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Israel and Judah: 27. Elisha and the Rise of Jehu

by David Sielaff, December 2017

Read the November 1, 2017 Commentary, "[Four Disparate Stories](#)"

Then read the accompanying "[December 2017 Newsletter](#)"

Israel and Judah: 27

Elisha and
the Rise
of Jehu

THE SITUATION: This episode of the biblical history of Israel and Judah begins with a good story of the beneficial effect of the work of Elisha the prophet. Then things turn dark when the kings of Israel and Judah become the subjects. Two anointings occur, one to have an evil result, and the other with Jehu, a soldier of Israel, being anointed King of Israel by Elisha. Elijah the prophet (Elisha's mentor and predecessor) shows he is still alive in the flesh when he sends a document to the King of Judah with an indictment from God, proclaiming his doom. Elisha gives Jehu his marching orders.

During the first hundred years of the divided Kingdoms of Israel and Judah, the two major prophets were Elijah and Elisha. The ministry of these two friends and colleagues fought against the spiritual corruption that was infecting both kingdoms of God's chosen people. Meanwhile, political and military events continued to occur around and against these two kingdoms on the land bridge between Africa and Asia.

As always, the basic text is the *Concordant Version of the Old Testament*.

TEXT: *The Shunamite Woman's Restoration*

2 Kings 8:1-6

¹ Elisha himself had spoken to the woman whose son he had revived, saying,

"Arise and go away, you and your household, and sojourn in a place wherein you can sojourn; for Yahweh has called for a famine; besides, it will come on the land for seven years."

² So the woman arose and did according to the word of the man of Elohim. She went away, she and her household, and sojourned in the land of the Philistines for seven years.

³ It came to be at the end of the seven years that the woman returned from the land of the Philistines and went forth to cry out to the king for her house and for her fields.

⁴ Now the king was speaking to Gehazi the lad of the man of Elohim, saying, **"Oh do recount to me all the great things that Elisha has done."** ⁵ And it came to pass while he was recounting to the king how he had

revived the dead, that, behold, the woman whose son Elisha had revived was crying out to the king for her house and for her fields.

Now Gehazi said, **“My lord the king, this is the woman, and this is her son whom Elisha revived.”**⁶ The king asked the woman, and she recounted it to him. Then the king appointed a certain court official for her, saying, **“Restore all that belonged to her and all the yield of the field from the day she forsook the land until now.”** **[end text]**

Verse 1. We are given an interesting sequel to an earlier story in 2 Kings 4:8–37 of Elisha’s interactions with a woman of the village of Shunam, called **“the Shunamite”** by Elisha. The woman showed kindness to Elisha when he regularly traveled by her house and accepted her offer to stay in a room of their house. In thanks he prophesied that a son would be born to her and her husband. A son was born and grew up. Sometime after, her son suddenly became ill and died. The Shunamite convinced Elisha to come to her home. God brought the son back to life through His prophet.

Now we learn that Elisha warned her and her family about the seven years of famine in Israel (but not on the Mediterranean coastal area of Philistia), instructing for her, **“you and your household”** to leave. Her husband is not mentioned (as in 2 Kings 4:8–37), but her son is, along with whatever is included in “household.” **“Yahweh has called for a famine,”** as punishment against the King and people of Israel for worshiping other gods. If this had been a natural occurrence, YHWH would not have been mentioned.

This famine is not mentioned anywhere else in Kings or Chronicles, though it must have been significant. (James 5:17 talks about a 3½ year famine during the ministry of Elijah.) I mention this to remind you there are many major events in the histories of Israel and Judah that are not told to us in Scripture. This is because “the events not mentioned” are not important to the message of the writers, however fascinating they might be to us. Remember what the apostle John said about the wonderful deeds of Jesus at the end of his gospel:

“Now there are many other things also, which Jesus does, which, if they should be written, one by one, I am surmising not even the world itself would contain the written scrolls.”

• *John 21:25*

To a lesser extent many great deeds occurred that God worked through His servants, the prophets, that are not mentioned in the biblical texts. In the Old Testament the prophets were the primary way God communicated with Israel and all future generations:

“By many portions and many modes, of old, God, speaking to the fathers in the prophets, in the last of these days speaks to us in a Son, Whom He appoints enjoyer of the allotment of all, through Whom He also makes the eons; ...”

• *Hebrews 1:1–2*

Verse 2. The woman followed Elisha’s instructions as a **“man of Elohim.”** She **“and her household”** went to the territory of the Philistines to live.

Verses 3. The family returned to the land they owned but found others apparently living on it, the house and land being unoccupied for seven years. The woman **“went forth to cry out”** and appealed to the King of Israel for justice.

Verse 4. Remember Gehazi? He was the servant of Elisha, but was dismissed from his service when he sought gifts from the Syrian general Naaman, who Elisha healed of leprosy. Well, he found himself another position serving the King of Israel, likely Joram, son of Ahab. Coincidentally (guided by God’s hand), the king asked Gehazi to tell him some stories about Elisha and his great deeds.

Verse 5. While Gehazi was telling the king about how Elisha revived a woman’s son after he died, suddenly Gehazi and the king heard a woman crying out for justice. Gehazi recognized her voice. Imagine the surprise when the king was told, that was the woman and her son!

Verse 6. The king gave an audience to the woman who told the same story as Gehazi (which no doubt made him look good before his king), met her son, and listened to her story. He granted her petition and

appointed an official to make sure her house, the land, and **“all the yield of the field”** during the seven years she was gone were restored to her.

Scripture portrays even evil kings as human beings, people who like to help others. However, there is no mention that any of the wonderful and miraculous events the king was told about regarding Elisha had any effect upon the king to bring about repentance or a change of heart toward YHWH. All too often evil continues in people for a multitude of reasons.

Looking Back (see **“Israel and Judah: 23. King Ahab’s Decline”**)

When Elijah was the chief prophet of Israel, before he transferred his prophetic ministry to Elisha, God gave Elijah a message. His message was given after God’s triumph with Elijah at Mount Carmel, and after Elijah fled from Queen Jezebel’s murderous wrath. Elijah traveled to the wilderness southwest of the Dead Sea and YHWH spoke to him:

“It came to pass as Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went forth and stood at the opening of the cave. And behold, a voice came to him and said, ‘What have you to do here, Elijah?’

