**2 Kings Commentary**

**2 Kings Chapter 1**

2Ki 1:1

**“Now Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab.”** Ahab was the second king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel in the Dynasty of Omri, which lasted four generations (Omri, Ahab, Ahaziah, Jehoram). Jehoram (also called “Joram”) was killed by Jehu (2 Kings 9:14-24). The Mesha Stele correlates with biblical history at this point.

2Ki 1:2

**“Ahaziah.”** At this time in history, the kings of Israel and Judah can be confusing. 2 Kings 1:2 is Ahaziah the son of Ahab, king of Israel, and his line is: Omri, Ahab, Ahaziah, Joram (also called Jehoram). In the nation of Judah, at almost the same time, the lineage was Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joram (also called Jehoram), and Ahaziah. As you can see, within the reigns of four kings of both Israel and Judah, two of the kings were called by the same name. It takes some diligence on the part of the reader to keep the kings straight.

**“fell down through the lattice.”** The latticework covered the window, so it seems that Ahaziah was leaning against the lattice to get a better look at something happening outside when the lattice gave way and he fell from his upper room to the ground below.

**“Baal-zebub.”** Baal-zebub means “lord of the flies.” It has been suggested for years that Baal-zebub is a purposeful corruption of Baal-zebul, “chief lord,” a god who is mentioned in Ugaritic literature as “lord of the underworld,” and that would make sense.

**“the god of Ekron.”** In this verse, and verses 3 and 6, the word “god” is a grammatical plural but refers to one singular god.

2Ki 1:3

**“angel.”** This is the same word as “messenger” in 2 Kings 1:2. So Ahaziah sends his messenger and Yahweh sends His.

**“Elijah.”** Interestingly, “Elijah” is spelled two different ways in 2 Kings 1; the shorter version, “Eliyya” (2 Kings 1:3, 4, 8, 12), and the longer spelling with “hu” on the end, “Eliyyhu” (2 Kings 1:10, 13, 15, 17). There is no known reason for the two different spellings in this chapter.

2Ki 1:4

**“die, yes, die.”** That Ahaziah would die from this injury is emphasized by the figure of speech polyptoton. This precise figure, “die, yes, die,” was used by God in Genesis 2:17 and by the Devil in Genesis 3:4.

[For more on polyptoton and the way it is translated in the REV, see commentary on Gen. 2:16.]

2Ki 1:6

**“A man came up to meet us.”** The messengers, not recognizing Elijah, thought that one of the prophets from Ekron had heard—likely from their god, but possibly word about the king Ahaziah’s fall had gone out into the kingdom—and was on his way to see the king when he met the messengers and gave his message to them. Ahaziah recognized from the message that something different must have happened and inquired about the prophet and discerned that it was Elijah.

2Ki 1:7

**“What sort of man.”** This question may be unclear to us, but the messengers knew that the king was asking what the man looked like, and they described Elijah.

2Ki 1:8

**“a hairy man.”** The text reads “a hairy man,” and not “a man wearing a hairy robe,” but the fact that the “hairy man” went with the leather belt shows that when the servants said to the king, “he was a hairy man” it was understood that the reference was to the kind of outer robe the man was wearing. John the Baptist likely had the same kind of outer robe; a robe made of camel’s hair with a leather belt at the waist (Matt. 3:4).

2Ki 1:9

**“He went up to him.”** The captain with his 50 men went up to Elijah. He felt secure with his army with him and would have come quite close to Elijah. So when the fire fell, it fell very close to Elijah and it likely left a pile of charred bones. Yet Elijah did not leave where he was. He was a battle-hardened prophet, and had been in Good vs. Evil conflicts before, for example, when he faced off against the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel.

2Ki 1:10

**“let fire come down.”** There is a kind of play on the phrase “come down” in this text. The commander orders Elijah to come down, but he doesn’t, but then Elijah commands the fire to come down, and it does. Exactly what this looked like is not known. It could be something like a lightning bolt, or it could be a blast of fire from heaven, but whatever it was it had to be fairly tight as a bolt because the soldiers would not have been very far away from Elijah.

