet and that an angel had told him to bring the young prophet home with him and feed him bread and water. This was a lie; an angel had not told him to do this. Unfortunately for him the young prophet chose to accept the old prophet's invitation and ate bread and drank water in his house. Like Rehoboam (12:13) and Jeroboam (12:28), the

younger man listened to bad counsel rather than obeying a direct word from the LORD.

The young prophet's death 13:20-25

13:20-22 As the two men sat down to eat, the old prophet received a message from the LORD. He announced that because the younger prophet had not been completely faithful to God, he would have a dishonorable burial. In the ancient Near East a person's burial made a statement about whether his life was honorable or not.

13:23-25 After the meal, the young prophet departed for home. On the way a lion attacked and killed him. Since the lion did not eat the prophet or maul his donkey, it was clear to the passersby who observed this rare phenomenon that this was an unusual killing. God had sent the lion to judge the younger prophet.

"Lions were attested in Palestine until at least the thirteenth century AD."¹

If God had not judged the young prophet for his disobedience, there might have been some doubt about whether God would judge Jeroboam for his. Perhaps the fact that the biblical writer did not record the younger prophet's name implies his disgrace (cf. Ruth 4:1). Likewise the old prophet is nameless in this story, probably for the same reason.

The old prophet's grief 13:26-32

13:26-30 In spite of his own unfaithfulness, the old prophet admired his younger friend, and he gave him as honorable a burial as was possible.

"The real motive [of the old prophet] was the desire to be associated with one who had been so strikingly authenticated as a prophet of God."²

¹Wiseman, p. 147. Cf. Gray, p. 331.

²Ibid., p. 332.

"Perhaps he felt that association with a true prophet of the Lord, even if only in death, would help erase his disobedience in life and ministry."¹

Another view is that the old prophet wanted to avoid the desecration of the younger prophet's bones, which he believed would take place if he was not buried.²

13:31-32 The old prophet wanted to be buried with the young prophet because he realized that the young man had carried out his mission in obedience to Yahweh. He was convinced that the young man's prophecy of the coming destruction of Jeroboam's religious system would come true. "Samaria" (v. 32) here stands for the Northern Kingdom of Israel, Samaria being one of its leading cities.

"This confession [that God would fulfill the younger prophet's prophecy, v. 32] proclaims renewal of faith in God's word by the prophet who had become deceitful. The mercy of God is at His disposal! The Lord had healed the hand of Jeroboam (v. 6) because of His mercy, and the Lord restored the faith of the deceitful prophet because of His mercy as well."³

"Whatever his motives, and it is impossible to know them for sure, the old man is a mixture of curiosity, dishonesty, accuracy, and conviction."⁴

Josephus described the old prophet as follows:

"Now there was a certain wicked man in that city, who was a false prophet, whom Jeroboam had in great esteem, but was deceived by him and his flattering words. This man was bed-ridden by reason

¹Merrill, "1 Kings," p. 261.

²Provan, p. 116.

³*The Nelson ...*, p. 586.

⁴Wiseman, p. 189. Cf. W. Gross, "Lying Prophet and Disobedient Man of God in 1 Kings 13: Role Analysis as an Instrument of Theological Interpretation of an OT Narrative Text," *Semeia* 15 (1979):122; Leon J. Wood, *The Prophets of Israel*, pp. 184-89.

of the infirmities of old age ... Whereupon he was afraid that this stranger and prophet should be in better esteem with the king than himself, and obtain greater honour from him ..."1

This incident illustrates the importance of complete obedience to God's Word. God intended it to impress this truth on Jeroboam, the Israelites, and all who heard about it, as well as us.

"From beginning to end, the story dwells on a single theme—the fulfillment of the word of the Lord in its due time, having transcended the weakness of its bearer and converted its violators into its confirmants."2

The fate of this disobedient young prophet anticipated that of the Northern Kingdom: As he had been disobedient to God's Word and suffered punishment for it, so Israel had been disobedient and would suffer for it.

Disobedience to the Word of God, even on the advice of trusted advisors, leads to divine discipline. We must follow the LORD's Word, rather than the counsel of other servants of God, when these conflict. We need to obey God's directives, not what other people say is God's will for us, when these things conflict.

Jeroboam's continued apostasy 13:33-34

The prophecy of God's judgment on Jeroboam and its signs (vv. 3-5) did not lead the king to repentance. The most serious aspect of his apostate system was his disregard for what God had required concerning Israel's priesthood (cf. Heb. 7:12). By instituting his new priestly system, Jeroboam became responsible for the termination of his dynasty ("the house of Jeroboam," v. 34).

The prophecy of judgment on Jeroboam's dynasty 14:1-18

Whereas 13:34 reported that Jeroboam's response to the young prophet's announcement of God's judgment on his cult resulted in the termination of his dynasty, this section of verses relates another prophecy that God would

¹Josephus, *Antiquities of ...*, 8:9:1.

²Uriel Simon, "1 Kings 13: A Prophetic Sign—Denial and Persistence," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 47 (1976):115.

terminate his dynasty. Compare Samuel's prediction concerning unfaithful Saul's descendants (1 Sam. 13).

14:1-3 The name of Jeroboam's son, "Abijah" means "My Father Is the LORD." This name is ironic since Jeroboam did not respect Yahweh as his divine Father. Jeroboam probably sent his wife to see the prophet Ahijah because Ahijah had previously given a favorable prophecy to him (11:29-39). He probably hoped his gift would win the prophet's favor. The town of Shiloh was in the Northern Kingdom.

"It would have been more pious if he had begged the prophet's prayers, and cast away his idols from him; then the child might have been restored to him, as his hand was [13:6]. But most people would rather be told their fortune than their faults or their duty."¹

14:4-5 Ahijah's eyesight was so poor that he could hardly see, but the LORD told him that the woman who was coming to visit him was Jeroboam's wife, and He told him what to tell her. Evidently Jeroboam's wife did not know how blind Ahijah was since she had disguised her appearance.

14:6 Ahijah's ability to recognize the queen, as blind as he was and as disguised as she was, should have convinced her that what he was about to tell her was from the LORD.

14:7-8a Ahijah began his message to the queen by reminding her that Yahweh was still the God of Israel, even though her husband refused to acknowledge Him as such. And the LORD was the One who had exalted Jeroboam among the Israelites and made him their leader. He had torn the kingdom from the house of David and had given it to Jeroboam.

14:8b In spite of this, Jeroboam had not followed the example of David, who viewed himself as Yahweh's servant, kept His commandments, followed Him wholeheartedly, and did only what was right in His sight. Obviously David had committed

¹Henry, p. 382.

some great sins, but the LORD was describing David's overall character.

In the evaluations of the kings that follow, David is often referred to as the standard to which the succeeding kings are compared (cf. 15:3-5, 11; 2 Kings 8:19; 14:3; 16:2; 18:3; 22:2).

14:9 Jeroboam, on the other hand, had done more evil in the LORD's sight than any who were before him. Specifically, he had made for himself other gods, cast metal images, that provoked God. And he had disregarded Yahweh ("cast Me behind your back").

14:10-11 Therefore God said that He would cut off Jeroboam's descendants so that he would not have a continuing dynasty. This is what the LORD had done to Eli and Saul for their similar disregard of God. Jeroboam's descendants would not even enjoy burial. Wild animals would eat them, which was a terrible disgrace in the minds of ancient Semites (cf. 16:4; 21:24; Deut. 28:26).¹

14:12-13 The sign that this would happen would be that Jeroboam's sick child would die when his wife returned home. His death at this time was really a divine blessing in view of what he would have experienced had he lived.

"This hopeful child dies first of all the family, for God often *takes those soonest whom he loves best*."²

14:14 The LORD also promised to raise up another king who would permanently eliminate the house of Jeroboam (his dynasty). The king that God raised up was Baasha ("Boldness"; 15:27-29).

14:15-16 God compared Jeroboam's Israel to a shaky reed planted in unstable water, like the papyrus reeds Jeroboam had seen in Egypt when he lived there. He also promised to send the Israelites into captivity beyond the Euphrates River because

¹Patterson and Austel, p. 123.

²Henry, p. 382.

they worshipped false gods. God handed Israel over to captivity eventually, but only after being very patient with His people, and only temporarily.

- 14:17-18 Having received these prophecies, the queen returned home. Evidently Jeroboam had moved his capital from Shechem to Tirzah (modern Tell el-Far'ah), seven miles to the northeast, and was living there at this time.¹ When she entered her house Abijah died, just as Ahijah had predicted (v. 12). All Israel mourned the child's death.

Jeroboam's death 14:19-20

- 14:19 The writer wrote that the reigns of 18 of Israel's 20 kings had been recorded in "The Chronicles of the Kings of Israel," all except those of Tibni and Hoshea. This document is different from the canonical books of 1 and 2 Chronicles and is not extant.
- 14:20 Jeroboam reigned 22 years, and his son Nadab succeeded him. Jeroboam was a strong leader. He separated Israel from Judah and reigned a long time. Nevertheless his lack of commitment to Yahweh resulted in him and Israel experiencing discipline from the LORD. During his reign Israel lost control of the area around Damascus that subsequently became an independent Aramean state. Ironically, it was this area that produced enemies of Israel for many years. The Philistines also recovered some of their territory and became stronger (cf. 15:27). Moreover Israel appears to have lost control over Moab about this time, because Judah, Israel, and Edom invaded Moab right after King Ahab of Israel died (2 Kings 3:21-27).² King Abijah of Judah also defeated Jeroboam in battle (2 Chron. 13:13-20). All of these losses are evidences of God's punishment for apostasy.

¹See "Tirzah: An Early Capital of Israel," *Buried History* 22:1 (March 1986):14-24; and Finegan, pp. 184-85.

²See *The Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Moab, Moabite," by Arnold C. Schultz, 2:1143-45.

3. Rehoboam's evil reign in Judah 14:21-31 (cf. 2 Chron. 12)

"The narrator introduces a new format and style at this point that enables him to state the essence of a king's reign with an economy of words. The introduction and conclusion of the account of each reign conform to a fixed pattern with only slight variations. The following information is regularly given in the introduction to the reigns of the kings of Judah: (1) date of beginning of reign, (2) age at beginning of reign (not noted consistently at first), (3) length and place of reign, (4) name of the queen mother, and (5) a theological evaluation. The pattern for the Israelite kings is the same except that their ages and the names of their mothers are not given. The reign of each king, both Judahite and Israelite, is normally concluded in this manner: (1) summary of reign and referral to the royal annals for additional information, (2) notice of death and place of burial, and (3) name of successor."¹

14:21 Rehoboam succeeded Solomon and reigned over Judah for 17 years (931-913 B.C.). Jerusalem was the only capital the Southern Kingdom ever had. It was "the city which the LORD had chosen ... to put His name there." In contrast to Israel's three successive capitals (Shechem, Tirzah, and Samaria), Jerusalem was God's chosen center for national life politically and religiously.

14:22-24 Rehoboam permitted the re-establishment of pagan worship as it had existed in Israel before Joshua conquered the land.² Perhaps the king's Ammonite mother was responsible for some of this.

"Perhaps the omission of any reference to the queen-mother in Northern Israel reflects the fact that the hereditary monarchy was never freely accepted there."³

¹Rice, p. 125. See also Wiseman, pp. 46-52.

²See Helmer Ringgren, *Religions of the Ancient Near East*, pp. 158-69.

³Gray, p. 342.

"Essentially, the religion of Canaan was based on the assumption that the forces of nature are expressions of divine presence and activity and that the only way one could survive and prosper was to identify the gods responsible for each phenomenon and by proper ritual encourage them to bring to bear their respective powers. This is the mythological approach to reality. Ritual involves human enactments, particularly by cultic personnel such as priests, of the activity of the gods as described in the myths."¹

Asherah (v. 23) was the mother goddess of the Canaanite pantheon. However, the word Asherah (pl. Asherim) also described a cult object: a tree, a grove of trees, or a pole.² Eugene Peterson called the Asherim "sex-and-religion shrines."³

"The 'sodomites' [AV, or "male cult prostitutes," v. 24] also found lodging in the land, and for all the psychological investigations and organized permissiveness of the age we live in, homosexual practice has always been a sign of decadence in a people."⁴

14:25-28 Judah's strength and wealth began to diminish as a result of Rehoboam's folly. Pharaoh Shishak (also called Shoshenq I, 945-924 B.C.) was the king who had given Jeroboam refuge in Egypt (11:40). Though Egypt was not as great a nation as it had been at this time, Shishak was an effective ruler.⁵ The

¹Merrill, *Kingdom of ...*, p. 159.

²John Day, "Asherah in the Hebrew Bible and Northwest Semitic Literature," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 105:3 (September 1986):385-408.

³Eugene H. Peterson, *The Message*, p. 447l.

⁴E. M. Blaiklock, *Today's Handbook of Bible Characters*, p. 202. AV refers to *The Holy Bible: Authorized King James Version*.

⁵I. E. S. Edwards, "Egypt: From the Twenty-second to the Twenty-fourth Dynasty," in *Cambridge Ancient History* 3:1:539-49.

campaign that brought him into Judah netted him 156 cities in Judah, Israel, Edom, and Philistia.¹

"In the temple ruins of Amon at Karnak, near Thebes, are recorded more than sixty Ephraimitic cities that paid tribute to Shishak, also the names of many more Judaeen cities; there also is a picture of Rehoboam."²

Shishak's invasion diminished much of the glory of the temple and of Yahweh. Shishak's offensive was the first serious attack against Judah by any foreign power since Saul's days.

Josephus' description of his attacking army seems inflated:

"... he had one thousand two hundred chariots in number that followed him, and threescore thousand horsemen, and four hundred thousand footmen."³

14:29-31 The biblical writer footnoted "The Chronicles of the Kings of Judah" (v. 29) when he wrote of 14 of those kings. Again, this document is not our 1 and 2 Chronicles. The war that kept flaring up between Rehoboam and Jeroboam (v. 30) was a consequence of their turning away from Yahweh. Rebellion against God brought war, but submission would have resulted in peace.

"Rehoboam had military encounters with two main enemies, Jeroboam of Israel and Shishak of Egypt. With the first he was generally successful, but with the second he suffered tragic loss, said to have been God's punishment for the religious defection [cf. 2 Chron. 12:2, 5]."⁴

¹Benjamin Mazar, "The campaign of Pharaoh Shishak to Palestine," *Vetus Testamentum Supplements* 4 (1957):57-66.

²Gaebelein, 1:2:278.

³Josephus, *Antiquities of ...*, 8:10:2.

⁴Wood, *A Survey ...*, p. 337.

"It is stated that Rehoboam had continual conflict with Jeroboam (I Kings 14:30). There is no indication that this was in violent open warfare, however; in fact, this manner of conflict had been directly forbidden by God (II Chron. 11:1-4). The strife likely centered in repeated border disputes, especially involving the Benjamite area. Rehoboam felt that he needed Benjamin as a buffer zone, and Jeroboam naturally would have wanted it too. In that Benjamin does come to be listed with Judah, it follows that Rehoboam won in these disputes more often than Jeroboam."¹

4. Abijam's evil reign in Judah 15:1-8 (cf. 2 Chron. 13:1-2, 13:22—14:1)

15:1-2 Abijam (or Abijah, lit. "My Father Is Yah[weh]") reigned from 913 to 911 B.C., while Jeroboam ruled over Israel.²

"The accession formulae from this reign onwards make cross-references between Judah and Israel. It is not clear whether this was to correlate the sources for the reader or to emphasize the essential unity which should have marked both peoples."³

The king's mother was a descendant of Absalom, a variant spelling of "Abishalom" (v. 2). According to 2 Chronicles 13:2, Maacah was the daughter of Uriel and therefore the granddaughter of Absalom.