He replied, ‘I have been zealous, yea zealous for Yahweh Elohim of hosts; for the sons of Israel have forsaken Your covenant; they have demolished Your altars, and they have killed Your prophets with the sword, so that I am left, I by myself alone. And they are seeking for my soul to take it.’

Now Yahweh said to him,

‘Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus. When you enter there, then

[1] you will anoint Hazael as king over Syria. And

[2] Jehu son of Nimshi shall you anoint as king over Israel. And

[3] Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel-meholah shall you anoint as prophet in your stead.

It will occur to the one escaping from Hazael’s sword that Jehu shall put him to death, and to the one escaping from Jehu’s sword that Elisha shall put him to death.’”

• 1 Kings 19:13–17

YHWH instructed Elijah to perform three anointings. Only one [3] was performed by Elijah before he was taken by flying chariot to the wilderness of southern Judea.^a The first two anointings were to be done by Elisha, although Elisha performed the anointing of Jehu by sending a representative, a young **“son of the prophets.”** So ... remembering YHWH’s word to Elijah, let us return to 2 Kings chapter 8.

TEXT: Elisha Goes to Damascus to Anoint a New Syrian King

2 Kings 8:7–15

⁷ Elisha came to Damascus when Ben-hadad king of Syria was ill. It was told to him, saying, **“The man of Elohim has come as far as here.”**

⁸ So the king said to Hazael, **“Take an approach present in your hand, and go to meet the man of Elohim. You will inquire of Yahweh through him, saying, ‘Shall I revive from this illness?’”**

⁹ So Hazael went to meet him; he took an approach present in his hand, even every sort of good thing of Damascus, a load of forty camels. He came and stood before him and said, **“Your son, Ben-hadad king of Syria, he has sent me to you, saying, ‘Shall I revive from this illness?’”**

¹⁰ Elisha replied to him, **“Go, say to him that you shall live, yea live, and that Yahweh has shown me that**

^a Elijah was taken bodily in the chariot to somewhere in Judah. He did not go to the third heaven. Elijah was not named in the faithful heroes of Hebrews chapter 11, but reference is made to one of the miracles God had Elijah perform: **“women obtained~their dead by resurrection”** (Hebrews 11:35; 1 Kings 17:22–24). All those spoken of in Hebrews chapter 11, including Elijah, died (Hebrews 11:39).

he shall die, yea die.”¹¹ And he stood with his countenance fixed and kept it until Hazael was ashamed. Then the man of Elohim lamented.

¹² Now Hazael said, **“for what reason is my lord lamenting?”**

He replied,

“Because I know what evil you shall do to the sons of Israel. Their fortresses shall you consign to fire; their choice young men shall you kill with the sword; their infants shall you dash to pieces; and their pregnant women shall you rend open.”

¹³ Then Hazael said, **“Indeed, what is your servant, a mere dog, that he might perform this great thing?”**

Elisha replied, **“Yahweh has shown me you as king over Syria.”**

¹⁴ He went from Elisha and came to his lord, who asked him, **“What did Elisha say to you?”**

He replied, **“He said to me that you shall live, yea live.”**

¹⁵ But it came to pass on the morrow that he [Hazael] took the gauze, dipped it in water and spread it out over his face, so that he died. And Hazael reigned in his stead. [end text]

Verse 7. Elisha next was tasked by God to perform a task he did not want to do, but he did as YHWH commanded. In Damascus, Syria, he was recognized, perhaps because of the hairy mantle he wore, a symbol of his prophetic office. Many had likely heard of Naaman’s healing by Elisha (2 Kings chapter 5). Elisha was honored, and perhaps feared as **“the man of Elohim.”** King Ben-hadad, long-time ruler of Syria (some calculate 40+ years) likely remembered Naaman’s healing by Elisha and wants to ask Elisha a question..

Verse 8. Ben-hadad sends a trusted soldier for an answer from Elisha that only a true prophet could give.

Verse 9. Hazael sought to speak with Elisha, and he brought substantial gifts or approach presents just as Naaman sought to do (2 Kings 5:5).

Verses 10–11. Surprisingly Elisha tells Hazael to lie to Ben-hadad. YHWH intends to put Hazael on the throne of Syria. Elisha glares at Hazael. Hazael was **“ashamed,”** as most translations render it, so that he was embarrassed or nervous. For his part, Elisha **“lamented,”** but most translations have that Elisha **“wept.”**

Verse 12. Elisha, patriotic toward his northern Kingdom of Israel, tells Hazael the evils he will perpetrate upon the people of Israel.

Verse 13. Hazael is angry and disbelieving, how (and why) would he, and how could he, do such horrors as Elisha says? Elisha responds by telling him he shall become King of Syria.

Hazael of Syria is mentioned in Assyrian inscriptions. Below is one example, there are other inscriptions describing the same event:

“Engraved on a large marble tablet (× cm) found in the wall of the city of Aššur, this version of the annals can be identified as Recension E (Schramm EAK 2:77–78). ...

(iii.45b-iv.15a) **‘In my eighteenth regnal year, I crossed the Euphrates for the sixteenth time. Hazael of Damascus** trusted in the massed might of his troops; and he mustered his army in great number. He made Mt. Saniru/Senirb a mountain peak, which (lies) opposite Mount Lebanon, his fortress. I felled with the sword 16,020 troops, his fighting men. I took away from him 1,121 of his chariots, 470 of his cavalry, together with his camp. In order to save his life he ran away. I pursued after him.

I confined him in Damascus, his royal city. I cut down his orchards. I burned his shocks. I marched to the mountains of Ĥaurānu. I razed, destroyed and burned cities without number. I carried away their booty. I marched to the mountains of Ba’li-ra’si at the side of the sea and opposite Tyre. I erected a statue of my royalty there. I received the tribute of Ba’al-manzēr, the Tyrian, and of Jehu (Ia-a-ú), c (the man) of Bīt-Humrī (Omri).”