2Ki 1:16

**“And he said to him.”** And Elijah said to the king.

**“die, yes, die.”** The figure of speech polyptoton is used for emphasis (see commentary on Gen. 2:16).

2Ki 1:17

**“Jehoram *his brother* began to reign in his place in the second year of Jehoram.”** King Ahaziah did not have any sons, so when he died his brother Jehoram began to reign over Israel (2 Kings 3:1). The words “his brother” were likely original but dropped by a copyist’s haplography from the Hebrew text. The phrase “his brother” is the Lucianic recensions of the Septuagint, the Latin Vulgate, and the Syriac OT.

At this time in history, the kings of Israel and Judah can be confusing. In the Northern Kingdom of Israel, King Ahab’s son was King Ahaziah, and the line of kings in Israel in the dynasty of Omri which lasted four generations was: Omri, Ahab, Ahaziah, and Ahaziah’s brother, Joram (also called “Jehoram” in the Bible). In the Southern Kingdom, Judah, at almost the same time, the lineage was Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joram (also called “Jehoram”), and Ahaziah. As can be seen, within the reigns of four kings of both Israel and Judah, two of the kings were called by the same name (Ahaziah and Jehoram of Israel and Ahaziah and Jehoram of Judah), and the two kings who were named “Jehoram” are also both called “Joram” in the Bible, making things very confusing indeed. It takes some diligence on the part of the reader to keep the kings straight.

At the time of 2 Kings 1:17, Joram (Jehoram), the son of Ahab and brother of the previous king, Ahaziah, was the king of Israel. At that same time, Joram (Jehoram) the son of Jehoshaphat was the king of Judah. Both kings are mentioned here in 2 Kings 1:17, and both kings have the same name, the longer one, “Jehoram,” in the Hebrew text.

2Ki 1:18

**“Ahaziah.”** This is Ahaziah, son of Ahab, king of Israel, he had no son, so his brother became king (see commentary on 2 Kings 1:17).

**2 Kings Chapter 2**

2Ki 2:1

**“*into* the heavens by a whirlwind​.”** It is worth noting that although almost all English translations read, “into heaven,” the Hebrew text does not have the preposition “into,” so a case could be made that the Hebrew text could be read to say, “by a whirlwind of the heavens.” Furthermore, when the Hebrew is indicating that something goes “to heaven,” it usually words it very clearly, which is not the case here. The Septuagint does supply the preposition “into” (*eis*), but it is not in the Hebrew text. Nevertheless, in favor of the idea of Elijah going “into the heavens” is the fact that in 2 Kings 2:2 and 2:4, when the text says “to Bethel” and “to Jericho,” there is no preposition “to” but it is clearly implied.

In any case, Elijah could not have been taken “into heaven,” meaning the place where God lives, because if Elijah could “go to heaven” before Christ died and paid for his sin, then any person could go to heaven without the death of Christ, and Jesus Christ would not have needed to come and die for the sins of humankind (see commentary on 2 Kings 2:11). If Elijah was taken “into heaven” it was “into the air,” because the air above the earth was referred to as “heaven” such as in the phrase “the birds of heaven” (which some modern versions translate as “birds of the air,” but the Hebrew text is “heaven”). So if the text says that Elijah was taken into the air, it refers to him being taken into the air so that he could be moved from one place to another on the earth, and thus taken from the oversight of the other prophets, making way for the ministry of Elisha. In the ancient culture, Elisha would never have taken over the place of a head prophet if Elijah was still around, so God moved him.

The prophets that were there did not believe Elijah was taken to heaven, and asked to go look for him, but since God moved him, there was no point to look for him.

2Ki 2:2

**“As Yahweh lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you.”** This seems to be some kind of test. Loyalty was greatly valued in the ancient culture, and here Elisha shows great loyalty by not leaving Elijah.

2Ki 2:3

**“lord.”** This is a grammatical plural; the Hebrew reads “lords,” but of course, it only refers to one “lord,” who is Elijah.