"The mothers of the kings of Judah are named to show that the claims to the throne are legitimate."⁴

¹Ibid., pp. 337-38.

²Various charts of the kings, including those referred to previously, visualize their overlapping reigns.

³Wiseman, p. 154.

⁴*The Nelson ...*, p. 589.

- 15:3-5 Abijam continued to tolerate the pagan worship that increased in Judah during his father's reign (14:23-24). He experienced chastening from the LORD because his heart did not fully belong to Yahweh (cf. 2 Chron. 13:2-20). God's patience with Abijam was due to His promises to David more than to Abijam's own character (cf. 2 Sam. 21:17; 1 Kings 11:36).¹
- 15:6-8 Conflict continued between the northern king and the southern king during all of Abijam's reign. The reference to Rehoboam (v. 6), who had died (14:31), is probably to the house (dynasty) of Rehoboam. War between Abijam and Jeroboam is explicitly mentioned in verse 7. Abijam received an honorable burial in the city of David, and his son Asa succeeded him.

5. Asa's good reign in Judah 15:9-24 (cf. 2 Chron. 14:2—16:14)

Asa was the first of eight kings of Judah whom the writer of Kings judged as good: Asa, Jehoshaphat, Jehoash, Amaziah, Azariah, Jotham, Hezekiah, and Josiah. Four of them were reformers who sought to bring the nation back to the Mosaic Covenant, and Asa was the first of these. The other reformers were Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah. The writer of Chronicles described Asa's reforms more fully in 2 Chronicles 14 through 16.

Asa's godliness 15:9-15

- 15:9-10 Asa ("Healer"?) came to power close to the end of Jeroboam's reign over Israel, which was in 910 B.C. Asa reigned for 41 years (911-870 B.C.). He had an unusually long reign that probably began when he was quite young (cf. v. 2). It was evidently his grandmother (NIV), not his mother (NASB), who bore the name Maacah (cf. v. 2). The queen mother (dowager), not the king's wife, was the first lady in the kingdom, as was customary.²

¹For the full biblical accounts of the reigns of these kings, consult the harmonies of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, by Crockett and Newsome, listed in the bibliography of these notes. The histories of Israel listed in the bibliography also give this information plus data from extrabiblical sources pertaining to their reigns.

²Gray, pp. 352, 354.

- 15:11-13 The rightness of Asa's acts is clear from his removing the male cult prostitutes from Judah and the idols that his father had made (cf. Deut. 9:21). He even removed his mother from her position as queen mother. Maacah was "a sort of Jezebel of Judah"¹ who had made an abominable image as an Asherah, which Asa cut down and burned at the brook Kidron.
- 15:14-15 Asa did away with some of the high places (2 Chron. 14:3), but not all of them. Presumably the high places that he removed were sites of pagan worship and the ones that he did not remove were the unauthorized sites of Yahweh worship. Generally speaking, Asa's heart was true to Yahweh all his days, even though he became somewhat self-reliant later in his life (2 Chron. 16:7-10). He also brought into the temple the gifts that he and his father had dedicated to the LORD (cf. 2 Chron. 15:18).

Asa's victory over Israel 15:16-22

- 15:16-17 Antagonism between Israel and Judah continued in Asa's day. Ramah was a border town just north of Judah. Many Israelites were leaving Israel to live in Judah, which was an indication of God's blessing on the Southern Kingdom (cf. 2 Chron. 11:13-17). King Baasha of Israel may have been building a Berlin wall type of structure at Ramah in order to secure the border.
- 15:18-22 Asa's plan to divert Baasha's attention to Ben-Hadad (ca. 900-860 B.C.) worked. His treaty with Ben-Hadad evidenced some lack of trust in Yahweh (2 Chron. 16:7-9). Asa's strategy was one that God blessed, however, and it enabled him to break down Baasha's border fortifications and use their materials to rebuild two towns on Judah's side of the border.

"With Asa's overtures to Benhadad [v. 18] we are introduced to the power of the Aramaean kingdom of Damascus which was to play such a grim role in the subsequent history of Israel until the Aramaean state was liquidated by Assyria in 732. ... The Aramaeans occupying Damascus

¹John C. Whitcomb, in *A History of Israel*, p. 367.

were the middlemen of ancient Eastern commerce [between Canaan and Mesopotamia]."¹

"*Tabrimmon* (v. 18) means 'good is Rimmon', the Thunderer-god, a title of Baal."²

Asa's death 15:23-24

Asa experienced some personal discipline for his flawed trust in the LORD (2 Chron. 16:12). It may have been because of his ill health (gout?) that Asa's son, Jehoshaphat ("Yahweh Judged"), became coregent with him late in his reign (873-870 B.C.).³ McFall believed that Jehoshaphat's coregency began in 872 or 871 B.C.⁴ When Asa died, Ahab ("Father's Brother") was reigning in Israel (874-853 B.C.).

Asa's heart was right with God his whole reign, as David's had been. Nevertheless, like David, he also sinned. He experienced personal blessing in the form of a long reign and victory over his enemies because of his commitment to Yahweh. He also became a source of blessing to Judah.

6. Nadab's evil reign in Israel 15:25-32

"At this point, the historian turns to the account of the kings of Israel and will remain there until the end of the book [really until 2 Kings 10 with the exception of Jehoshaphat in 1 Kings 22:41-50]. The story of the kings of Judah is found primarily in 2 Chronicles. David's dynasty is mentioned in 1 and 2 Kings only where there is some interaction between Judah and Israel."⁵

15:25-27 Nadab ("Generous" or "Noble"), the son of Jeroboam, ruled Israel from 910-909 B.C. Evidently Baasha assassinated him during a battle in Philistine territory. Gibbethon stood three

¹Gray, p. 352.

²Wiseman, p. 156.

³See Edwin R. Thiele, "Coregencies and Overlapping Reigns Among the Hebrew Kings," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 93 (1974):174-200.

⁴McFall, p. 45.

⁵Wiersbe, p. 466. See also Gray, p. 356.

miles west of Solomon's stronghold city of Gezer near the border where Israel, Philistia, and Judah met.

- 15:28-30 Baasha not only killed Nadab but also all of Jeroboam's male descendants. This was a fulfillment of Ahijah's prophecy that God would cut off Jeroboam's dynasty (14:14).

"Nothing is more characteristic of the northern state than its extreme internal instability."¹

The writer of Kings noted carefully the prophecies of the blessings and curses on the kings because of their obedience or disobedience to Yahweh. This is one of the major motifs in Kings.²

- 15:31-32 In conclusion, the writer referred to the record of Nadab in the royal chronicles. He also noted that there was war between the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom during Nadab's and Baasha's reigns.

7. Baasha's evil reign in Israel 15:33—16:7

- 15:33 Baasha's 24-year reign (909-886 B.C.), which was the third longest of any king of the Northern Kingdom, took place during Asa's long rule over Judah (911-870 B.C.). The Israelite king who ruled the longest was Jeroboam II (41 years), and the second longest was Jehu (28 years).
- 15:34 Baasha had an outstanding opportunity to lead Israel back to loyalty to the Mosaic Covenant after he had killed Nadab and terminated Jeroboam's dynasty. But he chose not to do so.
- 16:1-5 For Baasha's failure, in spite of the fact that Yahweh had graciously exalted him from a lowly position to become king, God announced that He would destroy ("burn," v. 3) his line as He had Jeroboam's (cf. 14:11). And none of his descendants would enjoy honorable burials. The prophet that God used to

¹Bright, p. 218.

²See Ziony Zevit, "Deuteronomistic Historiography in 1 Kings 12—2 Kings 17 and the Reinvestiture of the Israelian Cult," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 32 (1985):57-73.

deliver this message to Baasha was Jehu, whose father, Hanani, was also a prophet in Judah (cf. 2 Chron. 16:7).

- 16:6-7 God ended Baasha's reign for two primary reasons: his continuation of Jeroboam's cult (v. 2), and his assassination of Nadab (v. 7). Whereas it was God's will for Nadab to die, Baasha was responsible for murdering him. Baasha himself received an honorable burial in Tirzah, the second capital city of the Northern Kingdom. His son Elah ("Oak" or "Evergreen") then became king in his place.

"Besides providing information on Baasha's death, these verses reemphasize the author's theological approach to history. Three issues deserve mention. First, God's word dictates history, a fact Jehu's prophetic rebuke and prediction divulges. Second, Jeroboam and Baasha are judged unfavorably because they use their God-given political authority to preserve their own position rather than to glorify God among the people. Third, the text stresses cause and effect, not fatalistic determinism. God gives both Jeroboam and Baasha the opportunity to follow the covenant. Baasha eliminates Jeroboam's family, as God said would happen, yet becomes like Jeroboam, which makes him a murderer, not a reformer."¹

The dynasties that the northern kings Jeroboam and Baasha established were alike in several respects: (1) Both were only two generations long. (2) The first king in each dynasty reigned for a fairly long time: Jeroboam for 22 years, and Baasha for 24. (3) Assassins, who were apparently confidants that the kings trusted, terminated both dynasties. (4) Each assassin not only killed the king but also all his male descendants, as was customary in the ancient Near East. Perhaps the most significant difference is that Baasha, the first assassin, successfully established his own dynasty and ruled for many years. The second, Zimri ("Pertaining to an Antelope"), could not do so. He committed suicide seven days after he became king.

¹House, p. 200.

8. Elah's evil reign in Israel 16:8-14

- 16:8-10 Baasha's son Elah reigned for only two years, from 886-885 B.C. His assassin, Zimri, was one of his chariot commanders. Zimri assassinated Elah while Elah was drunk in his own house in Tirzah—hardly a glorious ending for a king. Then Zimri took the throne of Israel.
- 16:11-14 Zimri proceeded to purge the family of Elah by killing all of his descendants, so they could not rise up and reclaim the throne. As Jehu the prophet had foretold (v. 3), Baasha's dynasty ended with Elah's death. Again the writer noted the reason for this. It was Baasha's and Elah's leadership of Israel into idolatry (v. 13).

9. Zimri's evil reign in Israel 16:15-20

- 16:15a Zimri's seven-day reign in 885 B.C. was the shortest in the history of the Northern Kingdom. He reigned while Asa was on the throne of Judah.
- 16:15b-17 Omri ("Sheaf of Grain") was commander-in-chief of Israel's army. He outranked Zimri, who was only the commander of half of Israel's chariots (v. 9). When word of Zimri's assassination of Elah reached the soldiers who were besieging the Philistine town of Gibbethon (cf. 15:27), they immediately sided with their general and marched back to the capital to claim the throne for Omri.
- 16:18-20 Zimri realized that he could not oppose Omri successfully and chose suicide over execution. He also destroyed the fortified part of the palace ("the citadel") in Tirzah in the process. It was because of his sins in following Jeroboam's ways that God permitted Zimri to fail in his seizure of power and to die.

"Out of the chaos portrayed in this section will come Omri, a man who will stabilize the Northern Kingdom, establish a new capital, and begin a new dynasty. His family will rule through 2 Kings 10. They will therefore occupy more of the story than any other northern dynasty. Omrides will also serve as active

opponents of the prophets and as patrons of idolatry, especially of Baal worship."¹

10. Omri's evil reign in Israel 16:21-28

16:21-22 Controversy over who should reign over Israel following Zimri's death raged in the north during Asa's reign in Judah. Half of the people favored Tibni as their king, and the other half favored Omri. We know nothing about Tibni other than that he was the son of a man named Ginath. Omri finally overpowered Tibni and probably executed him ("Tibni died"). One writer argued that Tibni did not necessarily die but simply passed off the scene.² The plain statement of verse 22 seems to contradict this view.

16:23-24 For the first half of his 12-year reign Omri's capital city was Tirzah. For the last six years (880-874 B.C.) Omri reigned from Samaria. This was the new capital that he built on a centrally located and easily defended hilltop 12 miles west of Tirzah.³ Moving a nation's capital from one city to another is no small accomplishment, and Omri's ability to do this indicates that he was an effective leader.

"He established the capital at Samaria (16:24), confirmation of this being found when Harvard University excavated the site (1908-1910) under the direction of G. A. Reisner. On the native rock, a large palace was found identified as that of Omri ..."⁴

Omri was probably the most capable king that Israel had enjoyed since the division of the kingdom.

"He has often been called the 'David of the North.'"⁵

¹Ibid., p. 199.

²J. Max Miller, "So Tibni Died," *Vetus Testamentum* 18 (1968):392-94.

³See Finegan, pp. 185-88.

⁴Free, p. 181.

⁵Abram Sachar, *A History of the Jews*, p. 47.

"With Omri, the political situation in Israel became stabilized once more. It may be presumed that this pleased the people. Omri represented the third ruling family in three years. Elah had ruled only two years and Zimri but seven days; and the faction between Omri and Tibni had been disturbing to all. But with this division settled, Omri began a family rule that was to last three generations."¹

Assyrian records refer to Israel as "the land of Omri."² His influence extended far. He defeated the Moabites, the record of which constitutes one of the inscriptions on the famous Moabite Stone. He also made a treaty with Ethbaal, king of Tyre and Sidon (887-856 B.C.), that involved the marriage of his son, Ahab, and Ethbaal's daughter, Jezebel. A granddaughter of Ethbaal, Dido, founded Carthage.³

16:25-28 However the writer of Kings did not mention Omri's strengths, only the fact that he was the worst king that Israel had had spiritually. He was exceedingly bad because he personally followed Jeroboam's cult and caused the people to sin by allowing it to flourish in Israel.

"... Omri, the builder of Samaria and a man of high international fame, is dismissed in eight verses (1 Kgs 16:21-28). Why? Probably because he plays no particularly significant role in Israel's decline. Again, characterization is based largely on its role in plot development, not on how it will or will not satisfy modern historians."⁴

The first period of antagonism between Israel and Judah ended about 874 B.C., when the next Israelite king, Ahab, made a treaty with King Jehoshaphat of Judah (22:44).

¹Wood, *A Survey ...*, p. 308.

²T. C. Mitchell, "Israel and Judah Until the Revolt of Jehu (931-841 B.C.)," in *Cambridge Ancient History*, 3:1:467.

³Wiseman, p. 163.

⁴House, p. 66.