• **Context of Scripture, volume 2, 267^b**

^b William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger, *Context of Scripture, Volume 2: Monumental Inscriptions from the Biblical World* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2000), 267.

This Assyrian text by King Shalmaneser tells us several things. First, Hazael of Damascus was well known to the Assyrians as a defeated enemy. While Elisha's prophecy says Hazael was successful and horrible toward Israel, he was not victorious against every adversary.

Note also the mention of Jehu, King of Israel who presented tribute to Shalmaneser, and the tribute was acceptable both in quality and quantity. We will learn more about Jehu at the end of this article, and also in the next installment, "Israel and Judah: 28." There is an inscription confirming Hazael was a usurper:

"This is a Summary or Display inscription which is incised on the front, left hip and back of a broken basalt statue of Shalmaneser. It was discovered in the 1903 German excavations at the entrance to a Parthian building where it had been moved from its original location at the Tabira Gate. The statue had been broken into two large and many small pieces and the head was missing. The text appears to date to 833 BCE based on the its inscripational content.

The two portions translated here narrate [1] Shalmaneser's campaign against the western "12" king coalition in 853 BCE and [2] his campaign against Hazael of Damascus in 841 BCE.

(i.14–24) 'I decisively defeated Hadad-ezer (Adad-idri), the Damascene together with 12 kings, his allies. I laid low 29,000 of his men-of-arms like sheep. I threw the rest of their troops into the Orontes River. In order to save their lives, they ran away.'

(i.25-ii.6) 'Hadad-ezer (Adad-idri) passed away. Hazael, son of a nobody, took the throne. He mustered his numerous troops; (and) he moved against me to do war and battle. I fought with him. I decisively defeated him. I took away from him his walled camp. In order to save his life he ran away. I pursued (him) as far as Damascus, his royal city. I cut down his orchards.'

(Remainder of column too fragmentary for translation)"

• Context of Scripture, volume 2, 270

This confirms the scriptural account. The Assyrian text says "**Hazael, son of a nobody.**" This means that Hazael had no nobility or lineage that would remotely give him any legal basis to the throne of Syria. "**Hazael ... took the throne.**" He seized the throne after Hadad-ezer (Ben-hadad) died. It does not say that Hazael murdered Hadad-ezer, but the biblical account gives us that detail. The dates indicating Assyrian chronological events do not exactly match biblical dates, but they are very close.

Verses 14–15. It seems that Hazael had murderous thoughts before he was given God's pronouncement by Elisha. It did not take him long for murder to form in his heart. Hazael followed Elisha's order and lied to Ben-Hadad. Evil came forth from Hazael and he murdered Ben-hadad, probably suffocating him. It was to be his first atrocity of many. We are not told how Hazael won the approval of the Syrian nobility and army.

"Hazael rules from about 842 to 806 B.C. and, despite some setbacks at the hands of Assyria, manages to wield serious military influence in his region. Israel is forced to yield to him throughout his reign."

• Paul House, 1, 2 Kings, vol. 8, 284^c

The scene changes again to Judah and another king who commits murder ...

TEXT: King Jehoram of Judah

2 Kings 8:16–22

¹⁶ In the fifth year of Joram son of Ahab king of Israel, while Jehoshaphat was king of Judah,

Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah became king.

2 Chronicles 21:1–10

¹ Jehoshaphat lay down with his fathers; he was entombed with his fathers in the city of David, and his son Jehoram reigned in his stead.

² He had six brothers, sons of Jehoshaphat:

^c Paul House, *1, 2 Kings*, vol. 8, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 284.

¹⁷ He was thirty-two years old when he became king; and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. ¹⁸ He walked in the way of the kings of Israel, just as the house of Ahab had done; for Ahab's daughter had become his wife; so he did what was evil in the eyes of Yahweh.

¹⁹ Yet Yahweh would not cause ruin to Judah on account of His servant David, just as He had promised him to give him a lamp for his sons all the days.

²⁰ In his days Edom transgressed from under the hand of Judah and raised a king to reign over them.

²¹ So Joram advanced toward Zair and all the chariots with him. Now it came to pass that he himself arose by night and smote the Edomites who were surrounding him and the chariot chiefs. Yet his people fled to their tents.

²² Edom has been transgressing from under the hand of Judah until this day. Then Libnah transgressed at the same time.

Azariah, Jehiel, Zechariah, Azariah, Michael and Shephatiah. All of these were sons of Jehoshaphat king of Judah.

³ Their father gave them many gifts of silver and of gold and other costly gifts, as well as fortified cities in Judah. Yet he gave the kingdom to Jehoram since he was the firstborn.

⁴ When Jehoram rose up over the kingdom of his father, he reinforced his position and killed all his brothers with the sword, as well as some of the chief officials of Israel.

⁵ *Jehoram* was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. ⁶ He walked in the way of the kings of Israel, just as the house of Ahab had done, for Ahab's daughter had become his wife; so he did what was evil in the eyes of Yahweh.

⁷ Yet Yahweh would not cause ruin to the house of David on account of *the covenant that He contracted with David*, just as He had promised him to give a lamp *to him and* his sons all the days.

⁸ In his days Edom transgressed from under the hand of Judah and raised a king to reign over them.

⁹ So Jehoram advanced *into Edom with his chief officers* and all the chariots with him. Now it came to pass that he arose by night and smote the Edomites who were surrounding him and the chariot chiefs.

¹⁰ Edom has been transgressing from under the hand of Judah until this day. Then Libnah transgressed at the same time from under his hand, for he had forsaken Yahweh Elohim of his fathers.

[end text]

Confusion Alert

- **Kingdom of Israel** — King Ahab was succeeded by his son Ahaziah. Ahaziah was succeeded by his brother Joram. Both were sons of Ahab. Both were evil.
- **Kingdom of Judah** — Good King Jehoshaphat was succeeded by Joram (also called Jehoram). Joram killed all his brothers except one, Ahaziah. When Joram died Ahaziah ruled Judah. Both Joram and Ahaziah were evil.
- There were two kings named Joram and two named Ahaziah, one for each kingdom. Keep them straight and the narrative makes sense. Mix them and there is confusion.