**“from your head.”** An idiomatic way of saying, “from being your leader.” ​

2Ki 2:5

**“lord.”** This is a grammatical plural like in 2 Kings 2:3.

2Ki 2:6

**“for Yahweh has sent me to the Jordan.”** The movement of Elijah is a reversal of Israel’s move into the Promised Land. Israel went from the Jordan, to Jericho, then up to Bethel. Elijah makes that journey in reverse. Then, just as Moses died but no one knows where he is buried, so it is with Elijah. We don’t know how long he lived after he was taken up in the whirlwind, but we know he died at some point and then, like Moses, we do not know where he was buried. It seems God would bury him like he buried Moses.

2Ki 2:10

**“a difficult request​.”** The “difficult request” does not refer to it being difficult for God to give a double portion of spirit to Elisha. God can give as much holy spirit to a person as He wants, and it was not hard for Him to give Elisha a double portion of the spirit that was upon Elijah.

The “difficult request” Elijah referred to was how “hard” it is to carry the responsibility of walking by the spirit. Having the gift of holy spirit comes with responsibility. A person who has the spirit is responsible before God to walk by the spirit—walk by revelation—and manifest the power of God. Often what God told His prophets to say or do was difficult or heart-wrenching. That is why the word of God to a prophet was often called a “burden” (see commentary on Mal. 1:1).

Many of the prophets were persecuted, and the tasks were very challenging. For example, it could not have been easy for Elijah to tell the king of Israel that there would be no rain or dew (1 Kings 17:1), because it inflicted hardship on the people of Israel, and Elijah loved the people, but was obeying God. By telling Elisha that he was asking for a hard thing, Elijah was warning Elisha that he was asking for something that would be mentally, emotionally, and sometimes physically difficult. It had been difficult for Elijah to walk as a prophet and obey God, and if Elisha had a double portion of the spirit on Elijah, then it would be even harder for him.

We should also reflect upon the fact that Jesus was given the spirit “without measure” (John 3:34). Jesus had a huge responsibility upon his shoulders to walk by the spirit and obey God, and in doing so set the standard for all mankind to follow.

The gift of holy spirit that was upon the Old Testament prophets is different from the gift of holy spirit that God gave to Christians. For more on holy spirit, see commentary on Ephesians 1:13.

2Ki 2:11

**“and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into the heavens.”** (See commentary on 2 Kings 2:1). Elijah and Elisha were walking together and were separated from each other by a chariot of fire, then Elijah was taken into the heavens by a whirlwind. There are numerous paintings that show Elijah riding to heaven in a chariot of fire, but that is not what the Bible says. He was taken up from the ground by a whirlwind.

It is often taught that because the Bible says that Elijah “went up by a whirlwind into heaven,” that he did not die but was taken bodily to heaven to be with God. However, that is not correct. That Elijah went “into heaven” in no way indicates that Elijah was taken up to where God lives, which we generally refer to as “heaven.”

The word “heaven” has several usages in Scripture and often simply means “the sky,” or the air above the earth. Phrases such as “the dew of heaven” (Gen. 27:39; Deut. 33:13), and “the birds of heaven” (Gen. 7:3; 2 Sam. 21:10) show “heaven” being used for the air immediately above the earth (the birds of heaven” is often translated as the “birds of the air” or the “birds of the sky” even though the Hebrew word is “heaven”). The phrase “the stars of heaven” show “heaven” being used for what we today would call “space,” but to the ancients, the stars were just in the sky above the earth. The ancients did not think the stars were up with God.

God’s moving Elijah was an act of great love and mercy. God (and Elijah) knew it was time for Elijah to step down as the head prophet and let Elisha take over that position. The work and pressure were getting to be too much for Elijah. Not long before He asked God to let him die (1 Kings 19:4). But culture and respect would never allow Elisha to take over as long as Elijah was around, so God removed him from where Elisha and the prophets were and moved him to another place on earth where he could live out his days.

Elijah was taken from the earth into “heaven,” i.e., into the sky, by a whirlwind and set down somewhere else. The other prophets understood this, and wanted to go look for Elijah (2 Kings 2:16-17). Elisha, however, knowing that God would have hidden Elijah, did not want them to look for him. 2 Kings 2:11 simply means that God supernaturally moved Elijah from one place to another, similar to what He did many years later when He moved Philip (Acts 8:39-40). Elijah was mortal, and so we know that at some point after he was moved by a whirlwind, he passed away.