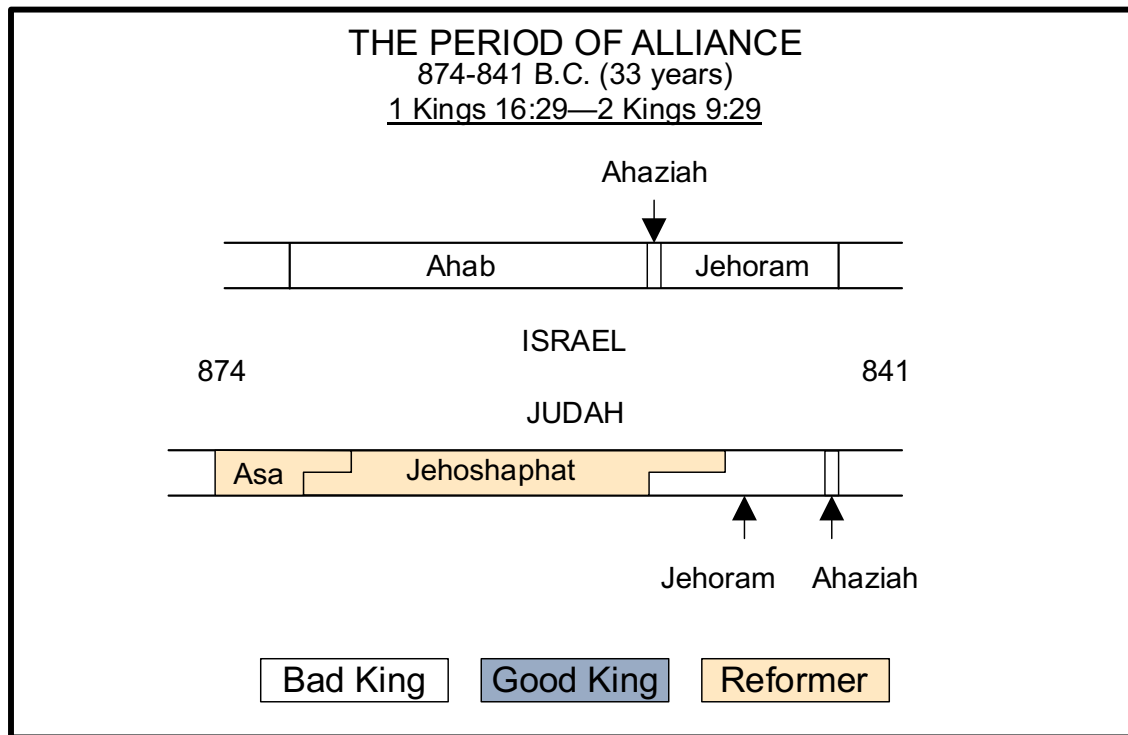
"Comparing the political histories of the two kingdoms [during this first period of antagonism], one is struck by the turmoil in Israel and the stability in Judah. There were three violent disruptions of government and a civil war in Israel. In Judah, by contrast, the succession was orderly and routine. ...

"The reasons for the differences are geographical, political, and theological. Judah was relatively isolated, cut off from the coastal plain by the Philistines and from Transjordan by the Dead Sea. Israel, on the other hand, was neighbor to Syria and Phoenicia, and the major thoroughfares of Palestine passed through its territory, linking Israel to the larger biblical world and making it vulnerable to political developments there. Ethnically and culturally Judah was comparatively homogeneous. Israel with its ten tribes and large Canaanite population (Judg. 3:1-5) had a history of tribal rivalries (Judg. 8:1-3; 12:1-6) and had to contend with differing culture patterns. There were also basic differences in the understanding of kingship."¹

B. THE PERIOD OF ALLIANCE 1 KINGS 16:29—2 KINGS 9:29

King Jehoshaphat of Judah made peace with King Ahab of Israel (22:44). He did so by arranging a marriage between his son, Jehoram, and Ahab's daughter, Athaliah (2 Chron. 18:1). This ended the first 57-year period of antagonism between the two kingdoms (931-874 B.C.) and began a 33-year period of alliance (874-841 B.C.).

¹Rice, pp. 130-31.



1. Ahab's evil reign in Israel 16:29—22:40

The writer devoted six chapters to the reign of King Ahab because many significant things happened in Israel then. Most importantly, Ahab tried to establish Baal worship as the official religion of Israel.

The introduction of Ahab's reign 16:29

Ahab ruled Israel from its new capital, Samaria, for 22 years (874-853 B.C.). During the first of these years Asa ruled alone in Judah. Then for three years Asa and Jehoshaphat shared the throne. For the remainder of Ahab's reign Jehoshaphat ruled alone.

Ahab's wickedness 16:30-34

16:30-33 These verses bracket and set forth Ahab's unusual wickedness with special emphasis. The writer had just written that Omri was the worst king of Israel so far (v. 25), but now he said

that Ahab exceeded him in wickedness. For Ahab, the fact that Jeroboam's cult deviated from the Mosaic Law was "trivial" (v. 31).

The writer held Ahab responsible for marrying Jezebel. This was fair because even in arranged marriages in the ancient world the candidates, especially the son, in most cases had the right of refusal. Ahab's and Jezebel's marriage may have been the seal to a covenant between Omri (Israel) and Ethbaal (Sidonia) that was designed to counteract the growing threat of Damascus (Aramea).¹

Like Solomon, Ahab married unwisely. Solomon's foreign wives led him into idolatry, and Ahab's wife did the same—with a vengeance. Ahab and Jezebel became the most notorious husband and wife team in Scripture. R. G. Lee described Ahab as "the vile human toad who squatted on the throne," and he described Jezebel as "the beautiful adder coiled beside the toad."² The name "Jezebel" means "Dunghill." This must have been a name the Israelites gave her.

Ahab's greatest sin, however, was that he brought the worship of Baal—the worship of the native Canaanites whom God had commanded Israel to exterminate—under the official protection and endorsement of his government. Jeroboam had already refashioned Yahweh worship by departing from what Moses had prescribed. Ahab went one step further: He officially replaced the worship of Yahweh with idolatry (cf. 18:4). This was a first in Israel's history.

"This represents a quantum leap in the history of apostasy."³

The temple ("the house of Baal," v. 32) and the altar to Baal that Ahab erected in Israel's capital symbolized his official approval of this pagan religion. Remember the importance of David bringing the ark into Jerusalem, and Solomon building a

¹Montgomery, p. 285.

²Cited in C. Samuel Storms, *Reaching God's Ear*, p. 216.

³Rice, p. 138.

temple for Yahweh, and what those acts symbolized.¹ Ahab also constructed an Asherah (v. 33), which was a wooden image of the female goddess Asherah. Evidently Baal worship became widely accepted in the Northern Kingdom.

"Archaeological discoveries show that the name 'Baal' appears in the personal names of people who lived in the northern kingdom, being evidenced in the seals and inscriptions which have been found. On the other hand, it is very significant that the seals and inscriptions from Judah, which become commoner in the eight[th] century and are very numerous in the seventh and early sixth, never seem to contain any Baal names ..."²

16:34 This verse may at first seem to have no connection with anything in the context. Perhaps the writer included it to show that as God had fulfilled His word about Jericho, so it would be in Ahab's case. Ahab was establishing paganism that God had already said He would judge. Similarly Hiel had tried to set up a city that God had previously said the Israelites should not rebuild (cf. Josh. 6:26). The building of Jericho is also an evidence of Ahab's apostasy since he must have ordered or permitted Hiel to rebuild the city, in spite of Joshua's long-standing curse.

"The foundation sacrifice, revealed by modern archaeology, is probably what was involved. The children named were probably infants, dead or alive, placed in jars and inserted into the masonry, propitiating the gods and warding off evil."³

The drought in Israel ch. 17

The three scenes in the Elijah narrative (chs. 17—19) form one story in which we can see the rising powers of the prophet in Israel's history. In each succeeding episode of the story Elijah confronted an increasingly

¹See my notes on these events (2 Sam. 6—7; 1 Kings 6).

²Free, p. 182.

³DeVries, p. 205.

difficult problem. In this way God developed his faith and taught the reader the importance of trust and obedience.¹

"... cutting across the linear story are parallel patterns which unify the narrative in another way. Specifically, if the narrative is divided into its three major divisions, corresponding basically to the present chapter divisions, one can discern the same sequence of events in each. The corresponding events in each chapter are linked by verbal, thematic, and structural repetitions which create a texture of foreshadows and echoes, of balances and contrasts, of rising and falling action. This parallel patterning gives the narrative a dimension of depth which supports and enriches its linear logic. The following chart outlines the phenomena which we shall proceed to interpret.

...

| | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|
| "A. Announcement | | |
| by Elijah (17:1) | by God (18:1) | by Jezebel (19:2) |
| B. Journey | | |
| from Israel (17:2-5) | to Israel (18:2) | from Israel (19:3-4) |
| C. Two encounters | | |
| ravens (17:6-7) | Obadiah (18:7-16) | an angel (19:5-6) |
| widow (17:8-16) | Ahab (18:17-20) | the angel of the Lord (19:7) |
| D. Miracle | | |
| resuscitation (17:17-23) | fire (18:21-38) | theophany (19:9-18) |
| E. Conversion | | |
| widow (17:24) | Israel (18:39-40) | Elisha (19:19-21) |
| | Ahab (18:41—19:1) | |

¹For five helpful, popular messages on incidents in these chapters, see Howard G. Hendricks, *Taking a Stand: What God Can Do through Ordinary You*.

"The parallel elements may be briefly summarized. Each act in the narrative begins with an announcement (A) which initiates the action and, thereby, precipitates a crisis. The announcement propels Elijah to a new locale (B). In the new setting he has two successive encounters or confrontations (C). The second encounter results in a challenge which requires Yahweh's intervention to resolve (D). Finally, in response to this intervention, individuals are 'converted' and declare or exhibit their loyalty to Yahweh (E)."¹

Wiersbe noted seven miracles that Elijah either performed or experienced in chapters 17 and 18: (1) a nationwide drought (17:1), (2) food from unclean birds (17:2-7), (3) food from empty vessels (17:8-16), (4) life for a dead boy (17:17-24), (5) fire from heaven (18:1-40), (6) the rain returns (18:41-45), and (7) strength for the journey (18:46).²

Elijah's announcement of God's judgment 17:1

Again God raised up a prophet to announce what He would do. Evidently Ahab's apostasy had been going on for 14 years before God confronted the king with His prophetic challenge.³ Normally God gives sinners an opportunity to judge themselves and repent before He sends judgment on them (cf. 1 Cor. 11:31; 2 Pet. 3:9-10).

The dramatic Elijah story opens with our hero bursting onto the scene in Ahab's palace.

"He is the most popular personality in Hebrew history, the patron saint of Jewish life. Dean Stanley calls him the grandest and the most romantic character that Israel ever produced."⁴

Elijah's name means "Yahweh is my God." He hailed from Tishbeh, the traditional site being eight miles north of the Jabbok River in Gilead, on the east side of the Jordan River.⁵ Elijah could promise severe drought because

¹Robert L. Cohn, "The Literary Logic of 1 Kings 17—19," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 101:3 (September 1982):343-44. This article has several good insights into the major motifs and structure of these chapters.

²Wiersbe, pp. 467-74.

³Merrill, *Kingdom of ...*, p. 346.

⁴Sachar, p. 50.

⁵Gray, p. 377.

God had said that this is what He would bring on the land if His people forsook Him (Lev. 26:18-19; Deut. 11:16-17; 28:23-24; 33:28), and the people of Israel had done just that. Josephus quoted the Greek dramatist Menander, who commented on this drought in Menander's account of the activities of Ethbaal, king of the Tyrians.¹

"'Before whom I stand' (v. 1) is his [Elijah's] claim to authority: it is a technical phrase used of a king's first or 'prime' minister—his confidant and chief executive."²

This drought would have been a challenge to Baal, since Baal's devotees credited him with providing rain and fertility. Some representations of Baal that archaeologists have discovered picture him holding a thunderbolt in his hand.

"Why choose a drought? Why emphasize that Yahweh lives? Elijah determines to attack Baalism at its theological center. Baal worshipers believed that their storm god made rain, unless, of course, it was the dry season and he needed to be brought back from the dead. To refute this belief Elijah states that Yahweh is the one who determines when rain falls, that Yahweh lives at all times, and that Yahweh is not afraid to challenge Baal on what his worshipers consider his home ground."³

Elijah at the brook Cherith 17:2-7

17:2 God sent Elijah to Cherith (exact site unknown, but east of the Jordan River⁴) to provide for his needs, to hide him from Ahab, and to teach him a lesson (cf. 18:10).⁵

"If Providence calls us to solitude and retirement,
it becomes us to acquiesce; when we cannot be

¹Josephus, *Antiquities of ...*, 8:13:2.

²Auld, pp. 109-10.

³House, p. 213.

⁴See Gray, p. 379.

⁵See the map "Elijah's Travels" in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, p. 523.

useful we must be patient, and when we cannot work for God we must sit still quietly for him."¹

17:3-6 God commanded Elijah to drink from the brook, and He promised that ravens would provide food for him. Ravens do not normally feed their own young (cf. Job 38:41). Elijah then obeyed the LORD. So God provided miraculously for Elijah in order to build his faith in view of the conflicts that he would face. "Bread" (v. 6) is literally "food" (Heb. *lehem*) and could include berries, fruit, nuts, eggs, etc. Elijah was learning experientially that Yahweh was the only source of food, fertility, and blessing.

"The Lord provided the food and the birds provided the transportation!"²

"Whether intentional or not, the Elijah narratives provide many parallels with the Mosaic tradition, in the present instance the emphasis of both traditions is on miraculous provision by God ..."³

17:7 As God had promised (v. 1), drought soon began to grip the nation.

Elijah in Zarephath 17:8-24

God had a very unusual ministry for Elijah to perform in which he would stand alone against hundreds of opponents (18:16-40). This section of the story reveals how the LORD further prepared him for it.

"The longer I live, the more I believe that God's leading is often humanly illogical. It's a mystery, at least from our limited perspective."⁴

17:8-9 The site of Zarephath, to which Yahweh led Elijah, was between Tyre and Sidon in Phoenicia, the stronghold of the cult that Ahab had imported into Israel (cf. 16:31). Widows were poor

¹Henry, p. 386.

²Wiersbe, p. 469.

³Jones, 2:305.

⁴Charles R. Swindoll, *Elijah: A Man of Heroism and Humility*, p. 52.

in the ancient Near East and would have been the first to run out of food in a drought.¹

17:10-12 Elijah's request for water and then bread from the widow he met evidently identified her to him as the widow that God wanted him to stay with (v. 9; cf. Gen. 24:10-21; Luke 4:26). In responding to his request the widow swore in the name of Yahweh, Elijah's God, that she only had enough food for one last meal before she and her son would die of starvation.

17:13-16 Elijah asked the widow to put God's interests—represented by himself, a prophet of Yahweh—before her own as the condition for her blessing (cf. Matt. 6:33; Mark 12:41-44). She responded obediently to the promise that Elijah gave her from God, showing that she really believed that Yahweh, not Baal, was the God who could provide food and fertility. God honored her faith; He provided her need for food. Note that it was a promise from God that she believed and that God honored.

"In the absence of Baal who lies impotent in the Netherworld, Yahweh steps in to assist the widow and the orphan, and this is even done in the heartland of Baal, Phoenicia."²

This situation undoubtedly strengthened Elijah's faith in the LORD's power and faithfulness, as well as the faith of the woman.

"The fact that Elijah had to sustain the widow and boy points not only to YHWH as provider for the needy but also as one who 'trained' his prophet, as it were, to be obedient to him. Flour and oil signify life; they are the two common staples in

¹See Richard D. Patterson, "The Widow, the Orphan, and the Poor in the Old Testament and the Extra-Biblical Literature," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 130:519 (July-September 1973):223-34.

²F. C. Fensham, "A Few Observations on the Polarisation between Yahweh and Baal in 1 Kings 17—19," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 92:2 (1980):234.

any ancient, as well as modern, Near Eastern household."¹

- 17:17-18 Sometime later the widow's son became sick and died. His sickness corresponded to Israel's spiritual condition at this time. The widow blamed Elijah for bringing up her past wrongdoing, whatever that may have been. And she incorrectly blamed herself for her son's death (cf. John 9:2-3). Evidently she believed that God was punishing her for something that she had done in the past.

"What had escaped divine notice before is now revealed by the discovery of a divine in her house, who has acted as detective of holiness ..."²

- 17:19-21 Elijah then asked the widow to give him her son, and he took him to the upstairs room where he had been staying and laid the boy on his bed.