Kings of Judah with More than One Name

- Some kings have more than one name. In this article
Joram = Jehoram

- Joram/Jehoram’s last surviving son is named **Jehoahaz = Azariah**
 Jehoahaz is his name in 2 Chronicles 21:17 and 25:23, and he is called Azariah in 2 Chronicles 22:6
- See the genealogy of Queen Athaliah below for another frame of reference.

2 Kings 8:16 and 2 Chronicles 21:1–2. These verses try to give us an exact time when the transition of the kings of Judah from good King Jehoshaphat to evil King Jehoram (Joram) occurred relative to the reign of King Joram of Israel.

Verses 2–4. Jehoram was the eldest and he conspired to kill all six of his brothers, each being “better” than he was, as we read later in 2 Chronicles 21:12. He killed elders and leaders in the kingdom who might oppose his right to rule. His wife was Athaliah, Jezebel’s daughter. She enters the narrative later.

Verses 17 and 5. The Hebrew of 2 Chronicles 21:5 has him as being “forty-two” years old when he took the throne, but this is problematic. Texts vary, so no one knows what his correct age was. Later, 2 Chronicles 21:20 reiterates the Chronicler’s judgment on Jehoram, and gives some additional information:

“He was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. He departed as not desirable, and they entombed him in the city of David, though not in the tombs of the kings.”

Jehoram married Ahab and Jezebel’s daughter, named Athaliah, who later becomes a major personality.

Verses 20 and 8. The people of Edom were vassals of the kingdom of Judah. Edom was located southeast of the Dead Sea. They “transgressed” their covenant with Joram for Judah to be sovereign over Edom. They crowned a king, stopped paying tribute to Judah, formally indicating their rebellion as stipulated in most suzerain-vassal treaties between greater and lesser peoples.

Verses 21 and 9. A battle was fought near Zair, which means “small,” on a level field that was good for chariots. The Edomites attacked at night, surrounded Joram who repelled the attackers. Judah’s army left the Edomites to their freedom, “yet his people fled to their tents,” meaning that Judah’s army went home.

Verses 22 and 10. The “transgressing” of Edom from Judah as overlord continued to the day the writer of Kings, meaning during the time of Isaiah. The writer of Chronicles adds that the rebellion came about because Jehoram “had forsaken Yahweh Elohim of his fathers.” Libnah was a small city southwest of the Dead Sea. Judah is so weak it cannot put down revolts of even minor vassals.

The narrative now shifts to Second Chronicles alone. Other regional powers sense weakness and attack.

TEXT: The Sins of Joram/Jehoram and God’s Judgment on Judah

2 Chronicles 21:11–17

¹¹ Moreover, he himself built high-places in the mountains of Judah, and he caused the dwellers of Jerusalem to commit **prostitution** and was driving Judah astray.

¹² Then a document came to him from Elijah the prophet, saying:

“Thus says Yahweh Elohim of your father David:

[1] **Whereas** you do not walk in the ways of your father Jehoshaphat or in the ways of Asa king of Judah,¹³ and

[2] [**whereas**] you have been walking in the way of the kings of Israel and have caused Judah and the dwellers of Jerusalem to commit prostitution, as the house of Ahab had caused the commission of prostitution, and

[3] **you also killed your brothers of your father’s house, who were better than you,**

¹⁴ **behold, Yahweh will strike a great stroke against your people, against your sons, against your**

wives, against all your goods,¹⁵ and against you with an evil illness, with an illness of your bowels, until, because of the illness, your bowels shall come forth, day by day.”

¹⁶ Yahweh roused against Jehoram the spirit of [1] the Philistines and [2] the Arabians who were by the side of [3] the Cushites.¹⁷ They marched up against Judah, broke through its defenses and captured all the goods that were found in the king's house, as well as his sons and his wives; no son remained to him, only Jehoahaz, the youngest of his sons. [end text]

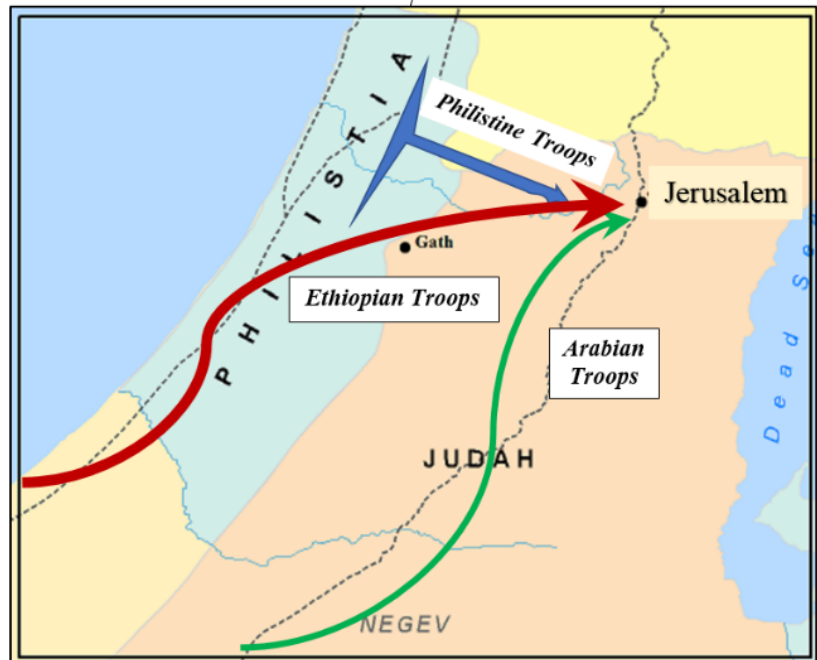
Verse 11. The evil acts of Jehoram of Judah are listed and they are serious. It was one thing for kings of Israel to do such things, but YHWH does not at this point tolerate them in the kings of Judah.