Elijah could not have gone up to heaven to be with God before Jesus Christ paid for the sins of mankind by dying on the cross. Like every person, Elijah sinned, and if Elijah could go to heaven without having his sins paid for by Jesus Christ, then any person could go to heaven without Jesus having to die, and Jesus’ death would have been unnecessary. Elijah is now dead and buried, awaiting the resurrection from the dead.

Even though Jesus has been raised from the dead and it would be possible now for God to take believers into heaven because their sins have been paid for, the resurrection and Day of Judgment have not come, so no human is in heaven except Jesus. The Bible says, “No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man” (John 3:13 ESV).

[For more on the resurrection of the dead, see Appendix 3: “The Dead are Dead.”]

2Ki 2:12

“**my father**.” Here used as “mentor” and “guide.”

[For more information on the uses of “father” in the Bible, see commentary on Gen. 4:20. For information on the disciples of a Rabbi being called his “sons,” see commentary on Matt. 12:27. For information on the disciples of a Rabbi being called “orphans” if the Rabbi died or left the area, see commentary on John 14:18, “orphans.”]

**“he took hold of his clothes and tore them in two pieces.”** Tearing one’s clothing can be a sign of mourning or death, and Elisha knew he would never see Elijah again.

2Ki 2:13

**“at the bank of the Jordan.”** The Hebrew is idiomatic: “on the lip of the Jordan.”

2Ki 2:15

**“bowed down.”** The common biblical way of bowing down before people or God was to fall to one’s knees and bow the upper body and face to the earth. The word translated “bowed down,” *shachah* (#07812 שָׁחָה), is the same Hebrew word as “worship.”

[For more on bowing down, see the word study on “worship.”]

2Ki 2:16

**“lord.”** This is a grammatical plural; the Hebrew reads “lords,” but of course, it only refers to one “lord,” who is Elijah (cf. 2 Kings 2:3 and 2:5).

2Ki 2:20

**“small bowl.”** The Hebrew word is only used here and so the meaning is unclear. It seems to be a small bowl.

2Ki 2:21

**“from there.”** That is, from the waters of the spring.

2Ki 2:22

**“the word of Elisha that he spoke.”** Elisha spoke the words given to him by Yahweh (2 Kings 2:21).

2Ki 2:23

**“some youths.”** These were not young children, but young men who were undisciplined, ungodly, and dangerous. They started with mocking, but it would soon have been a very dangerous and even potentially lethal situation for Elisha. They knew who he was and in mocking him were knowingly mocking his God as well. Prophets are persecuted all the time, so this was no mere verbal persecution. Given the revelation God gave Elisha and his curse, Elisha would have almost certainly been killed.

2Ki 2:24

**“and mauled 42 of those youths.”** Elisha cursed the men and they were mauled by the bears.

2Ki 2:25

**“Samaria.”** This could be the region or the city; likely the region. It is unlikely that Elisha would go to the city of Samaria when Jehoram, an ungodly king, was reigning and Jezebel was still a powerful woman in the city.

**2 Kings Chapter 3**

2Ki 3:1

**“Now Jehoram the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel.”** The reigns of Jehoram (aka “Joram”) king of Israel and Joram (aka “Jehoram”) king of Judah need to be carefully tracked because both kings are called by both names, which can get very confusing indeed (see commentary on 2 Chron. 21:1).

2Ki 3:2

**“removed.”** Exactly what the king did with the standing-stone is unclear from the vocabulary. The text does not use a word for “destroyed,” Jehoram may have destroyed it or just moved it to a less prominent place.

**“standing-stone.”** Standing-stones were set up for various reasons, some of them being godly memorials, but here the context is pagan worship; the worship of Baal. Sometimes the stone represented the god, but sometimes the people believed the god actually inhabited the stone.

[For more on standing-stones, see commentary on Gen. 28:18. For more on idols being harmful, see commentary on Deut. 7:5.]