"The members of the most ordinary household actually lived in the upper story [cf. v. 19] of their home [during this time in Israel's history], not on the ground level as common folk had in earlier times; the ground floor was used for storage and for working quarters."³

Then Elijah prayed and asked God if He had also, in addition to the widow's other heartaches, brought the catastrophe of the son's death on this widow. This seems to be a rhetorical question meaning: Why have You brought this catastrophe also on her? Elijah prayed shamelessly—he was not ashamed to ask God to do something, because he thought he could not handle the situation himself—one of the fundamental requisites for obtaining one's petitions in difficult cases (cf. Matt. 7:7-8; Luke 11:5-13).

¹James R. Battenfield, "YHWH's Refutation of the Baal Myth through the Actions of Elijah and Elisha," in *Israel's Apostasy and Restoration: Essays in Honor of Roland K. Harrison*, p. 22.

²Montgomery, p. 295.

³Albright, *The Archaeology ...*, p. 210.

Often in cases of miraculous restoration, God's servant placed his hand on the afflicted one. Elijah did so to indicate that the power of God in him was passing to the needy boy (cf. Matt. 8:3). In this instance Elijah placed his whole body against the boy's body, probably for the same reason (cf. 2 Kings 4:34; Acts 9:31-43; 20:10).

"Certainly his posture indicated total identification with the boy and his need, and this is an important factor when we intercede for others."¹

17:22-24 Yahweh answered ("listened to the voice of") Elijah and restored the boy's life. This is the first restoration to life of a dead person that Scripture records. In the process Elijah learned the power of God and the power of prayer. He applied both of these lessons in his contest with the Baal prophets later (18:16-46). His confidence in his own ability as a channel of God's blessing and word received added strength from the widow's confession that now it was clear to her that he was a "man of God" (a prophet) and that what he spoke was truly the word of God.

"The best proof of the effectiveness of Elijah's preparation is that he was verified as an authentic man of God and the bearer of God's word by a daughter of the very people he opposed (v. 24)."²

This miracle undoubtedly confirmed Elijah's belief that if God could raise a dead Gentile boy back to life, He could also revive the chosen people of Israel who had become spiritually dead.

"... the emphasis in this text [17:17-24] is not so much on Elijah as on the word of the Lord which is in Elijah's mouth."³

¹Wiersbe, p. 470.

²Rice, p. 145.

³Marion Soards Jr., "Elijah and the Lord's Word: A Study of I Kings 17:17-24," *Studia Biblica et Theologica* 13:1 (April 1983):39-40.

Verses 17 through 24 display a chiastic structure that highlights Elijah's control of the situation and his intimate relationship with Yahweh that resulted in the miraculous resuscitation of the widow's son:

- "A 'What have you against me, O man of God?'
- B 'Give me your son!'
- C And he took him and brought him up
- D And he cried to the Lord and said, 'O Lord my God.'
- E And he stretched upon the boy
- D' And he called to the Lord and said, 'O Lord my God.'
- E' And the Lord heard the voice of Elijah
- C' And Elijah took the child and brought him down
- B' 'See your son lives!'
- A' 'Now I know that you are a man of God.'"¹

"The whole point of the story, however, seems to be paramountly a demonstration that YHWH, not Baal, has the power of life over death."²

Yahweh's vindication of Himself on Mount Carmel ch. 18

God's promise of rain 18:1-2

In the third year of the famine the LORD told Elijah to present himself to King Ahab again (cf. 17:1) and that the famine was about to end. The LORD promised to provide rain on the face of the earth. Evidently God made the famine especially severe in Samaria because Ahab and Jezebel were the causes of it and lived there. Elijah would next learn from God how the Israelites would respond to his ministry as Yahweh's servant. And the Israelites would learn that Yahweh is the only true God.

¹Cohn, "The Literary ...," p. 336.

²Battenfield, p. 23.

Elijah's encounter with Obadiah 18:3-16

- 18:3-4 As a believer in Yahweh, Obadiah, who was in charge of Ahab's household, had been a blessing to 100 of God's prophets even during the famine. The prophets in view here were probably preachers and leaders in the worship of Yahweh. Obadiah had hid them in a cave and fed them so that Jezebel could not find and kill them. Surveyors have counted over 2,000 caves in the Mount Carmel area.¹
- 18:5-6 Ahab directed Obadiah to help him search throughout the land for grass sufficient to keep the horses, mules, and cattle alive, which they did.
- 18:7-8 When Obadiah met Elijah, he voiced his submission to the man of God and to Yahweh. He did so by calling Elijah his "master" and by bowing low before him. However, Obadiah served two masters. Elijah pointed this out by referring to Ahab as Obadiah's master. To rise as high as he had in Ahab's government, Obadiah had to have externally supported Ahab while internally following Yahweh. Elijah directed Obadiah to announce to Ahab that Elijah was near at hand.
- 18:9-11 Obadiah feared that if he did this Ahab would kill him, since Ahab had looked high and low for Elijah, even internationally, for years and had not been able to find him. Obadiah's confession that Yahweh lived confirms that he was a genuine believer (cf. v. 3). This is exactly the same profession that both the widow of Zarephath (17:12) and Elijah had made (17:1). Obadiah made a great effort to convince Elijah that he was a believer in Yahweh. He may have felt this explanation was necessary because of his position in Ahab's administration.
- 18:12-14 Obadiah obviously struggled with whether he could believe Elijah when the prophet told him that he would speak to Ahab.
- 18:15-16 Having received a second promise from Elijah that he would not disappear but meet with Ahab that very day, Obadiah finally obeyed the prophet's command (v. 8). He went to Ahab

¹Patterson and Austel, p. 142; Jones, 2:313.

and informed him of Elijah's presence. Then Ahab went to meet Elijah. He did not summon him into his presence but went to him, indicating his respect for Elijah as well as his eagerness to see him.

"Why Obadiah should be so featured is, at first, puzzling. Yet the episode appears to have two major purposes. First, Obadiah's speech reveals to Elijah the gravity of the crisis in Samaria during his absence ... Second, through the use of irony, Obadiah's scene establishes the unique authority of Elijah."¹

Obadiah was similar to many believers in Yahweh who were living in Israel at that time. They had divided allegiances, they had faith in Yahweh, they were fearful for their own safety, and they were slow to respond to God's word. What a contrast Obadiah was to the Gentile widow of Zarephath (cf. Matt. 15:21-28). Elijah saw beforehand, in Obadiah's response to him, how believers in Israel would respond to what he would soon do on Mount Carmel. Elijah would call on the people to do essentially what he had commanded Obadiah to do: obey the LORD's word through His prophet.

Elijah's contest with the prophets of Baal 18:17-40

18:17-18 Ahab had a problem finally believing that he was seeing Elijah similar to Obadiah's (cf. v. 7; Josh. 6:18; 7:25). He believed that Elijah was the cause of the famine. The real source of Israel's troubles was Ahab's and Omri's disregard of the Mosaic Covenant and their preference for idolatry (Deut. 6:5). Ahab was the Achan of his day: He was the troubler of Israel (cf. Josh. 7:25). "The Baals" (v. 18) refers to "the various local manifestations of the Canaanite fertility god known as Baal 'lord'."²

"This [idolatry] was a crime against the state worthy of death (like that of Achan, Jos. 6:18; 7:25; and Jonathan in 1 Sa. 14:24-29)."³

¹Cohn, "The Literary ...," pp. 338-39. Paragraph division omitted.

²Jones, 2:315.

³Wiseman, p. 168.

- 18:19-20 Elijah then told Ahab to assemble the Israelites on Mount Carmel along with the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah that Jezebel was providing for during the famine.

"To eat at the table of the king or queen was to be subsidized by the state (cf. 2 Sam. 9:9-11; 1 Kgs. 2:7). So aggressive is Jezebel that she promotes at state expense the worship of Baal and Asherah."¹

Elijah gave the king orders, as was appropriate, since the prophet was the representative of the true King of Israel. Surprisingly Ahab obeyed. His weak will becomes even more obvious later in 1 Kings.

Probably hundreds, if not thousands of people, gathered, since Elijah summoned all Israel to Mount Carmel. Elijah probably chose this mountain, as God led him, because it stood between Israel and Phoenicia geographically—neutral ground between Yahweh's land and Baal's. Furthermore, the Phoenicians regarded Mount Carmel as a sacred dwelling place of Baal. Storms with lightning and thunder were common on Mount Carmel, and Baal worshippers viewed them as manifestations of their deity. In the minds of many, Baal had the advantage in this contest. The name "Carmel" means "Garden Land," and it was famous for its fertility.

- 18:21 Elijah then sought to turn Israel from Baal worship back to Yahweh. He called on the people to make an "either or" choice. It was time to decide. They had tried to serve both Yahweh and Baal long enough. Would they give their allegiance to Yahweh or to Baal? They could not do both, because Yahweh demands exclusive allegiance (cf. John 14:6). But the Israelites were not yet ready to make that commitment. In our day people still try to serve two masters: God and some idol.

¹Rice, p. 149

"The issue is not that Israel wanted to reject Yahweh and choose Baal, but rather to serve them both."¹

"Here is the Martin Luther of old-time Israel, who singlehandedly challenged the whole priesthood of the state religion, and all the people of the realm, to the decisive test on Mount Carmel."²

18:22 Elijah realized that he was not the only prophet of Yahweh who remained in Israel (cf. v. 13), but he was perhaps the only one who was openly serving the LORD.³ Another possibility is that he was comparing himself to the many prophets of Baal: one against many. In this situation the odds were one against 450. Elijah must have felt very much alone. His victory would require a supernatural act of God.

The writer previously mentioned the summoning of "450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table" (v. 19). But in this verse only 450 prophets of Baal are mentioned. This has led some interpreters to conclude that only Baal's prophets showed up on Mount Carmel, and that Ahab was not able to control his wife, who controlled her own set of prophets.⁴

18:23-24 Elijah proposed a test in order to determine which deity was to be worshipped. The oxen that were used, as symbols of service, may have represented the people of Israel (cf. Num. 7:3). Elijah would sacrifice them as a burnt offering of worship. Which prophets would their respective deities respond to: the pagan prophets or Elijah? Aaron had previously conducted a similar test (Lev. 9). The deity who brought fire down would be the true God. The people agreed to Elijah's test. Elijah's

¹B. S. Childs, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context*, p. 65.

²Baxter, 2:111-12.

³Wiersbe, p. 473.

⁴See Provan, p. 140.

actions on Mount Carmel were a strong polemic (attack) against Canaanite religion.¹

Interestingly, this was a contest of prophets, not priests. The priests had less influence for Yahweh in Israel than the prophets at this time. Apparently the prophets in Phoenicia were more powerful too. Perhaps God accepted Elijah's offering, by a non-priest, because there were no faithful priests in the Northern Kingdom at this time (cf. Num. 18; Deut. 18). The Israelites had been straddling the spiritual fence just as Obadiah had (v. 21).

18:25-26 The priests of Baal proceeded to prepare their sacrifice as Elijah had specified, and they called out to Baal to ignite it all morning. Theirs was not a rainmaking dance but a wild ecstasy that was designed to move Baal to act.² Even though Baal worshippers thought the thunder represented Baal's voice, they did not hear his voice on this occasion. And though they represented him as holding a lightning bolt in his hand, they did not see any fire from heaven.

18:27 Elijah did something that must have shocked everyone present: He mocked Baal. In the ancient East, even if a person did not worship an idol, he at least took its status as a god for granted.³ They were tolerant and inclusive. However, Elijah refused to acknowledge that Baal was a god at all. He suggested that Baal might be "attending to business" (lit. relieving himself).⁴ Baal's devotees also thought that he accompanied the Phoenician sailors, so Elijah suggested that he might be on a journey. All of these possibilities exposed Baal's limited powers.

¹George Saint-Laurent, "Light from Ras Shamra on Elijah's Ordeal upon Mount Carmel," in *Scripture in Context*, pp. 123-39; Leah Bronner, *The Stories of Elijah and Elisha*, Robert B. Chisholm Jr., "The Polemic against Baalism in Israel's Early History and Literature," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 151:603 (July-September 1994):267-68.

²Wiseman, p. 169.

³Rice, p. 150.

⁴Gary A. Rendsburg, "The Mock of Baal in 1 Kings 18:27," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 50:3 (July 1988):415. For other interpretations of this verse, see Leo Hayman, "A Note on 1 Kings 18:27," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 10 (1951):57-58.

18:28-29 Pagan worship has always proved destructive to humanity, as the priests' cutting themselves illustrated. For about six hours the priests of Baal ranted and raved to no avail.

18:30-32 Yahweh's altar at that site (one of the high places? cf. 15:14) had fallen into disrepair. Elijah rebuilt it, as the Mosaic Covenant specified, with 12 uncut stones, symbolic of Israel's 12 tribes. There was still only one LORD, one covenant, and one nation with one destiny in the plans and purposes of God, even though Israel had split into two parts.

"As Moses built an altar at Sinai and set up twelve stones for the twelve tribes (Exodus 24:4), and Joshua erected the twelve stones at Gilgal in the Gilgal covenant festival (Joshua 4:3), so Elijah built an altar of twelve stones 'according to the number of the tribes' of Israel (1 Kings 17 [*sic* 18]:31 [32])."¹

18:33-35 Then Elijah prepared the sacrifice. The 12 large jars of water that he had poured on the sacrifice may also have represented Israel. Elijah may have obtained the water from a spring or perhaps from the Great (Mediterranean) Sea that is not far from some parts of Mount Carmel. The traditional site of this confrontation, however, is at the east end of the Carmel range of mountains, far from the sea.

"The water was obtained, as I suppose, from those permanent sources of the Kishon, at the base of Carmel ..."²

18:36-37 Elijah prayed a simple prayer for God's glory at about 3:00 p.m., the time of Israel's traditional evening (really afternoon) sacrifice, which illustrated its daily commitment to Yahweh.³ Emphasizing the fact that Yahweh had been Israel's God since patriarchal times, Elijah prayed that the LORD would reveal Himself as Israel's God. He also asked that the people would perceive that He had accepted His servant Elijah's offering that

¹Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, p. 192.

²W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book*, 2:225. See also 2:228.

³Josephus, *Antiquities of ...*, 14:4:3. Cf. Acts 3:1.

he had presented in harmony with God's Law. The heart of the people needed turning back to God, and Elijah prayed for evidence of that as well.

- 18:38 God revealed Himself as He had earlier in Israel's history (Lev. 10:1-2). He accepted the sacrifice that had been offered in harmony with His will. In fact, the fire from heaven not only consumed the sacrifice, but the altar and everything associated with it.¹ Yahweh could hardly have demonstrated His presence and power more dramatically (cf. Lev. 10:1-2).
- 18:39 By falling face down and shouting "The LORD, He is God; the LORD, He is God" the people were not only announcing their commitment to Yahweh, but they were also chanting Elijah's name, which means "The LORD is God." It is possible that this chant was the origin of Elijah's nickname.²
- 18:40 The Israelites demonstrated their commitment to Yahweh with obedience to the Mosaic Law, and God's prophet, by executing the false prophets, as the Law prescribed (cf. Exod. 22:20; Deut. 13:1-18; 17:2-7; 18:20). The Kishon brook (wadi) lay just north of Mount Carmel in the Jezreel Valley below.³

"The contest on Carmel is not, as often billed, between Elijah and the prophets of Baal: it is between his Lord Yahweh himself and Lord Baal."⁴

"Far more dangerous to the well-being of any people than thieves or even murderers are the disseminators of doctrinal error (Isa. 9:14-17; Matt. 23:15). If pollution of our natural resources and human bodies is becoming a national concern in America, what about the pollution of our minds and souls?"⁵

¹See Charles E. Baukal Jr., "Pyrotechnics on Mount Carmel," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 171:683 (July-September 2014):289-306.