“Prostitution” meant ritual prostitution. Sexual rituals were involved as part of the normal worship of pagan gods to enhance fertility of the people and the land. Needless to say, such rituals were popular with segments of the population and the leadership. Drugs were often used to induce altered states of reality and enhance supposed contact with various gods.

Other gods do exist, as the apostle Paul tells us:

“... We are aware that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God except One. For even if so be that there are those being termed gods, whether in heaven or on earth, even as there are many gods and many lords,

nevertheless for us there is one God, the Father, out of Whom all is, and we for Him, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through Whom all is, and we through Him. But not in all is there this knowledge. ...”



Philistine, Arabian, and Ethiopian Troops Pillage Jerusalem

• 1 Corinthians 8:4–7

Verses 12–15. The Concordant Version arranges the text (and I indented part of it) to enhance the legal aspect of Elijah's statement, with charge, verdict, and punishment to be carried out. By accepting the throne of Judah, Joram bound himself to YHWH's covenant with David, which so many rulers of Judah and Israel seem to ignore, forget, or dismiss as not binding on them. They act as if YHWH was a part-time Sovereign and not the God of gods, El of Elohim, King of Elohim and of men.

Verse 12–13. Jehoram's evil acts are so intolerable that YHWH had the prophet Elijah write a document (usually translated as a letter or a writing) to Jehoram. It is a legal document, an indictment. When YHWH presents an indictment, He is also the judge who knows the hearts of men.

Verse 14. YHWH pronounces the sentence of punishment. **“Yahweh will strike a great stroke”** against the people of Judah, who willingly follow their king's evil acts. A great stroke will also befall Jehoram's sons and wives. The wealth of the kingdom will receive **“a great stroke.”**

Verse 15. Jehoram himself will endure great suffering from illness culminating in a horrible death.

Verse 16. The conspiracy and invasion is briefly described. YHWH caused two small powers, **“the Philistines and the Arabians,”** who allied themselves with a major power, **“the Cushites.”** The Cushites were the Ethiopians, as the King James Version and modern translations render it. This means that an Ethiopian dynasty of Pharaohs from “upper Egypt” in the south ruled Egypt during this period of the mid-800s BC. The

combined armies did not come to conquer; they came to raid and plunder the riches Judah stored at Jerusalem.^d

Verse 17. These three forces marched to the capital and **“broke through its defenses.”** This likely means they entered the city by stealth, or a traitor in Jerusalem conspired to open the gates to the city. They did not destroy the city, neither did they attempt to hold the city and suppress the people of Judah. When YHWH is against you, no fortresses will prevent God’s judgments.

The armies pillaged **“the king’s house”** meaning the royal palace in Jerusalem. They probably left Jerusalem before the Army of Judah could be mobilized.

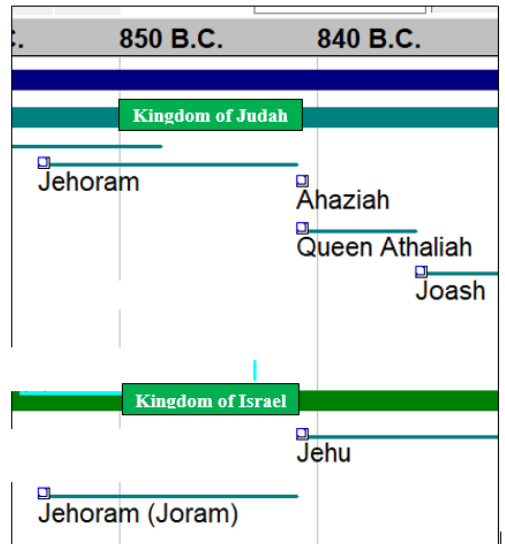
Jehoram’s **“sons and his wives”** were also captured along with the loot from the king’s house. The sons were later killed by the Arabians (see 2 Chronicles 22:1, below). The wives are not heard from again in Scripture and probably died in Egypt. There is no mention that they captured the treasures from the Temple, if any were there at the time. The king’s house was close to the Temple for security.

Jehoram and his favorite wife, Athaliah, somehow survived the attack or escaped from Jerusalem before it was captured. One son escaped, Jehoahaz, who became king. Jehoahaz has another name: Ahaziah. He was called Jehoahaz in 2 Chronicles 21:17 but Ahaziah in 2 Chronicles 22:1, and 2 Kings 8:24. The name Jehoahaz means “YHWH has seized” or “YHWH has grasped.” Ahaziah has a slightly different meaning: “YHWH holds” or “YHWH sustains.”

TEXT: The End of Joram/Jehoram’s Reign

2 Kings 8:23–24

²³ The rest of the affairs of Joram, and all that he did, are they not written on the scroll of the annals of the days of the kings of Judah? ²⁴ Joram lay down with his fathers and was entombed with his fathers in the city of David;



**Relationship of Kings of Judah and Israel
Dates Are Approximate**

2 Chronicles 21:18–20

¹⁸ After all this, Yahweh struck him in his bowels with an illness for which there was no healing. ¹⁹ It continued for day after day, and as the time went forth, after the end of two years of days, his bowels came forth because of his illness; and he died in gruesome travail.

But his people made not funeral-fire for him like the funeral-fires of his fathers.

²⁰ He was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. He departed as not desirable,

and *they* entombed *him* in the city of David, *though not in the tombs of the kings.* **[end text]**

^d This event is reminiscent of the sack of Jerusalem after the death of King Solomon, and it occurred for the same reason, Pharaoh Shishak successfully attacked and captured Jerusalem (1 Kings 14:25–26; 2 Chronicles 12:1–9). Both Rehoboam and Jehoram ignored YHWH and His commandments and disparaged the covenant of Moses and YHWH’s covenant with David.

2 Chronicles 21:18–19. YHWH’s prophecy (through Elijah’s letter) of punishment against Jehoram personally from 2 Chronicles 21:14 came true. It is described in two graphic verses. The people either did not like Jehoram, or they feared more punishment from YHWH. They did not perform the usual funereal events.