2Ki 3:3

**“from them.”** The Hebrew is singular, “from it,” bundling all the sins together as if they were one collective sin.

2Ki 3:4

**“Mesha.”** Mesha is mentioned in the Mesha Stele, also known as the Moabite Stone.[[1]](#footnote-18004) The Mesha Stele was found in Dibon in 1868, and it describes Moab’s revolt in 35 lines on a black basalt stone (56 x 32 in.). The inscription is important for biblical historical geography and the study of ancient languages. In the inscription, Mesha boasts of conquering cities and territory on the Medeba Plateau north of the Arnon River. He “made the highway through the Arnon,” a route that connects the Plateau to Moab proper.[[2]](#footnote-21370) Besides site names, Mesha mentions Omri king of Israel, Omri’s son, the tribe of Gad, the vessels of Yahweh, and the house of David. This is a significant reference to the Davidic dynasty, and by implication confirms that David was a real person. The inscription is one of only two known ancient extra-biblical references to David. The other reference is from the Tel Dan Inscription.[[3]](#footnote-30739) Both inscriptions date to just after 850 BC, over 100 years after David lived.

2Ki 3:7

**“He went *ahead* and he sent.”** Jehoram went ahead with his plans to attack Moab.

**“I will go up.”** Moab was up on a plateau to the east. Earlier King Ahab asked the same kind of thing and the battle ended in defeat (1 Kings 22:4).

2Ki 3:8

**“And he said.”** Who the “he” is here is ambiguous.

**“The Road of the Wilderness of Edom.”** This road runs north-south on the east side of Edom and Moab. At this time in history, Judah was controlling Edom (1 Kings 22:47), and it is possible that Moab was attacking Syria to the north and so their southern border was weak.

2Ki 3:9

**“flanking movement.”** The Hebrew word is related to “go around.” The idea was to get behind and to the east of Moab.

**“that followed them.”** The Hebrew text is idiomatic: “that was at their feet.”

2Ki 3:10

**“For Yahweh has called.”** Jehoram of Israel did not follow or obey Yahweh, but he somehow blames Him for Israel’s trouble.

2Ki 3:11

**“Is there not a prophet of Yahweh here.”** Very similar to 1 Kings 22:7.

**“who poured water on the hands of Elijah.”** Pouring water on the master teacher so he could wash his hands after eating was a humble act that showed the relationship between the two people.

2Ki 3:13

**“Do not *say that*, because Yahweh has called.”** Jehoram king of Israel is saying that it was Yahweh, Elisha’s God, who called for the war with Moab, even though Yahweh did not call the kings to war.

2Ki 3:14

**“respect the presence.”** This is idiomatic. The literal Hebrew text reads “lift up the face.”

2Ki 3:15

**“But now bring me a musician.”** The Hebrew word “musician” relates to someone who plays an instrument that has strings. Elisha had just boldly confronted the king of Israel, whose mother was likely Jezebel, the great enemy of Elijah, and the confrontation unsettled him. It is difficult to impossible to hear the gentle voice of God when you are upset or anxious, so Elisha apparently asked for a musician to play to calm him down. That apparently worked because right after that Elisha got the revelation about the water coming and making pools in the valley.

2Ki 3:16

**“this valley.”** Most likely this is one of the canyons going down from the heights of Edom down to the Rift Valley. Although most versions translate the verb as an imperative, “make this valley,” it is an infinitive, “the making of this valley into pools.” It would be very difficult to dig any kind of a trench or ditch in the canyons going down from the heights to the Jordan Valley because the rains washed most of the soil away and the bottom of the valleys are mainly rock. It makes much more sense that God is going to send water and it will pool up in places in the canyon.

**“pools, *many* pools.”** The word “pools” is repeated twice for emphasis and to show there would be a lot of them. The Hebrew text simply reads, “pools pools,” repeating the exact same word twice, which is the figure of speech repetitio, “repetition.”[[4]](#footnote-25941) Canyons and valleys have many places where water pools up after a heavy rain. There apparently had not been much rain, because even the animals and people needed water, but now there would be lots of water and pools of water in the valley.

2Ki 3:17

**“livestock and your animals.”** Livestock to eat and animals to carry burdens and to ride on.

2Ki 3:18

**“light thing.”** That is, an easy thing.

2Ki 3:19

**“You will strike.”** Here the prophet Elisha is foretelling what the Israelite, Judean, and Edomite armies will do, not what is the will of God for them to do.