²Gray, p. 402.

³A wadi is a streambed that has water in it only during wet times of the year.

⁴Auld, p. 118.

⁵Whitcomb, p. 393.

The end of the drought 18:41-46

- 18:41-42 Elijah then told Ahab, who had observed this miracle, to go home and celebrate ("eat and drink") because it was about to start raining heavily. Evidently thunder accompanied the falling of the fire (lightning?) from heaven.¹ Perhaps Ahab had been fasting to end the drought. Ahab evidently went on his way to Jezreel (v. 45), but Elijah went up to the highest point on Mount Carmel. His posture of bending down to the earth and putting his face between his knees suggests that he was humbling himself before the LORD. It seems that Elijah prayed. If he was praying, he was probably praying that God would send the rain that he had already told Ahab was coming (v. 1).
- 18:43-44 Rain normally came on Mount Carmel from the west, from the Mediterranean Sea. Elijah evidently persisted in prayer (cf. Luke 18:1-8), doubtless basing his request on the people's repentance and God's promise to bless that with rain (Deut. 28:12).

"How often our prayers return the same answer: There is no change, no sign of deliverance. 'There is nothing there.' And so we're inclined to give up. We do not know that God's answer is on the way."²

Perhaps the cloud as small as a man's hand represented God's hand returning to the land to bless His people again (cf. v. 46). Elijah told his servant to urge Ahab to go down from Mount Carmel. Evidently Ahab was slow to obey Elijah's former order to go up to Jezreel (v. 41). He may have found it hard to believe that the three-year drought was about to end with a violent rainstorm.

- 18:45-46 Jezreel was Ahab's winter palace, which stood 10 to 20 miles east of Mount Carmel in the Jezreel Valley, depending on where on Mount Carmel these events took place. Perhaps Elijah was able to beat Ahab to Jezreel because he ran along the ridge of

¹John Ruthven, "A Note on Elijah's 'Fire from Yahweh,'" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 12:2 (1969):111-15.

²David Roper, *Seeing Through*, pp. 143-44.

Mount Carmel while Ahab's chariot got bogged down in the muddy valley below. Another explanation follows:

"The mode of doing honor to Ahab by running before his chariot was in accordance with the customs of the East, even to this day."¹

"The distance from the base of Carmel across the plain to Jezreel is not less than twelve miles, and the race was probably accomplished in two hours, in the face of a tremendous storm of rain and wind. It was necessary that the 'hand of the Lord should be upon' the prophet, or he would not have been able to achieve it."²

As God had predicted (v. 1) He provided rain on the face of the earth.

This concludes the account of Israel's three and one-half year drought (17:1—18:46; cf. Luke 4:25; James 5:17; ca. 860-857 B.C.). This drought was a foreview of the three and one-half year Great Tribulation in which God will punish Israel even more severely for her apostasy in the future (cf. Rev. 8—18). The major motifs of this section are Yahweh's superiority over Baal and His faithfulness to withhold blessing (rain) as a punishment and to send it in response to repentance.

"... the whole chapter ... is seen to have a single motive from beginning to end: the bringing of rain, that Yahweh's supremacy may be established in Israel, not by a barren Pyrrhic victory [i.e., a victory won at too great a cost to have been worthwhile for the victor] through a supernatural fire-bolt, but by meeting the crying need of His people for water ..."³

"Often in the history of the world great issues have depended on lone individuals, without whom events would have taken a wholly different turn. Yet few crises have been more significant for history than that in which Elijah figured, and in the story of the Transfiguration he rightly stands beside Moses. Without

¹Thomson, 2:227.

²Ibid.

³D. R. Ap-Thomas, "Elijah on Mt. Carmel," *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 92 (1960):155.

Moses the religion of Yahwehism as it figured in the Old Testament would never have been born. Without Elijah it would have died. The religion from which Judaism, Christianity and Islam all in varying ways stemmed would have succumbed to the religion of Tyre. How different the political history of the world might have been it is vain to speculate. But it is safe to say that from the religion of [Baal] Melkart mankind would never have derived that spiritual influence which came from Moses and Elijah and others who followed in their train."¹

One might compare Moses and Elijah to George Washington and Abraham Lincoln in American history.

"Without question Elijah is one of the most distinctive and diversely talented individuals in the Bible. He is prophet, preacher, political reformer, and miracle worker all at the same time. At the heart of this multifaceted person, though, rests one overriding conviction. Elijah hates Baalism as much as Jezebel loves the cult, and he desires to magnify Yahweh over Baal and defeat the interloping religion once and for all. He makes it his mission to teach that Yahweh lives, that Baal does not exist, and that ethical standards flow from a commitment to the living God."²

There are several similarities between this chapter and Judges 4 and 7. All three encounters with Israel's enemies took place on the south side of the Jezreel Valley. The Kishon brook figured in both Barak and Elijah's victories over the Canaanites. Gideon faced odds of 450 to one like Elijah did, and both men experienced miraculous deliverances. In the future, Israel's enemies will again assemble against her in this valley at Armageddon. Then Jesus Christ will be the hero and will bring an even more spectacular victory to His chosen people (cf. Rev. 16:16; 19:11-21).

¹H. H. Rowley, "Elijah on Mount Carmel," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 43:1 (September 1960):219. R. P. Carroll, "The Elijah-Elisha Sagas: Some Remarks on Prophetic Succession in Ancient Israel," *Vetus Testamentum* 19:4 (October 1969):408-14, drew attention to the Mosaic parallels and office depicted in the Elijah-Elisha sagas (1 Kings 17—2 Kings 13). See also H. L. Ellison, *The Prophets of Israel*, p. 35, for a list of comparisons between Moses and Elijah.

²House, p. 212.

Elijah's fear and his new commission ch. 19**Elijah's flight from Jezebel 19:1-8**

Elijah was apparently surprised and disappointed that the repentance of the Israelites that he had just witnessed did not do away with Baal worship.

19:1-2 Ahab told Jezebel, who had not been present on Mount Carmel, all that Elijah had done there. "All the prophets" that Elijah had killed were the 450 prophets of Baal (18:22). Jezebel then sent a message to Elijah that she had sworn by her gods that she would kill Elijah within the next 24 hours.

"Here is a woman who still swears by her gods (19:2), even after all that has happened—a believer [in idols] who is impervious to evidence."¹

19:3-4 Jezebel's message terrified Elijah, and he ran for his life to Beersheba. Apparently Jezebel's threat drove the lessons of God's power and provision that he had been learning at Cherith, Zarephath, and Carmel out of his memory temporarily.

"Like Simon Peter when he took his eyes off the Lord, looked at those waves, and began to sink, Elijah lost his courage."²

"Charles Spurgeon said that Elijah 'retreated before a beaten enemy.'"³

"Probably Elijah had played into Jezebel's hand. Had she really wanted Elijah dead, she surely would have seized him without warning and slain him. What she desired was that Elijah and his God be discredited before the new converts who had aided Elijah by executing the prophets of Baal. Without a leader revolutionary movements usually stumble and fall away. Just when God needed him

¹Provan, p. 144.

²McGee, 2:291.

³Wiersbe, p. 476.

the most, the divinely trained prophet was to prove a notable failure."¹

"A date of 857 for Elijah's trek to Horeb would appear to be reasonable. Since that journey was after the three-year drought, Elijah must have first encountered Ahab in about 860, fourteen years after he had commenced his reign. This would be ample time for the apostate conditions described in the narrative to have taken firm root."²

Beersheba was the southernmost sizable town in the Southern Kingdom. Perhaps the fact that Elijah dismissed his servant there and then went farther south alone indicates that he was giving up his ministry (cf. Jonah 1:1-3).³ Previously the Israelites had wandered for 40 years in this wilderness because of their unbelief. Elijah did not get much refreshment from the natural provisions of the wilderness, such as the juniper ("broom") tree. He was so discouraged that he asked Yahweh to take his life, and he said he was no better than his predecessors in purging Israel from idolatry. Apparently he had expected to see a complete revival in Israel.

"Elijah would never have run away from Jezebel if he had not been exhausted."⁴

"H. B. London, assistant to the president at Focus on the Family, cites a Fuller Institute of Church Growth Study that found that 90 percent of pastors work more than 46 hours a week; 90 percent feel that they are inadequately trained to cope with ministry demands; 50 percent feel unable to meet the needs of the job; 75 percent report a significant stress-related crisis at least once in their ministry; 80 percent believe that pastoral ministry has a negative affect [*sic* effect]

¹Patterson and Austel, p. 148.

²Merrill, *Kingdom of ...*, p. 346.

³DeVries, p. 235.

⁴McGee, 292.

on their families; and 33 percent say that being in the ministry is downright hazardous to their families (*Pastors at Risk*, p. 22). Clearly, the pastorate is no bed of roses."¹

19:5-8 God provided supernaturally for His servant in the wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights, like He had provided for the Israelites for 40 years there. Though "the angel of the LORD" usually refers to God Himself in the Old Testament (e.g., Exod. 3:2-6), here it may refer to a human messenger (vv. 5, 7).

The trip from Beersheba to the traditional site of Horeb ("the mountain of God," Mount Sinai) took only about 14 days by foot. But it took Elijah 40 days to get there. Perhaps Elijah was wandering in the wilderness because he was depressed and/or to hide from Jezebel. It seems that Elijah was experiencing the same discipline for his weak faith and the same education that God had given the Israelites years earlier. God sustained Elijah faithfully, as He had preserved Israel in the wilderness.

"Elijah's 'pilgrimage' to Sinai was a search for the roots of Yahwism. There Yahweh had appeared to Moses when he was herding sheep, and there He appeared to him when he gave the law. Elijah needed reaffirmation. What he thought he saw happening on Mt. Carmel did not happen, namely, the repentance of Israel. So he went to Mount Sinai (also known as Mount Horeb) to chide Yahweh for forsaking him."²

Moses had spent 40 days and nights on Mount Sinai fasting while he waited for a new phase of his ministry to begin (Exod. 34:28). Jesus spent 40 days and nights in a wilderness at the beginning of His public ministry too (cf. Matt. 4:1-2). Whereas Moses represented the Law, Elijah represented the prophets in Israel's history.

¹Howard G. Hendricks, *Standing Together*, pp. 80-81.

²Homer Heater Jr., "A Theology of Samuel and Kings," in *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament*, p. 134.

God's revelation of Himself to Elijah 19:9-14

19:9 Elijah eventually found a cave in Mount Horeb and spent the night there. The Hebrew text has "the" cave rather than "a" cave, suggesting that this may have been the very spot where God had placed Moses before He caused His glory to pass before him (Exod. 33:21-23). Now Elijah sought refuge in "the" cave and the glory of the LORD passed before him. God asked him what he was doing there (cf. v. 13; cf. Gen. 3:9), because He had not sent him to Horeb, as He had sent him to Cherith, Zarephath, and Samaria (cf. 17:3, 9; 18:1). Elijah had fled to Horeb out of fear.

"A cave is, of course, not a good place for someone to sit who has a selective memory—even if he is a hero of the faith (cf. Heb. 11:37-38). For like the words that Elijah speaks in its midst, the cave harks back to the situation of oppression under Jezebel when other prophets were hidden in a cave (18:4, 13). It is a dark place for someone in a dark mood, and it is significant that God's attempt to change Elijah's thinking is closely tied to an attempt to get him out of the cave (v. 11). It is also significant that Elijah is so reluctant to come out and face God (vv. 11-13)—does he fear that reality will interfere with conviction?"¹

19:10 Elijah's zeal for God's covenant, altars, and prophets was admirable, but he became too discouraged, because he underestimated the extent of commitment to Yahweh that existed in Israel.² But he was not alone in his stand for Yahweh (cf. 18:13).

19:11-12 God proceeded to reproduce demonstrations of His power, which He had given Israel at Mount Sinai (Exod. 19:16-18), and which He had demonstrated to Elijah at Mount Carmel (18:38,

¹Provan, pp. 148-49.

²Ronald B. Allen, "Elijah the Broken Prophet," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 22:3 (1979):202.

45). However God was not in these demonstrations of power (strong wind, earthquake, and fire), in the sense that they were not His methods now. Rather, God was in the gentle blowing. A few scholars believe that we should understand the Hebrew words translated "a gentle blowing" (NASB) or "a gentle whisper" (NIV) as "a roaring and thunderous voice" (cf. Exod. 19:16-18; Job 38:1).¹ This view has not found popular acceptance with most Bible translators and commentators.

Elijah was to learn that, whereas God had revealed Himself in dramatic ways in the past, He would now work in quieter ways. Instead of Elijah continuing to stand alone for God and perform dramatic miracles, God would now put him into the background while He used other people to do His will.² Elijah evidently got the message, but he still felt depressed (v. 14). God was dealing with him gently.

19:13 Elijah covered his face because he realized that He could not look at God and live, as Moses also realized (Exod. 33:20-22; cf. Gen. 32:30). Again the LORD spoke to Elijah with a voice and asked him again: "What are you doing here, Elijah?" (v. 9). Elijah's fear had taken him to a place where God had not directed him.

"God's way of correcting Elijah's perspective was to bring him to the place of revelation, which is what he must do with us again and again."³

19:14 In response to the LORD's repeated question, Elijah repeated his answer (v. 10). The revelation of God's presence (vv. 11-13) had not changed Elijah's perspective.

"His [Elijah's] God-given successes had fostered an inordinate pride (cf. vv. 4, 10, 14) that had made him take his own importance too seriously. Moreover, Elijah had come to bask in the glow of

¹E.g., J. Lust, "A Gentle Breeze or a Roaring Thunderous Sound?" *Vetus Testamentum* 25:1 (January 1975):115; Stuart, pp. 10-18.

²For helpful insights into verses 9-14, see William Dumbrell, "What Are You Doing Here? Elijah at Horeb," *Crux* 22:1 (March 1986):12-19.

³Roper, p. 165.

the spectacular. He may have fully expected that because of what had been accomplished at Mount Carmel, Jezebel would capitulate and pagan worship would come to an end in Israel—all through his influence!"¹

Elijah's new ministry 19:15-21

- 19:15-16 In spite of Elijah's fear, discouragement, and pride, the LORD was not finished with his servant (cf. Jonah). He gave Elijah a new mission. He was to go to Damascus and anoint Hazael king over Aram. Damascus was the capital city of Aram and the Arameans. He was also to anoint Jehu king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. And he was to anoint Elisha as his successor. Elijah anointed only Elisha personally (vv. 19-21). He anointed Hazael and Jehu indirectly through his successor, Elisha (2 Kings 8:7-14; 9:1-3).

"I have never been impressed by the view that the command to anoint Hazael, Jehu and Elisha was the expression of God's disapproval of Elijah's flight from Jezebel, and that thereby his prophetic work was as good as terminated. He had a considerable period of activity still before him, and there is absolutely nothing in the story of his departure to justify such a conclusion. For Elijah to anoint those who were to carry on his work, whether he did it personally or by proxy, is rather to stress with what authority they would act, when they brought judgment and destruction on Israel."²

- 19:17 Through Hazael, Jehu, and Elisha God would continue the purge of Baal worship that Elijah had begun, and He would bring judgment on the idolatrous Israelites.
- 19:18 Yet Yahweh promised not to wipe out all the Israelites. He would leave 7,000 faithful Yahweh worshippers in the Northern

¹Patterson and Austel, p. 148.