2 Chronicles 21:20. Nor did they bury him “**in the tombs of the kings**” referring to a tomb complex only for the most honored kings of Judah, descendants of King David, as we learn from later writings:

“Then Hezekiah lay down with his fathers; they entombed him in the ascent [height] of the tombs of the sons of David; all of Judah and the dwellers of Jerusalem showed him honor in his death; his son Manasseh reigned in his stead.”

• **2 Chronicles 32:33**

Note “**the tombs of the sons of David.**” These tombs, plural, were within a complex of tomb chambers directly south of the southern wall of the Temple. How far south is unknown. Burial space was limited within that complex, so only the most noble of King David’s royal descendants were buried within King David’s complex. King Hezekiah during the time of Isaiah the prophet, was one of those good kings. This complex of tombs is mentioned later during the time of Nehemiah. He and people in his time knew the location of this complex.

“After him Nehemiah son of Azbuk, chief of half the Beth-zur tract, repaired as far as in front of the tombs of David, and as far as the reservoir that had been made, and as far as the house of the masters of war.”

• **Nehemiah 3:16**

The context of the passage deals with one part of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. Again, this is a reference to the tomb complex of King David. The Hebrew text clearly has “tombs,” plural. The Concordant Version wrongly has “tomb” singular, preferring the Septuagint rendering. I changed the word “tomb” to “tombs” to reflect the Hebrew. See my article, “[The Location and Future Discovery of King David’s Tomb.](#)”

TEXT: Ahaziah Becomes King of Judah

2 Kings 8:24 [repeated]–29

²⁴ Joram [of Judah] lay down with his fathers and was entombed with his fathers in the city of David; his son Ahaziah reigned in his stead.

²⁵ In the twelfth year of Joram [of Israel] son of Ahab king of Israel,

Ahaziah son of Jehoram king of Judah became king.

²⁶ Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he became king; and he reigned one year in Jerusalem; his mother’s name was Athaliah granddaughter of Omri king of Israel. ²⁷ He walked in the way of the house of Ahab and

did what was evil in the eyes of Yahweh, like the house of Ahab, for he was a son-in-law of the house of Ahab.

²⁸ He went with Joram son of Ahab to the battle against Hazael king of Syria at Ramoth-gilead; yet the Syrians smote Joram.

2 Chronicles 22:1–6

¹ *The dwellers of Jerusalem made Ahaziah, his youngest son, king in his stead, for the raiding party that came with the Arabians to the camp had killed all the first ones; so Ahaziah son of Jehoram reigned as king of Judah.*

² Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned one year in Jerusalem; his mother’s name was Athaliah granddaughter of Omri. ³ He *too* walked in the ways of the house of Ahab, for his mother became his counselor to act wickedly.

⁴ He did what was evil in the eyes of Yahweh, like the house of Ahab, for *after his father’s death they became his counselors, to his ruin.* ⁵ Moreover, he followed their counsel and went with Joram son of king Ahab of Israel to the battle against Hazael king of Syria at Ramoth-gilead; yet the Syrians smote Joram.

²⁹ So king Joram returned to get healed at Jezreel from the smiting with which the Syrians smote him at Ramah when he fought against Hazael king of Syria. As for Ahaziah son of Jehoram king of Judah, he went down to see Joram son of Ahab in Jezreel, for he was wounded.

⁶ So *he* returned to get healed at Jezreel from the smiting with which they smote him at Ramah when he fought against Hazael king of Syria. As for Ahaziah son of Jehoram king of Judah, he went down to see Joram son of Ahab in Jezreel, for he was wounded. [end text]

2 Kings 8:24 and 2 Chronicles 22:1. Joram (=Jehoram) of Judah is mentioned first. He died after an 8-year reign, and his son Ahaziah succeeded to the throne. His religious faithfulness to YHWH was no better than his father's.

The Arabians killed all of Jehoram's oldest sons. Somehow Ahaziah, the youngest, escaped and so did his mother Athaliah. She was not seized along with Jehoram's other wives. Perhaps she was not taken captive because she was the granddaughter of Ethbaal, the King of Sidon, or perhaps because her mother was queen Jezebel of Israel. It is also possible that both the queen and her son, Prince Ahaziah, were not in Jerusalem and evaded capture.

2 Kings 8:25. King Joram of Israel is mentioned. He is different from the Joram of Judah, who just died.

Verses 26 and 2. Ahaziah was young when he ascended the throne, and he reigns just one year. Both authors state his short reign was due to his sinful and evil ways like his grandfather Ahab, through his mother Athaliah, the daughter of Jezebel and Ahab.

Verse 3. Specific blame is given in Chronicles to Athaliah who counseled him in evil. She was Ahab and Jezebel's daughter. She was half Israelite and half Phoenician, with her sympathies overwhelmingly with her pagan religion of Phoenicia, that she is willing to kill for, just as her mother did.

That meant she counseled him in every way to go against YHWH, His covenant with all the people of the tribes of Israel, and to promote pagan religions, particularly the worship of Baal. Ahaziah's reign was shortened and the texts indicate she was to blame, while he followed his mother's lead.

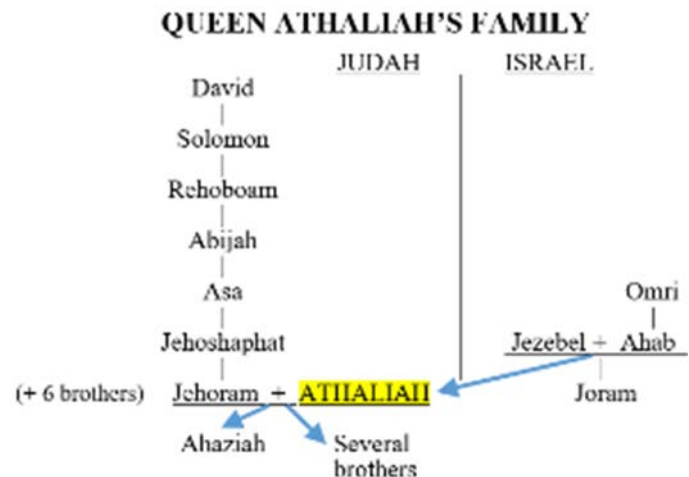
Verses 28 and 5. In spite of the damage done to his kingdom by the Ethiopians, Arabians, and Philistines, and in spite of the defeat by the Edomites demonstrating the extreme weakness of Judah's army, his mother and others from the house of Ahab were able to convince Ahaziah to join Joram's war against Syria. This situation reeks of conspiracy.