2Ki 3:20

**“about the time of offering the grain offering.”** The fact that the water came at about the time that the grain offering was being offered at the Temple in Jerusalem was a sign that the water was from Yahweh and He was helping Israel and Judah win the war.

**“from the direction of.”** The Hebrew text is “by the way of Edom,” meaning from the east. It likely rained east of the army and the water ran down the valley from east to west.

2Ki 3:21

**“on the border.”** The southern border of Moab was the Arnon River valley.

2Ki 3:23

**“slain, yes, slain.”** The Hebrew text emphasizes the excitement of the Moabites at the thought that their enemies had destroyed one another by using the figure of speech polyptoton, the repetition of the verb but in different cases.

[See figure of speech “polyptoton.”]

2Ki 3:24

**“the land.”** The Hebrew is more literally “her,” but the land or cities in the land are often referred to as “her” or “she.”

2Ki 3:25

**“each man cast stones.”** The Hebrew is singular: “each man cast his stone,” but “stone” is likely a collective singular for stones because it would not be logical that each man cast just one stone on each piece of property. We use the collective singular if we say, “My house is made of stone.” It is really made of lots of stones.

**“Kir-hareseth.”** This was the capital city of Moab.

**“however, the men armed with slings went about it and struck it.”** The capital city of Moab did not fall to Israel, but the Israelite slingers were able to kill some of the people in the city.

2Ki 3:27

**“and offered him for a burnt offering on the wall.”** This is a very clear case of human sacrifice, which was more common among the nations of the ancient Near East than is portrayed in the Bible. The gods of the pagan nations were demanding and cruel, which is what we would expect from demonically inspired idols. Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmore write, “Classical sources report the frequent sacrifice of children in cities under siege in Phoenicia and its north African colonies.”[[5]](#footnote-20526)

**“There was great wrath against Israel.”** 2 Kings 3:27 is very difficult to understand. Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmore write, “This clause is one of the most perplexing items in Scripture.”[[6]](#footnote-23103) There have been many suggestions set forth as to what it means, but none are fully satisfying. It seems at first blush that because of the attack of Israel on Moab that there was great anger toward Israel, but how would that be connected to Israel returning to its own land, if in fact the two sentences are connected? We would expect that any country that was attacked and ruined would have great anger toward the aggressor nation, so why is that in the text here? There are no truly satisfying answers at this time. It does make sense that Israel would return to the land of Israel after they were through fighting Moab. After all, Yahweh told them that they could not have the land of Moab (Deut. 2:9).

**2 Kings Chapter 4**

2Ki 4:8

**“a prominent woman.”** The exact meaning of “prominent” is not clear. It could mean “wealthy,” but the woman could be prominent for other reasons.

2Ki 4:16

**“according to the time of life.”** The Hebrew text is literally, “according to the time of life” but that is considered an idiom, although it may be literal and refer to the time of pregnancy. Many scholars believe the phrase is an idiom and understand it to mean “next year,” but there is no universal agreement as to that being the meaning. Another potential meaning is in the spring of the year.

2Ki 4:18

**“And the boy grew.”** He was not yet old enough to work, so he was likely six or less.

2Ki 4:20

**“lap.”** The Hebrew is more literally “knees,” but it means “lap.”

2Ki 4:23

**“*All is* well.”** In the Hebrew text, the woman gives a one-word answer: *shalom*. “*Shalom*” means more than just “peace,” it means to be well, to be whole (and thus to have peace). It is really impossible to say exactly what the woman meant with so little context to go on. She could have meant “all is well” (ESV), or “it will be well” (NASB), or simply, “never mind” (NJB). Given the fact that the woman’s husband did not know the child was dead and the woman did not want to appear rude, the rendering “all is well” seems the most likely.

2Ki 4:24

**“made ready.”** The Hebrew word translated “made ready” is *chabash* (#02280 חָבַשׁ), and it means to tie, bind, bind on, bind up, saddle, restrain, bandage, govern. In the context of a camel, donkey, or horse it usually referred to putting something like a blanket in place so that it could be sat upon. Although the translation “saddle” is common in English versions, that is anachronistic and gives the wrong impression because the saddle even as a primitive saddle was not invented until much closer to the time of Christ, and the stirrup as we know it was not invented until after the biblical era.