²Ellison, p. 33.

Kingdom. The writer mentioned some of these loyal people in the chapters that follow.

This word from the LORD marks a great crisis in Israel. God now turned from the northern tribes as a whole to deal with a faithful remnant within the Northern Kingdom.¹ Evidence of this is the fact that the stories of Elisha that follow deal mainly with the faithful remnant rather than with the whole nation, in contrast to the record of Elijah's ministry.

19:19 Elisha departed from Mount Horeb and returned to Israel where he found Elisha plowing his field. Elisha was a farmer who lived near Abel-meholah (v. 16) in the Jordan Valley 23 miles south of the Sea of Chinnereth (Galilee). W. M. Thomson explained that it was common for several farmers, each with his own yoke of oxen, to plow together, both for companionship and for protection.

"It was well that Elisha came the last of the twelve, for the act of Elijah would have stopped all that were in advance of him. They can not pass one another."²

Throwing a prophet's cloak around a person symbolized the passing of power and authority of that office to that individual.³

"Elijah recruits his attendant and successor at the workplace, as Jesus was to do with many of his followers."⁴

19:20-21 Elisha quit his former occupation and from then on served as a prophet (cf. Amos 7:14-15; Luke 9:62). "What have I done to you" is an idiom that means: "Do as you please." Elisha's sacrifice of his oxen as a burnt offering to Yahweh symbolized his total personal commitment to God.

¹Ibid., p. 44.

²Thomson, 1:208.

³House, p. 225.

⁴Auld, p. 128.

This closes the so-called Elijah cycle or narrative (chs. 17—19), one of the richest portions of the Old Testament for preaching and teaching. In many ways Elijah, Israel's savior, prefigured Jesus Christ and His ministry.

"Elijah is not the only servant of God left, in spite of what he has claimed (19:10, 14), and the quiet ways of God must take their course yet a while before the events that 19:17 speaks of come to pass."¹

Ahab's first two battles with the Arameans ch. 20

God dealt gently (cf. 19:12) with the Northern Kingdom at this time in the Divided Monarchy in order to continue to move His people back to Himself. This chapter records two battles that the writer recorded in 1 Kings between Ahab and the kings of Aram, Israel's antagonistic neighbor to the northeast, plus Ahab's unfaithfulness to Yahweh and its consequences that followed the second battle. Chapter 22 records a third battle between Ahab and the Arameans.

The battle at Samaria 20:1-25

The first of these battles evidently took place early in Ahab's reign (ca. 874 B.C.). Ahab's adversary was Ben-Hadad I (900-860 B.C.).²

20:1 Ben-Hadad assembled 32 kings and besieged Samaria, the capital city of the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

"The reason for Ben-Hadad's attack on Samaria is not given, but it might well have been in response to the growing friendship between Israel and Sidon as evidenced, for instance, by Ahab's marriage to Jezebel. Ben-Hadad would surely have viewed this alliance as an impediment to his own access to the sea and to the trade routes up and down the coast. Moreover, if the chronology we have proposed is correct, Shalmaneser III of Assyria would by this time have begun his campaign west

¹Provan, p. 151.

²See D. D. Luckenbill, "Benhadad and Hadadezer," *American Journal of Semitic Languages* 27 (1911):279; and Julian Morgenstern, "Chronological Data of the Dynasty of Omri," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 59 (1940):392.

into Aram and Palestine, thus forcing Ben-Hadad into some sort of defensive posture."¹

Also, Ben-Hadad may have been taking advantage of Israel's weakened condition as a result of the famine and may have been trying to prevent an alliance between Israel and Assyria.²

20:2-6 Before he attacked Samaria, Ben-Hadad offered King Ahab the opportunity to make a treaty with him, but then he called for Ahab's surrender.

"Taken by themselves, Ben-Hadad's words 'are mine' [v. 3] meant no more than that Israel was a client state to the more powerful Aramean state. Ahab's reply 'All ... are yours' [or 'I am yours, as well as all that I have,' v. 4] would then have been acceptance of such a treaty, in which Israel was the subservient party. [In] '20:5, 6' T[t]he language was no longer that of political formalities; this was a demand for complete surrender of everything of value, of any person of worth, of 'whatever' was 'pleasant' in Ahab's eyes, to be handed over to the foreign monarch."³

20:7-9 Ahab agreed to making a treaty with Ben-Hadad, but when Ben-Hadad demanded absolute surrender, Ahab refused.

20:10-12 Having received Ahab's refusal, Ben-Hadad prepared for battle.

"... the phrase ["for handfuls," v. 10] simply means that the Syrian host can carry away the whole city by handfuls ... [cf. 2 Sam. 17:13]."⁴

"Samaria is threatened with total devastation."⁵

20:13 The LORD sent a prophet with a message for Ahab. The message was that Yahweh would hand over the besieging

¹Merrill, *Kingdom of ...*, pp. 346-47.

²Merrill Unger, *Israel and the Aramaeans of Damascus*, p. 66.

³*The Nelson ...*, pp. 599-600.

⁴Montgomery, p. 321.

⁵Jones, 2:341.

Arameans to him that very day. The prophet presented Yahweh as Israel's real deliverer. The deliverance would therefore demonstrate Yahweh's power and superiority over Baal.

"The promise of God's deliverance in this situation was not based upon Ahab's fidelity but on God's love for His people. God gave this man an opportunity to change. We hear a great deal today about lost opportunities and about opportunity knocking only once at the door of every man. I think opportunity stands at the door and keeps knocking."¹

- 20:14 The danger that Ben-Hadad posed, as his demands on Ahab continued to escalate, made the Israelite king receptive to the directives of Yahweh's prophet. The "young men [Heb. *na'ar*] of the leaders of the provinces" were apparently the servants of these rulers, since the Hebrew word elsewhere describes young male servants, not elite soldiers (cf. 3:7; 11:17; 14:3, 17, 28; 18:43; 19:3). Thus God ordered a relatively weak force to oppose the Arameans initially, as He had done in the past (Judg. 7:7; 1 Sam. 17:33)—so that it would be obvious that He had granted the victory. The LORD also instructed Ahab to begin the battle, to take the offensive rather than waiting for the Aramean's to attack.
- 20:15 Ahab followed God's orders. He prepared the 232 young men for battle, but he also prepared 7,000 Israelites to be ready to back them up. This backup force seems to have been assembled because Ahab did not believe that the young men could win the battle on their own—with the LORD's help.
- 20:16-18 At noon the young Israelite men departed from Samaria on their way to attack the Arameans. Ben-Hadad was so confident that he could take Samaria that he was celebrating already, but getting drunk with his allies—at noon. When he heard that the young Israelites were coming his way, Ben-Hadad ordered

¹McGee, 2:294.

that they be received. He did not see them as a threat. They may not even have looked like warriors.

20:19-21 But the young men, with the other Israelite soldiers backing them up, attacked the Arameans and killed many of them. Some of them escaped, including Ben-Hadad. Ahab himself joined in the battle, and God's strategy resulted in victory for Israel.

20:22 The LORD further directed Ahab, through His prophet, to prepare for the Aramean army's return the next spring (cf. 2 Sam. 11:1). Though the Arameans had been defeated, they would attack again.

"God was telling Ahab, 'I have given you a victory now, but you be careful that you don't return to the worship of Baal. I have demonstrated that I am your God—the living God. The king of Syria is going to come against you again at the return of the year.'"¹

"The turn of the year" could mean the coming around again of any time of the year, but, since ancient Near Eastern kings usually resumed warfare in the spring and early summer, that time of the year is probably in view here.² Late spring and early summer were seasons for military expeditions, because at that time of year in the Middle East, grass was readily available for the horses to eat.

20:23-25 The Arameans had a limited appreciation of Yahweh's power. Samaria was built on a hill. The Arameans thought that Israel's "gods" were gods of the mountains. They believed that this was the reason for their defeat. But if the Arameans attacked the Israelites on the plain, they believed that they could defeat them.

¹Ibid., 2:295.

²Gray, p. 425.

The battle at Aphek 20:26-30

20:26 In the spring of the next year the Arameans again attacked Israel. But this time they chose a battlefield on a plain. The battle of Aphek (873 B.C.) probably took place on the tableland southeast of the Sea of Chinnereth (Galilee). Gray believed that the battle took place on the modern Golan Heights, near the route from Damascus to Beth-shan.¹ This was not the same Aphek where Saul had battled the Philistines (1 Sam. 4:1; 29:1).

20:27-28 The Aramean soldiers greatly outnumbered the Israelite soldiers, but God promised Ahab victory, through another prophet ("a man of God"), so that he and all Israel, as well as the Arameans, would know that He was the true God.

20:29-30 God enabled the soldiers of Israel to defeat their enemy, but He also intervened supernaturally to assist them (cf. Josh. 6; et al.). One hundred casualties a day in ancient warfare was considered heavy.² But God gave His people 1,000 times that number that day. Ben-Hadad took refuge in the city of Aphek.

"The striking parallels to the conquest of Jericho, as the interval of seven days before the battle and the falling of the city walls, clearly identified the battles at Samaria and Aphek as holy war."³

"It is important to recognize that *all* of Israel's military victories were won by obeying the Lord. Of no other nation can such a statement be made."⁴

Ahab's unfaithfulness to Yahweh and his sentence 20:31-43

This section of text is similar to the one that recorded Saul's failure to follow Yahweh's command, which also resulted in God cutting him off (1 Sam. 13:13-14). The parallels between Saul and Ahab are remarkable

¹Ibid., p. 428.

²Wiseman, p. 178.

³Rice, p. 172.

⁴Whitcomb, p. 378.

throughout this record of Ahab's reign, and I have pointed out some of them in my comments that follow.

20:31-32a Ben-Hadad's servants urged him to surrender to Ahab because they had heard that the Israelite kings were merciful. Archaeology has confirmed that other ancient Near Eastern kings were more brutal in war than Israel's kings were. "Sackcloth" and "ropes" expressed remorse and servitude respectively. "Ropes on their heads" may mean ropes around their necks.¹ This was a sign of captivity or subjection.² Ben-Hadad's envoys called him Ahab's "servant" because that is what Ben-Hadad was willing to become if Ahab would have mercy on him.

20:32b-33 Ahab called Ben-Hadad "my brother." Ben-Hadad was not Ahab's blood brother (cf. 9:13), but Ahab was willing to regard Ben-Hadad as a brother, rather than as a servant, if Ben-Hadad would agree to make a treaty with him and concessions to him.

"The term 'brother' was commonly used when relations between kings were cordial (see 9:13). Ben-Hadad might have been implying, 'We are both kings.'"³

Ahab welcomed Ben-Hadad into his chariot. This was an honor. Ahab's plan was contrary to God's Law, which called for the deaths of Israel's enemies (Deut. 20:10-15). Compare Saul's refusal to execute Agag.

"Pity which produces disobedience to the divine command is sin."⁴

20:34 The Aramean king was quick to make concessions in return for his life. The covenant that the two men made involved the return of Israelite cities that Aram had previously taken and trade privileges for Israel with Damascus. Ahab figured that it would be better for him and Israel to make a treaty than to

¹Jamieson, et al., p. 267.

²Jones, 2:346.

³*The Nelson ...*, p. 601.

⁴G. Campbell Morgan, *An Exposition of the Whole Bible*, p. 145.

obey God's Law (cf. Exod. 23:32). Perhaps the reason Ahab was so eager to make this treaty was that the Assyrian Empire was expanding toward Israel from the far northeast, and an alliance with Aram would help secure Israel's safety.

- 20:35-36 What happened to the man who refused to strike the prophet was exactly what would happen to Ahab, and for the same reason: disobedience to the word of the LORD. Compare Samuel's first sentence against Saul for his disobedience (1 Sam. 13). Again a lion was God's agent of execution (cf. 13:24). Perhaps God used a lion because it is a fitting symbol of God Himself.

"As there [in 1 Kings 13:24], the implication is clear: if disobedient prophets cannot escape God's judgment, then disobedient kings certainly will not."¹

- 20:37-43 The obedient prophet's parable to Ahab recalls the one that Nathan told David (2 Sam. 12:1-7). Ahab condemned himself by what he said. God would kill Ahab for not killing Ben-Hadad (22:37). He would also cause Israel, which Ahab headed and represented, to suffer defeat, rather than the Arameans (v. 42; cf. 1 Sam. 15:22-29). Ahab foolishly chose to follow his own plan instead of obeying the LORD. Obedience probably would have terminated the conflict with the Aramean army.

Ahab's and Jezebel's murder of Naboth ch. 21

Jezebel's evil influence over her husband stands out in this story.² Ahab was willing to permit the murder a godly Israelite so that he could obtain a mere garden.

¹Provan, p. 156.

²Alexander Rofe, "The Vineyard of Naboth: The Origin and Message of the Story," *Vetus Testamentum* 38:1 (January 1988):102.

The occasion and execution of the murder 21:1-16

- 21:1-3 Naboth's vineyard was in Jezreel, the site of Ahab's winter palace. Ahab's offer to Naboth seems fair enough, and Naboth's reason for declining the offer also seems legitimate.

"A vineyard, like an olive-orchard, is not just land that may have been in the family for a long time: it represents a high investment in many years of unfruitful care before it reaches maturity."¹

Provan believed that Ahab had an ulterior motive in his offer:

"When one realizes that Israel is sometimes portrayed in the OT as a vine under God's special care (e.g., Isa. 3:13-15; cf. Mark 12:1-12 and parallels; John 15:1-17), then it becomes clear that Ahab's desire to replace a vineyard with a vegetable garden is meant to be seen as symbolic of a deeper desire. This is a king who wants to make Israel like Egypt [see Deut. 11:10], as did that earlier king [i.e., Solomon] with his foreign wives (cf. ... 3:1; 4:21-28; 9:10-14; 10:14-29)."²

Naboth, in contrast to Ahab and Jezebel, sought to live by the Mosaic Law (v. 3; cf. Lev. 25:23-28; Num. 36:7).

- 21:4 Ahab's "sullen and furious" feelings (cf. 20:43) were the result of his awareness that Naboth's position was unassailable legally. Compare Saul's moodiness following his disobedience and sentence. Ahab's "bed" (Heb. *mittato*) could have been the couch that he reclined on to eat.³
- 21:5-7 Jezebel believed that Ahab was the supreme authority in Israel, an opinion that he shared (cf. 20:42). This was the root of many of Ahab's and Jezebel's difficulties. Saul and his daughter Michal, and Ahab, Jezebel, and their daughter Athaliah, all held

¹Auld, p. 137.

²Provan, pp. 157-58.

³See Gray, p. 439.

this view of kingship in Israel. They failed to acknowledge Yahweh's sovereignty over Israel.

- 21:8-10 Jezebel apparently knew something of the Mosaic Law (v. 10). It required two witnesses in capital offense cases (Deut. 17:6-7). Cursing God was a capital offense (Lev. 24:16). Since the king was God's anointed authority, Jezebel in effect elevated cursing the king to a crime on the same level with cursing Yahweh. This was inappropriate but consistent with her concept of Israel's king. She formed her plot in conscious disobedience to God's revealed will.