One wonders if there was maneuvering, under Athaliah's influence, toward the eventual goal of uniting all twelve tribes of Israel back into a single kingdom as it was under David and Solomon. The difference would be that the leadership of both kingdoms would embrace and worship pagan gods. The people would eventually follow their leaders. As usual, they do not reckon with YHWH's interference.

Ahaziah went with the army of Judah to defend Ramoth-gilead, joining the army of Israel against an attack from Syria. It seems incomprehensible that a king whose capital had recently been invaded would so soon go to war with Syria. Recall that Athaliah was Joram's sister and Ahaziah's mother, so the two kings were closely related by marriage. Whatever the case, Ahaziah felt secure to go to war with Israel against Syria.

One must also ask, how did Joram know the Syrians were going to invade? The new king of Syria was Hazael, recently anointed by Elisha, and crowned king after the "untimely death" of his predecessor, Ben-hadad. Recall that Elisha knew from YHWH that Hazael would do horrible things against the people of the northern Kingdom of Israel.

The battle with the Syrian army occurred along the trade route east of the Jordan River near the Israelite-



occupied strong fortress of Ramoth-gilead. The Israelite general Jehu was one of the commanders (we will meet him again soon).

Ramoth-Gilead means “the heights of Gilead.” This was a fortress overlooking a caravan trade highway east of the Jordan River. It was there that the armies of Israel and Judah gathered to battle the Syrians, who were likely trying to seize Ramoth-Gilead to take away control of an important trade route with the people living east of the Jordan River and Dead Sea.

So Hazael of Syria (called Aram) with his troops fought with Joram (with his commander Jehu) of Israel alongside Ahaziah of Judah with all their troops. All the actors of an interesting drama were on the field of battle. The Syrians severely wounded Joram of Israel and he was removed from the battlefield.

Verses 29 and 6. In spite of their king being struck down by the Syrians, it seems the combined Israelite-Judean armies drove off Hazael’s Syrian army, which probably withdrew north toward Damascus. In Second Kings chapter 9, Jehu and the army commanders were gathered at the fortress of Ramoth-gilead, which was still in Israelite control.

The text reads “**the Syrians smote him at Ramah,**” based on the Hebrew. But no one knows where that is. “Ramah” may be a contraction for Ramoth. The Greek Septuagint declares it to be Ramoth, “**they wounded him at Ramoth.**” This makes good sense consistent with the context before and after the mention of Ramah.

The wounded King Joram of Israel was transported west across the Jordan River to Jezreel to recover from his wounds.^e Although severely wounded, the texts indicate his wounds were not immediately life threatening, otherwise he would not have traveled so far to recover. King Ahaziah of Judah went to visit Joram (Jezebel’s son) sometime after the battle. Jezebel herself was with Joram in Jezreel.

2 Kings 8:29 and 2 Chronicles 22:6. King Joram of Israel was taken to Ramah (Ramoth) and then to Jezreel to recover. Ahaziah king of Judah went to visit him.

Back to Elisha the prophet and his interaction by messenger with Jehu of Israel.

TEXT: YHWH’s Gift for Jehu; He Is Anointed King of Israel

2 Kings 9:1–13

¹ As for Elisha the prophet, he called one of the sons of the prophets and said to him,

“Gird your waist, take a vial of this oil in your hand and go to Ramoth-gilead. ² When you come in there, see Jehu son of Jehoshaphat son of Nimshi there. You will enter and make him arise from the midst of his brothers. Then you will bring him into the chamber inside a chamber.

³ **You will take the vial of oil and pour it on his head. You will say, ‘Thus speaks Yahweh: I anoint you king over Israel.’ Then you must open the door and flee and not tarry.”**



^e Jezreel was where Naaboth’s garden was located. King Ahab’s wife Jezebel murdered Naaboth for his garden.

⁴ So the lad, the prophet's lad, went to Ramoth-gilead.

⁵ When he came in, behold, the chiefs of the army were sitting together. He said, **"I have a word for you, O chief."** Jehu replied, **"For which one of all of us?"** He answered, **"For you, O chief."**

⁶ So he got up and entered into the house; and he poured the oil on his head and said to him,

"Thus speaks Yahweh Elohim of Israel: 'I anoint you king over the people of Yahweh, over Israel.

⁷ You will smite the house of Ahab your lord. Thus will I avenge the blood of My servants the prophets and the blood of all the servants of Yahweh at the hand of Jezebel.

⁸ The whole house of Ahab must perish; and I will cut off from Ahab any man-child, restrained or forsaken, in Israel. ⁹ I will make the house of Ahab like the house of Jeroboam son of Nabat, and like the house of Baasha son of Ahijah.

¹⁰ As for Jezebel, the dogs shall devour her in the portion of Jezreel, and there will be no one entombing her."

Then he opened the door and fled.

¹¹ As for Jehu, he came forth to the servants of his lord; and they said to him, **"Is all well? For what reason did this mad fellow come to you?"** He replied to them, **"You yourselves know the man and his concern."**

¹² Yet they said, **"It is false! Tell us now."** Then he replied, **"Like this and like that he spoke to me, saying, 'Thus speaks Yahweh: I anoint you king over Israel.'"**

¹³ So they hastily took each man his garment and placed it under him on the landing of the stairs. Then they blew the trumpet and said, **"Jehu is king."** [end text]

2 Kings 9:1. Apparently the battle was not decisive for either Syria or the combined forces of Israel and Judah, even though Joram was severely injured. He was moved to Jezreel, but Jehu remained with troops near the hill fortress of Ramoth-Gilead with fellow commanders (2 Kings 9:14). Syria did not capture this important fortress. The prophet Elisha sends a messenger to Jehu with specific instructions.