2Ki 4:29

**“Tuck your cloak under your belt.”** This refers to the custom of a man tying up his long clothing so he could move more quickly. In the biblical culture of the Old Testament, both men and women wore long outer robes, with the man’s robe being slightly shorter than the woman’s robe. When men wanted to move quickly, they would take the bottom part of their robe and pull it up around their waist and secure it with a belt so that the bottom of the robe was a little shorter or longer than around the knees. This was called “girding up the loins.” 1 Peter 1:13 (KJV) says, “Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind,” basically meaning, “prepare for action.” The custom of girding the loins, or belting your cloak around your waist, can be seen in 2 Kings 4:29; 9:1; Job. 38:3; 40:7; Jeremiah 1:17; Isaiah 5:27; and 1 Peter 1:13 KJV).

**“take my staff in your hand.”** In this context, Elisha’s staff represented the authority and power of Elisha (see commentary on Exod. 4:20).

**“do not greet him.”** It was the common custom in the biblical world that greeting people and saying goodbye took a very long time, which is why when Elisha sent his servant Gehazi to heal a child, he told him not to greet anyone or return a greeting (2 Kings 4:29). It is also why, when Jesus sent his disciples out to evangelize, he told them not to greet anyone on the road (Luke 10:4). The ungodly religious leaders loved the elaborate greetings in the marketplaces (Matt. 23:7; Mark 12:38; Luke 11:43; 20:46).

2Ki 4:32

**“the child was dead and had been laid on his bed.”** It is worth noting here that the child was dead and on the bed. The child was not alive somewhere and only his body was on the bed. The “child” was dead.

[For more on the dead being dead and not alive anywhere in any form, see Appendix 3: “The Dead Are Dead.”]

2Ki 4:34

**“He bent down over him.”** The child was little, so Elisha could not stretch himself full length upon the child, but Elisha could get on his knees and bend the top half of his body over the child so that he matched the child more exactly, mouth to mouth, eyes to eyes, and hands to hands. The only other use of the word translated “bent down” is 1 Kings 18:42 when Elijah bent down and prayed to God to send rain on Israel.

2Ki 4:35

**“and walked in the house back and forth.”** The Hebrew uses the word “once,” but it is idiomatic, like “once here, once there,” in other words Elisha paced back and forth.

2Ki 4:37

**“bowed down.”** The common biblical way of bowing down before people or God was to fall to one’s knees and bow the upper body and face to the earth. The word translated “bowed down,” *shachah* (#07812 שָׁחָה), is the same Hebrew word as “worship.”

[For more on bowing down, see the word study on “worship.”]

2Ki 4:38

**“Gilgal.”** This is likely the Gilgal that is just north of Bethel, not the one close to Jericho.

**“there was a famine in the land.”** This is the same phrase as in Ruth 1:1. Israel had abandoned God in the time of Elijah and Elisha and famine was one of the signs of the judgment of God (Lev. 26:19-26; Deut. 28:23-24, 38-42). When people abandon God they open themselves up to the cruel attacks of the Devil. A nation that defies God will suffer many hardships.

[For more on famines, see commentary on Ruth 1:1.]

2Ki 4:39

**“but they did not know what they were.”** Ordinarily, people would not put plants that they did not recognize into a stew for people to eat—some are poisonous while most others are simply not good tasting or nutritious. But this was a famine, so the man who gathered the gourds took a risk, thinking that at worst they would taste bad but would fill their stomachs. In this case, however, the man made a bad decision because the gourds were poisonous as we learn in 2 Kings 4:40.

2Ki 4:40

**“there is death in the pot!”** This is a case of God saving the lives of the prophets by giving them revelation that the food was poisonous. The stew may have tasted bad, but many things that taste bad are not deadly. To be sure that the stew was deadly, they would have had to have revelation from God. The phrase, “as they were eating” in this context means “as they began to eat.” It is not like halfway through the meal God finally told the prophets they were eating poisonous food. God told them just as they started to eat.