"Every legal system can become the tool of politicians, if the values of those responsible for it have been sufficiently corrupted."¹

- 21:11-14 The elders and nobles of Jezreel were under Jezebel's thumb. They were not faithful to Yahweh. They probably could not have been to stay in office under Ahab (cf. Obadiah, 18:3-16). Jezebel evidently executed Naboth's sons at the same time (2 Kings 9:26).
- 21:15-16 When Ahab heard what his wife had done, he did not reprove her but took advantage of her actions and in doing so approved them.

"The most heinous act of Ahab came in the matter of Naboth. A king's primary responsibility was to render justice in the land [cf. 3:9]. Ahab egregiously [shockingly] violated this requirement by stealing from a man he had murdered (through Jezebel)."²

Compare Saul's unjustified attempts to kill David.

¹Provan, p. 158.

²Heater, p. 134.

Ahab's second sentence from Yahweh 21:17-29

As Saul had been unfaithful to God twice and received two judgments from the LORD (1 Sam. 13:14; 15:26) so did Ahab (cf. 20:31-43).

21:17-18 Again God told Elijah to "go" somewhere (cf. 17:3, 9; 18:1; 19:15). As the LORD's faithful servant, he went to confront the king, again. Compare Samuel's second announcement of God's judgment on Saul (1 Sam. 15).

Verse 18 contains a problem: Elijah was told to go "to meet Ahab king of Israel, who is in Samaria; behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth, where he [Ahab] has gone down to take possession of it." However, Naboth was a Jezreelite (v. 4) and his vineyard was in Jezreel (v. 1). The NIV translators got around this problem by translating verse 18: "Ahab king of Israel, who *rules* in Israel."¹ Other commentators translated it "... who *lives* in Samaria."² They evidently took the mention of Samaria as a reference to Ahab's capital and assumed, correctly I think, that Elijah went to Jezreel, not Samaria.³

21:19 Even though Jezebel was behind the murder of Naboth, God held her husband Ahab responsible for it, since he should have prevented it (cf. Gen. 3:16; Eph. 5:23). Murdering someone and taking possession of his property was a capital offense under the Law of Moses (cf. 2 Sam. 11; 12:13). It would be a great shame for Ahab to have his blood flow in the streets of his winter capital: Jezreel. It would be an even greater disgrace to have it licked up by wild scavengers, as Naboth's blood had been (cf. Gal. 6:7). God did not punish the king exactly this way because Ahab repented later (vv. 27-29; cf. 2 Kings 9:25-26). Provan offered the following translation of God's sentence on Ahab: "Instead of dogs licking up Naboth's blood, dogs will lick up your blood—yes, yours!"⁴

¹See also House, p. 232.

²Keil, p. 272; Gray, p. 438; Russell H. Dilday, *1, 2 Kings*, pp. 236-37.

³B. D. Napier, "The Omrides of Jezreel," *Vetus Testamentum* 9 (1959):366-78, clarifies the confusing references to Jezreel and Samaria in the Naboth story.

⁴Provan, p. 160.

- 21:20 Elijah was Ahab's "enemy" because the prophet was God's representative whom the king had decided to oppose. Ahab had given himself over to do evil in that he had sacrificed his own life and future to obtain what he wanted (cf. Saul).
- 21:21 The wages that God would pay him for this would be trouble and death (cf. Rom. 6:23). God would remove all human support from Ahab and would sweep him away like so much filth. The Hebrew word translated "disaster" (*d'h*) is similar to the one translated "evil" in verse 20 (*hd'*). This wordplay emphasizes the correspondence between Ahab's sins and their punishment.
- 21:22-24 God would also cut off Ahab's dynasty for the same reasons that He had terminated Jeroboam's and Baasha's dynasties (houses). As for Jezebel, wild dogs, which normally lived off the garbage in cities, would eat her. Furthermore, all of Ahab's descendants would experience dishonorable deaths (cf. 14:11; 16:4).
- 21:25-26 The writer's assessment of Ahab was that he was the worst ruler in Israel yet (cf. 16:30). He was as bad as the Amorites whom God drove out because of their wickedness (cf. Lev. 18:25-30).

"The Amorites, we may suppose, became the most numerous, powerful, and corrupt of all the race, for they are frequently made to represent the whole [cf. Gen. 15:16]."¹

"The comment in verses 25-26 certainly makes Ahab to be the worst of all twenty kings of Israel."²

Nevertheless, Ahab was a king over God's chosen people, though not of the Davidic line. Samson was also very Amoritish and Canaanitish in his thoughts and ways, even though he was a judge in Israel.

¹Thomson, 1:240-41.

²Wiseman, p. 184.

21:27-29 Ahab's genuine repentance, when he heard of his fate—from Israel's true King—resulted in God's relenting and lightening His sentence (cf. Exod. 32:14; Num. 14:12, 20; Ps. 106:44-45; Jer. 18:6-12). Samson also repented (Judg. 16:28). Not Ahab but his son Joram (i.e., Jehoram) would die on Naboth's land in Jezreel (v. 19; 2 Kings 9:25-26). There is no indication here or elsewhere that Jezebel ever repented.

"... because of this single response to his [Ahab's] conscience, God extended his dynasty a dozen years! How vastly important in God's sight is our feeblest response to His Word! Only eternity will tell."¹

"The story of Naboth warns against the use of piety and legality to cloak injustice. It teaches that those who support the plots of a Jezebel, whether by silent acquiescence or overt complicity, share her crime. It is a resounding affirmation that injustice touches God, that 'as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me' (Matt. 25:40, 45), that in the cosmic order of things there is a power [really a Person] at work that makes for justice. And the story attests that there is awesome power in the conscience and protest of the individual servant of God."²

Ahab's final battle with the Arameans 22:1-40 (cf. 2 Chron. 18)

Another significant battle occurred between the battle of Ramoth-gilead, which the writer recorded in this chapter (853 B.C.), and the two battles that he recorded in chapter 20. Ahab and his Aramean ally Ben-Hadad II (860-841 B.C.) defeated their mutual foe, King Shalmaneser III of Assyria, at Qarqar on the Orontes River in Aramea (also in 853 B.C.).³ Assyrian records set the date for this battle making it one of the clear benchmarks in Old Testament chronology.⁴ The writers of Scripture did not refer to this battle, but a record of it that Shalmaneser wrote has survived and is now

¹Whitcomb, p. 399.

²Rice, p. 181.

³See Finegan, pp. 204-6; William H. Shea, "A Note on the Date of the Battle of Qarqar," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 29 (1977):240-42.

⁴R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 733. See the map "The Assyrian Empire" in Merrill, *Kingdom of ...*, p. 362.

in the British Museum.¹ Perhaps it was this victory that encouraged Ahab to challenge his ally, Ben-Hadad II, at Ramoth-gilead.

Ahab's alliance with Jehoshaphat 22:1-12

- 22:1-2 Three years passed without war between the Arameans and Israel. Evidently the three years of peace mentioned followed the Battle of Aphek (20:26-30; 873 B.C.). In the third year (870 B.C.), King Jehoshaphat of Judah came down from Jerusalem to visit King Ahab. Jehoshaphat had come to Judah's throne in 873 B.C. and had formed an alliance by marriage with Ahab (2 Chron. 18:1). He had undoubtedly come down from Jerusalem (topographically) to Samaria at Ahab's invitation. Verses 1 and 2 seem to introduce the events in verses 3 through 40 as they read in the text, but several years apparently passed between Jehoshaphat's visit in verse 2 (873 B.C.) and Ahab's invitation to him in verse 4 (854 or 853 B.C.; cf. 2 Chron. 18:1-2).²
- 22:3-4 Ramoth-gilead had been one of the chief cities in Gad. It was about 33 miles east of Jezreel. The Arameans had previously captured it. Ahab decided that it was time to take Ramoth-gilead back. Jehoshaphat agreed to join forces with Ahab to return this city to Israelite control. Ahab's alliance with Jehoshaphat began the period of peace between Israel and Judah that lasted 33 years.
- 22:5-6 Jehoshaphat was a worshipper of Yahweh. It was apparently typical of him to inquire concerning the LORD's will, though Ahab could not have cared less about doing so. The 400 prophets that Ahab assembled may have been apostate prophets of Yahweh, since they were unacceptable to Jehoshaphat (cf. vv. 11, 12, 24). Probably they were prophets of Baal, since there were many of them in Israel at this time, and since they did not reveal Yahweh's will to Jehoshaphat. They may have been Jezebel's "400 prophets of the Asherah"

¹See James Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, pp. 278-79, for a translation of it.

²Morgenstern, pp. 385-96.

who apparently escaped the execution of Ahab's "450 prophets of Baal" on Mt Carmel (see my comments on 18:19).¹

- 22:7-9 We should probably interpret Jehoshaphat's request for a prophet of Yahweh as a request for a faithful prophet who would reveal the LORD's will accurately. Ahab hated Micaiah because he always prophesied bad things about Ahab and never good things. Ahab wanted good prophecies about himself, but Micaiah could not give them because Ahab was constantly doing things that Yahweh disapproved. This is another evidence of Ahab's continuing antagonism toward Yahweh and His representatives (cf. 21:20).

"Someone has said that a man is not really known by his friends. Rather, he is known by his enemies. Every man ought to make sure that he has the right enemies. The best compliment that could be paid to Micaiah was for Ahab to say, 'I hate him.'"²

- 22:10-12 All the false prophets urged the two kings to go into battle and promised them success. One of their number, Zedekiah, was especially creative and gave an object lesson to reinforce his prediction.

Micaiah's prophesy of defeat 22:13-28

- 22:13-14 Like Elijah, Micaiah was willing to stand alone for God against hundreds of false prophets (cf. 18:22). Micaiah had stood before Ahab many times before (v. 8).
- 22:15-16 This time Micaiah told Ahab what he wanted to hear sarcastically. But Ahab knew that what Micaiah had said was not what the LORD had told him to say.
- 22:17 Micaiah's vision of the Israelites was that of defenseless sheep without a human shepherd, namely, Ahab. They would come home after the battle peacefully, he predicted.

¹Whitcomb, p. 381; Provan, p. 162.

²McGee, 2:298.

- 22:18 The king responded to this prophecy of his death ("no shepherd," v. 17) glibly. He could not have believed the LORD's word and gone into battle. Saul had done the same thing under the influence of another evil spirit (1 Sam. 16:14-15).
- 22:19-22 Micaiah had a vision of God and His heavenly host similar to those of other prophets (cf. Isa. 6; Ezek. 1; Mic. 1:2; Rev. 4—5).¹ The identity of the spirit that stood before the LORD and offered to entice Ahab is problematic. This "spirit" may have been a demon or Satan. Saul also disguised himself and saw a spirit shortly before he died (1 Sam. 28:8-19).
- 22:23 Micaiah explained to the Ahab that the LORD had put a deceiving spirit in the mouths of Ahab's prophets in order to lure him into battle and bring disaster on him. God was Ahab's real enemy, not Aramea.

"Foolishly, Ahab thought Elijah and Micaiah were his enemies when, quite the contrary, they were his only links to a future worth living. Today's readers of Scripture have the same option that was offered Ahab: they may hear and repent, or they may sulk and resent the messenger."²

Similarly, Saul regarded David as his enemy.

"... God Himself instigated and authorized the deception of Ahab, as indicated by the Lord's initial question to the assembly (22:20), His commission to the spirit (v. 22), and Micaiah's willingness to prophesy a lie after he had vowed to speak only the word of the Lord (vv. 14-15). If the spirit of verses 20-23 can be identified with the divine spirit that energizes prophecy (v. 24), this thesis is further corroborated. The introduction of the truth, rather than ameliorating [making improvements to] the deception, shows

¹On Micaiah's heavenly vision, see Allen McNicol, "The Heavenly Sanctuary in Judaism: A Model for Tracing the Origin of an Apocalypse," *Journal of Religious Studies* 13:2 (1987):69-71.

²House, p. 249.

how effective it was. Even when faced with the truth, Ahab insisted on charging into battle, for the lying spirit working through the prophetic majority had convinced him he would be victorious."¹

"... God is truthful in that He keeps His unconditional promises to His people and fulfills His sovereign decrees and oaths. God's commitment to truthfulness, however, does not mean that He never uses deceit as a method of judgment on sinners. But He does so without compromising His truthful character and commitment to righteousness."²

Another view is that Satan initiated and superintended demonic activity, which God permitted (cf. 2 Sam. 24:1; 1 Chron. 21:1; Job 1:13-22; 2:7; Zech. 3:1; Matt. 12:24; John 8:44).³ My preferred interpretation is that the spirit was a good angel who served the LORD by influencing the false prophets to deceive Ahab.

22:24-27 Striking on the cheek was a much greater insult in Ahab's day than it is now. The false prophet Zedekiah was bluffing to the very end. Ahab continued to be hard to the point of insensibility instead of repenting at Micaiah's word of judgment (cf. 21:27; Jer. 36:26; 38:5).

"Joash [v. 26] is an otherwise unknown son of Ahab, and it has been suggested that **the king's son** in this instance (as in Jer. 36:26; 38:6; 2 Chr. 28:7) is a title denoting an office; he was not a high-ranking official, but was specifically connected with prisoners and was similar to a police officer. A Palestinian seal and a stamp from

¹Robert B. Chisholm Jr., "Does God Deceive?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 155:617 (January-March 1998):16-17.

²Ibid., p. 12.

³See Richard L. Mayhue, "False Prophets and the Deceiving Spirit," *Master's Seminary Journal* 4:2 (Fall 1993):135-63, who evaluated six possible identifications of this spirit. See also Howard, p. 196.

a signet-ring confirm that it was an official title. Originally the officer may have been chosen from among the king's sons ..."¹

I prefer the simpler explanation that Joash was literally one of the king's sons.

"The king's function was to be immersed in the Law of the Lord and to lead his people in obedience to it (Deut. 17:18-20), not to be leading them in Baal worship (1 Kings 18) or in listening to innumerable false prophets (chap. 22)."²

22:28 Time would tell that Micaiah's words were from the LORD.

Ahab's death 22:29-40 (cf. 2 Chron. 18:34)

22:29-31 It is amazing that King Jehoshaphat went along with Ahab's decision to go into battle in view of Micaiah's prediction, but he did. Ahab probably disguised himself since he was Ben-Hadad's primary target, having broken their treaty (20:34).

"The purpose of Ahab's disguise was not out of treachery against Jehoshaphat ... but for the avoidance of fate."³

22:32-33 The Arameans incorrectly identified Jehoshaphat as Israel's king, but they discovered that he was not. So they stopped pursuing him.

22:34-36 Ahab's plan to thwart God's will failed. He could not fool or beat Yahweh. One arrow providentially guided was all that God needed to carry out His will. Josephus wrote, "But Ahab's fate found him out without his robes ..."⁴ Wounded Ahab watched the battle from his chariot until he died that evening.

¹Jones, 2:369.

²Howard, p. 195.

³Montgomery, p. 340.

⁴Josephus, *Antiquities of ...*, 8:15:5.

"The Achilles' heel of Ahab was not the crack in his armor but his willful rebellion against God."¹

"There are those today who think they have escaped the hand of God. But I want to tell you that God has an arrow with your name on it; it will find you one of these days. No matter how much you try to deceive and cover up, that arrow will find you. That is what happened to Ahab."²

Israel lost the battle, as Micaiah had prophesied (v. 17). The Israelite army disbursed "like sheep that have no shepherd" (v. 17) when they heard of Ahab's death.

Ahab became the source of much discipline rather than a source of great blessing to Israel because he disregarded God's word and will (cf. Saul).