Elisha has an important mission for one of his servants. Elisha does not go himself. Why not? Well, Elisha did not like performing the act of anointing Hazael of Syria because that king was to be used as an instrument of Israel's punishment. I think Elisha knows something about Jehu and he does not want to face him.

Verse 2. The instructions are simple but precise. The Jehoshaphat of **"Jehu son of Jehoshaphat son of Nimshi"** was a different person than Jehoshaphat, king of Judah. In other words, Jehu had no link to any Davidic royal blood in his lineage.

Verse 3. He was to anoint Jehu with oil and say the words of YHWH, that Jehu was to be King of Israel. Note the urgency of Elisha's command for the young man **"to flee and not tarry."** Did Elisha suspect Jehu of violence against the young man, so he would not tell anyone else? Jehu was a military man, one of those killer-warriors that every country needs from time to time. He was a dangerous man.

If Jehu disagreed with what Elijah proposed, according to human standards Elijah was telling Jehu to commit treason against the rightful King of Israel. That was a crime punishable by death — for Elijah and maybe also Jehu.

Or, perhaps Elisha was simply warning the young man to obey precisely his instructions. After all, bad things happened in the past to others who disobeyed Elisha.

Verse 4. The young man went and did as he was told. He traveled to Ramoth-gilead without incident, went right up through the troops to where the commanders were gathered.

Verse 5. The young man, the lad, a "son of the prophets," asked to be alone with Jehu. He was a brave young man. The commanders **"were sitting together,"** apparently at ease, and not in the field preparing or wary of impending combat. Seeing all the military commanders in the room, the young man boldly went up to Jehu.

Verse 6. He goes with Jehu to a separate room and gives him YHWH's message from Elisha, including details (that must have come from Elisha) and a prophecy about purging of the Israelite family of Ahab, Jezebel, and all males, young or old, who were directly related by blood to Ahab.

Contrary to some, I think the message the young prophet gave was information Elisha wanted Jehu to know to completely fulfill God's vengeance. **"Vengeance is mine; I will repay," says the Lord**" (Romans 12:19, King James Version), quoting Deuteronomy 32:43 (Concordant Version):

"Be Jubilant, heavens, together with Him, And worship Him, all the messengers of Elohim! Be jubilant, nations, with His people! For the blood of His servants shall He avenge, Vengeance to His foes shall He return, And a propitiatory shelter shall He make for the ground of His people."

The act of his anointing Jehu with oil probably surprised the military man, but he did not stop him from doing so. Jehu knew (from Syrian prisoners or from traders) about Elisha's visit to Damascus to anoint Hazael as King of Syria and King Ben-hadad's sudden death. All sorts of strange things were happening in that part of the world. Through the young man Elisha another portion of the prophecy of 1 Kings 19:15–17 was fulfilled (see page 3 above).

Verse 7. YHWH's vengeance against the house of Ahab will be complete.

Verse 8. All the males of the house of Ahab were to be killed, even those **"restrained or forsaken in Israel."** Simply understood, this includes even relatives of Ahab who are in prison or those incapacitated. It does not include servants or slaves, but only family members.

Verse 9. Like the dynasties of Jeroboam and Baasha, the dynasty of Omri was to be eliminated.^f

Verse 10. The young "son of the prophets" gives Jehu orders from YHWH about what he must do as YHWH's instrument of punishment upon the house of Ahab, the extent of the purge, and what will happen to Jezebel, the mother of his king, and queen of Ahab, Jehu's first commander. Jehu perhaps thought that if he does not perform the deeds of YHWH's retribution, then someone else would do so, and Jehu will not be king for long. After all, a civil war must be avoided if possible. The coup must be quick, clean, and decisive.

YHWH's purpose in having Jehu wipe out Ahab's entire family was to **"avenge the blood of My servants the prophets and the blood of all the servants of Yahweh at the hand of Jezebel."** We are told more information about her atrocity of killing YHWH's prophets than we are when Jezebel's crime is first mentioned in 1 Kings 18:4, 13. There we were told that the murders happened and one hundred of the prophets had to be hidden in caves by a court official named Obadiah. YHWH partially avenged Himself after fire came down from heaven honoring Elijah as God's prophet for his sacrifice to YHWH (1 Kings 18:20–40). Elijah ordered the people of Israel to kill the prophets of Baal at Mt. Carmel.

Then **"Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done and all about how he had killed all the prophets with the sword."** (1 Kings 19:1). Years after Ahab died, the complete fulfillment of Elijah's horrible prophecy will happen. A special judgment will be reserved for Jezebel.

The young man then obeyed Elisha, opened the door and hurried away. Jehu, a man of action, probably had a great deal of thinking to do and did not stop him.

Verse 11. Jehu came out from the room to speak to his fellow commanders. They asked him what **"this mad fellow"** wanted to tell him. Jehu says they knew who the young man was — one of the sons of the prophets — was he a messenger for Elisha?

Verse 12. They did not believe it until Jehu confirmed and spoke the words Elisha's messenger said to him, **"I anoint you king over Israel."** That anointing was done on behalf of Elisha at YHWH's command.

Verse 13. The military leaders approved and reacted positively, putting their garments before Jehu^g at the top of the stairs.

The trumpet was blown to attract everyone's attention and the shout was proclaimed: **"JEHU IS KING!"**

David Sielaff, December 2017

^f Although Ahab is the major figure of the dynasty, rulers and history outside Israel such as the Assyrians knew it as the dynasty of the House of Omri. That dynasty was to end with Joram, Ahab's son. The Assyrians considered Jehu to be part of that dynasty because of the continuity of the vassal tribute given to the Assyrian kings. As long as the tribute money continued to flow, all was well between vassal (Israel) and suzerain (Assyria).

^g Some think Jehu's name means "YHWH is He," but that is uncertain. Surely, YHWH's name is part of Jehu.