22:37-38 The fact that the Israelites buried Ahab at all is a tribute to God's grace. All the same, he suffered the ignominy of having the dogs lick his blood, and that at the pool where the despised and unclean prostitutes bathed. Perhaps this was fitting since Ahab, like the prostitutes, had sold himself to do evil. Jones wrote that there was a superstition concerning the potency of the king's blood.³

"He [Ahab] has fed the people idolatry, and now he is consumed by it. It is poetic justice, not just in relation to the murder of Naboth, but also in relation to all his other iniquitous acts."⁴

Scholars have sought a solution to the problem that Elijah predicted that Ahab would die where Naboth did (in Jezreel, 21:19) and the record that he died in Samaria.⁵ Various solutions have been proposed: that Elijah's prophecy was not

¹Whitcomb, p. 383.

²McGee, 2:300.

³Jones, 2:372.

⁴Provan, pp. 164-65.

⁵See Benjamin Foreman, "The Blood of Ahab: Reevaluating Ahab's Death and Elijah's Prophecy," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 58:2 (June 2015):249-64.

location-specific, that his prophecy was not fulfilled, that Ahab's blood was licked by dogs in Jezreel, that Elijah's prophecy was modified (possibly by some action of Ahab, such as repentance), that it was fulfilled generally but not specifically, that Elijah did not predict the place of Ahab's death, and/or that Naboth was tried and executed in Samaria. I believe that the prophecy of dogs licking Ahab's blood was fulfilled, but that the prophecy of where that would happen was modified because of Ahab's repentance (in 21:27). There is another example of a prophecy apparently being altered, but in that case it was by someone's bad behavior after the prophecy was made (i.e., King Josiah's death; 2 Kings 22:20; 23:29).

22:39-40 Ahab was really a capable ruler in spite of his gross spiritual idolatry, which the writer of Kings emphasized. Other extra-biblical references to him indicate that he was generally successful militarily. This was due to the natural abilities that God had given him, and because God showed mercy to Israel. Archaeologists have discovered more than 200 ivory figures, bowls, and plaques in only one storeroom of Ahab's Samaria palace, which is a tribute to the wealth that he enjoyed.¹ He also fortified several cities in Israel.

But in spite of all his positive contributions, Ahab's establishment of Baal worship as the official religion of the Northern Kingdom weakened Israel as never before. His reign took the Northern Kingdom to new depths of depravity. Because he did not acknowledge Yahweh as Israel's King, and did not submit to Him, Ahab's personal life ended in tragedy, even a violent death. Furthermore, the nation he represented experienced God's chastening instead of His blessing. Agricultural infertility and military defeat marked Ahab's reign, as we read of it in 1 Kings.

The writer noted, as usual, the record of Ahab's acts in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel, and the name of his successor: his son Ahaziah ("Held By Yahweh").

¹See Wood, *A Survey ...*, p. 311; Free, p. 183.

Here is a summary of some points of comparison between King Ahab and King Saul:

- Both kings had the opportunity to be good kings of Israel.
- God gave both kings military victories at first.
- Both kings failed to obey God completely by not executing their captured enemies.
- God rejected both kings and their dynasties for their disobedience.
- Both did not submit to Yahweh's authority.
- Both kings voiced a measure of repentance.
- Both learned that they would die in battle but proceeded anyway.
- Both kings disguised themselves before going into battle.
- Both kings died violent deaths in battles with Israel's and Yahweh's enemies.
- Because of their foolish choices both kings ended up dying prematurely.

The lives of Saul and Ahab reinforce the lessons they teach: submission to Yahweh brings blessing, but proud selfishness leads to destruction. As leaders of God's people their behavior affected the people they led and resulted in hard times agriculturally, militarily, and spiritually. This is always the case.

2. Jehoshaphat's good reign in Judah 22:41-50 (cf. 2 Chron. 20:31-37)

22:41-42 Jehoshaphat began ruling over Judah as coregent with his father Asa (873-870 B.C.). When Asa died, he reigned alone for 17 more years (870-853 B.C.). He concluded his 25-year reign with another period of coregency with his son Jehoram that lasted five years (853-848 B.C.). For all but Ahab's first year on Israel's throne, Jehoshaphat ruled over Judah. Jehoshaphat became Judah's sole ruler in Ahab's fourth year.

Some scholars date Joel's prophecy during the reign of Jehoshaphat.¹

- 22:43 Jehoshaphat was one of the eight good kings of Judah (along with Asa, Jehoash, Amaziah, Azariah, Jotham, Hezekiah, and Josiah) and one of the four reforming kings (along with Asa, Hezekiah, and Josiah). He was better than his father Asa but not as highly acclaimed by the writers of Scripture as Hezekiah and Josiah, who were the other reforming kings who followed him years later. Especially in his earlier years Jehoshaphat walked with Yahweh. However, he allowed the high places of worship to remain in the land. Perhaps earlier in his reign he removed these (2 Chron. 17:6), but when the people rebuilt them, he let them stand (2 Chron. 20:33). Or he may have only removed some of them and allowed others to stand.² The Israelites sometimes used these "high places" in the worship of Yahweh (cf. 3:2-4), but usually they were the sites of pagan worship.
- 22:44-46 Jehoshaphat also made peace with Israel, which brought to an end the period of antagonism that had begun with the division of the United Monarchy. The peace that existed between Israel and Judah gained strength through the marriage of Jehoshaphat's son, Jehoram, and Ahab's daughter, Athaliah (2 Kings 11). A prophet rebuked Jehoshaphat for his alliance with Israel (2 Chron. 19:2). And Jehoshaphat eliminated the remnant of the male cult prostitutes that remained in the land following the reign of his father, Asa (cf. 15:12).
- 22:47-50 Edom had been under Judah's control but revolted during Jehoshaphat's reign. It may well have been the Edomites who destroyed his ships at Edom's port of Ezion-geber.³ Jehoshaphat had refused to let his allies from the north accompany his servants in their shipping endeavors. Jehoshaphat's successor was his son, Jehoram.

¹See my discussion of the date of Joel's prophecies in my notes on Joel.

²Wood, *A Survey ...*, p. 343, n. 18.

³John Bartlett, "The Moabites and Edomites," in *Peoples of Old Testament Times*, p. 236. Cf. Josephus, *Antiquities of ...*, 9:1:4, which says that his ships were to sail to Pontus and the cities of Thrace.

Jehoshaphat compromised three times, and each one proved costly for him: (1) his "bride compromise," when he married his son to Ahab and Jezebel's daughter (2 Kings 8:16-19; 2 Chron. 18:1; 21:4-7), his "battle compromise," when he went into war with Ahab (18:2—19:3), and (3) his "boat compromise," when he joined with Ahab's son Ahaziah in a commercial venture (22:48-49; 2 Chron. 20:31-37).¹

Ahab's ineffective attempts to achieve victory and security for Israel, in unbelief, contrast with Jehoshaphat's trust in God and God's provision of victory for Judah. Jehoshaphat submitted to Yahweh's sovereignty, but he relied on human wisdom and resources at crucial moments in his life. This resulted in mixed blessing and discipline for both himself and Judah. For Jehoshaphat's other achievements, see 2 Chronicles 17 through 20.

"Man's will is free, because God is sovereign. A God less than sovereign could not bestow moral freedom upon His creatures. He would be afraid to do so."²

3. Ahaziah's evil reign in Israel 1 Kings 22:51—2 Kings 1:18

A summary of Ahaziah's reign 22:51-53

A short summary of Ahaziah's two-year term as king (853-852 B.C.) concludes 1 Kings. The events of his reign continue in 2 Kings 1. Ahaziah ("Yahweh Has Grasped") was the older son of Ahab and Jezebel. He did evil in the LORD's sight by walking in the ways of Jezebel and Jeroboam. He continued to serve and worship Baal and so provoked Yahweh to anger, like Ahab had done.

This unusual breaking place between 1 and 2 Kings was due to the need to divide this long book into two parts, each of which could fit on a standard scroll.

¹Wiersbe, pp. 487-88.

²A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, p. 118.

Appendix 1

Dates of the Rulers of Judah and Israel¹

| Judah | | Israel | |
|-------------------------------------|---------|--|---------|
| Rehoboam | 930-913 | <i>Jeroboam I</i> | 930-909 |
| Abijah | 913-910 | Nadab | 909-908 |
| Asa | 910-869 | <i>Baasha</i> | 908-886 |
| Jehoshaphat, coregency with Asa | 872-869 | Elah | 886-885 |
| Jehoshaphat, total reign | 872-848 | <i>Zimri</i> | 885 |
| Jehoram, coregency with Jehoshaphat | 853-848 | Tibni | 885-880 |
| Jehoram, total reign | 853-841 | <i>Omri</i> , overlap with Tibni | 885-874 |
| Ahaziah | 841 | Ahab | 874-853 |
| Athaliah | 841-835 | Ahaziah | 853-852 |
| Jehoash | 835-796 | Jehoram | 852-841 |
| Amaziah | 796-767 | <i>Jehu</i> | 841-814 |
| Azariah, overlap with Amaziah | 792-767 | Jehoahaz | 814-798 |
| Azariah, total reign | 792-740 | Joash | 798-782 |
| Jotham, coregency with Azariah | 750-740 | Jeroboam II, coregency with Jehoash | 793-782 |
| Jotham, official reign | 750-735 | Jeroboam II, total reign | 793-753 |
| Jotham, total years | 750-732 | Zechariah | 753 |
| Ahaz, overlap with Jotham | 735-732 | <i>Shallum</i> | 752 |
| Ahaz, official years | 732-715 | <i>Menahem</i> , overlap with Pekah | 752-742 |
| Hezekiah | 715-686 | Pekah, overlap with Menahem and Pekahiah | 752-732 |
| Manasseh, coregency | 697-686 | Pekahiah, overlap with Pekah | 742-740 |
| Manasseh, total reign | 697-642 | <i>Hosea</i> | 732-723 |
| Amon | 642-640 | | |
| Josiah | 640-609 | | |
| Jehoahaz | 609 | | |
| Jehoiakim | 609-598 | | |
| Jehoiachin | 598-597 | | |
| Zedekiah | 597-586 | | |

The rulers in italics above began new dynasties.

¹Adapted from Edwin R. Thiele, *A Chronology of the Hebrew Kings*, p. 75.

Appendix 2

Faithful Prophets Who Ministered during the Divided Monarchy

| Prophets | Kings | Kingdoms | References |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| Ahijah of Shiloh | Jeroboam I | Northern | 1 Kings 11:29-39; 12:15; 14:1-18; 15:29; 2 Chron. 9:29; 10:15 |
| Iddo | Jeroboam I Rehoboam? Abijah? | Northern Southern Southern | 2 Chron. 9:29 2 Chron. 12:15 2 Chron. 13:22 |
| Shemaiah | Rehoboam | Southern | 1 Kings 12:22-24; 2 Chron. 11:2-4; 12:5-8, 15 |
| A man of God from Judah | Jeroboam I | Northern | 1 Kings 13:1-10 |
| An old prophet from Bethel | Jeroboam I | Northern | 1 Kings 13:11-32 |
| Azariah | Asa | Southern | 2 Chron. 15:1-8 |
| Hanani | Asa | Southern | 2 Chron. 16:7-10 |
| Jehu ben Hanani | Baasha Jehoshaphat | Northern Southern | 1 Kings 16:1-4, 7, 12 2 Chron. 19:1-3; 20:34 |
| Jahaziel | Jehoshaphat | Southern | 2 Chron. 20:14-17, 20 |

| | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Eliezer | Jehoshaphat | Southern | 2 Chron. 20:37 |
| Joel | Jehoshaphat or Uzziah | Southern Southern | Joel 1:1 |
| Elijah | Jehoram Ahab Ahaziah | Southern Northern Northern | 2 Chron. 21:12-15 1 Kings 17:1—19:21; 21:17-24, 28-29 2 Kings 1:3—2:11 |
| 100 prophets | Ahab | Northern | 1 Kings 18:4, 13 |
| Elisha | Ahab J(eh)oram Ahaziah Jehoash | Northern Northern Northern Northern | 1 Kings 19:16-21 2 Kings 2:1-25; 3:11-19; 4:1—7:2, 18-20; 8:1-15 2 Kings 9:1-3, 36-37; 10:17 2 Kings 13:14-21 |
| A prophet | Ahab | Northern | 1 Kings 20:13-14, 22 |
| A man of God | Ahab | Northern | 1 Kings 20:28-29 |
| A son of the prophets | Ahab | Northern | 1 Kings 20:35-42 |
| Micaiah ben Imlah | Ahab and Jehoshaphat | Northern Southern | 1 Kings 22:7-28; 2 Chron. 18:6-27 |
| 50 sons of the prophets from Jericho | J(eh)oram | Northern | 2 Kings 2:7-18 |
| A son of the prophets | J(eh)oram | Northern | 2 Kings 9:1-10 |
| Obadiah | J(eh)oram or Zedekiah | Northern or Southern | Obad. 1 |
| Zechariah | Joash Uzziah | Southern Southern | 2 Chron. 24:20-21 2 Chron. 26:5 |

| | | | |
|------------------|---|--|---|
| A man of God | Amaziah | Southern | 2 Chron. 25:7-10 |
| A prophet | Amaziah | Southern | 2 Chron. 25:15-16 |
| Jonah | Jeroboam II | Northern | 2 Kings 14:25; Jon. 1:1 |
| Amos | Uzziah Jeroboam II | Southern Northern | Amos 1:1 Amos 1:1 |
| Hosea | Uzziah Jotham Ahaz Hezekiah Jeroboam II | Southern Southern Southern Southern Northern | Hos. 1:1-2 Hos. 1:2 Hos. 1:2 Hos. 1:2 Hos. 1:2 |
| Isaiah | Uzziah Jotham Ahaz Hezekiah | Southern Southern Southern Southern | 2 Chron. 26:22; Isa. 1:1 Isa. 1:1 Isa. 1:1 2 Kings 19:2-7, 20-34; 19:20-34; 20:1-11, 14-18; 2 Chron. 32:20, 32; Isa. 1:1 |
| Micah | Jotham Ahaz Hezekiah | Southern Southern Southern | Mic. 1:1 Mic. 1:1 Mic. 1:1; Jer. 26:18 |
| Oded | Ahaz | Southern | 2 Chron. 28:9-11 |
| Nahum | Manasseh? | Southern | Nah. 1:1 |
| Unnamed prophets | Manasseh | Southern | 2 Chron. 33:18 |
| Zephaniah | Josiah | Southern | Zeph. 1:1 |
| Jeremiah | Josiah Jehoahaz | Southern Southern | Jer. 1:1-2; 2 Chron. 35:25 (Jer. 1:3) |

| | | | |
|----------|------------|----------|--|
| | Jehoiakim | Southern | Jer. 1:3 |
| | Jehoiachin | Southern | (Jer. 1:3) |
| | Zedekiah | Southern | Jer. 1:3; 2 Chron. 36:11-22 |
| Huldah | Josiah | Southern | 2 Kings 22:14-20; 2 Chron. 34:22-28 |
| Habakkuk | Jehoiakim? | Southern | Hab. 1:1 |
| Urijah | Jehoiakim | Southern | Jer. 26:20-23 |
| Daniel | Jehoiakim | Southern | Dan. 1:1 |
| | Jehoiachin | Southern | (Dan. 6:28) |
| | Zedekiah | Southern | (Dan. 6:28) |
| Ezekiel | Zedekiah | Southern | Ezek. 1:1-3 |

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