God is a God of grace and mercy, and we see that in this record. God’s mercy covered the prophets when the cook took a risk and put an unknown gourd into the stew, and God’s grace covered them when He told Elisha what to do to heal the stew and healed it by a miracle so that the prophets had food in the famine.

2Ki 4:41

**“And there was nothing harmful in the pot.”** This is a genuine miracle. God told Elisha what to do and Elisha obeyed so God healed the stew. Putting flour into a poisonous stew will not heal it without a miracle from God. The Hebrew word translated “harmful” is more literally “evil,” but in this case, it means “harmful.”

2Ki 4:42

**“Baal-shalishah.”** This is usually identified as a site in the Western Samarian foothills.

**“and brought the man of God bread from the firstfruits.”** It is noteworthy that this man brings the firstfruits of the grain harvest to Elisha and not to Bethel, which was the chief center of worship for Samaria. This man recognized that the way to honor God was to honor the true follower of God.

**“20 loaves of barley *bread.”*** This is possibly a sign the famine is breaking and more food was becoming available. A “loaf” of bread is about like a pancake, and 20 pancakes are not much for a hungry crowd of men.

2Ki 4:43

**“They will eat, and will have some left over.”** This parallels Jesus’ feeding of the 5,000 and the 4,000 because in both those times Jesus fed the multitude and there was some left over.

**2 Kings Chapter 5**

2Ki 5:1

**“commander of the army of the king of Syria.”** This is the same phrase as in Joshua 5:14, where it says “the commander of the army of Yahweh.”

**“lord.”** The Hebrew uses a grammatical plural, “lords.”

**“because by him Yahweh had given victory to Syria.”** This is a wonderful and inclusive statement because it shows that Yahweh will help others besides just Israel. We don’t know a lot about the personal lives of the people of Syria and how godly or ungodly they were; they certainly worshiped idols. But they were not under a covenant to obey God. In any case, here we see Yahweh helping the Syrians in their battles.

**“but he was a leper.”** It is interesting that Naaman was a leper but in full service to the king and in the army. According to the Mosaic Law, that would never be allowed in Israel. Lepers were isolated.

2Ki 5:2

**“and she became a servant to Naaman’s wife.”** The Hebrew is idiomatic: “she was before Naaman’s wife.”

2Ki 5:3

**“cure.”** This is not the normal word for “heal.” It is the normal word for “gather,” and the girl likely means it in the sense of “taking away” the leprosy.

2Ki 5:4

**“told his lord.”** Naaman’s “lord” was the king of Syria, as per 2 Kings 5:5. This is a grammatical plural, “lords,” but it means “lord.”

**“Thus and so.”** This is an American idiom for the Hebrew idiom, “Like this and like this,” which is an idiom for just communicating the sense of the message. Naaman told the essence of what the girl said to his lord the king of Syria.

2Ki 5:5

**“Go now.”** That is, go to Israel.

**“a letter to the king of Israel.”** Naaman and the king did not understand that the king of Israel did not have the power of Yahweh to heal, but the prophet of Yahweh did if he had the revelation to do it.

**“ten talents of silver and 6,000 shekels of gold.”** That is roughly 750 pounds (340 kg) of silver, and 150 pounds (68 kg) of gold. The word “shekels” is not in the text with the word “gold,” but the shekel was a standard measure for gold and would have been used here, so there was roughly150 pounds (68 kg). The large amount of silver and gold shows how important a man Naaman was in the kingdom of Syria.

2Ki 5:6

**“the king of Israel.”** Jehoram was reigning over Israel at this time (cf. 2 Kings 3:6).

**“saying.”** It was the letter that was “saying,” but the text assumes the reader understands that.

**“cure.”** See commentary 2 Kings 5:3.

2Ki 5:11

**“I thought.”** Many times what we think God will do stops us from receiving what God wants to do for us. That was almost the case with Naaman, but thankfully the officers in his army intervened.

**“come out, yes, come out.”** The verb is repeated twice for emphasis in the figure of speech polyptoton (see commentary on Gen. 2:16).

**“the leper.”** Naaman refers to himself in the third person.

2Ki 5:12

**“Abanah.”** A river that flows down from the Anti-Lebanon mountains through Damascus. The modern name is the Barada River.

**“Pharpar.”** A river that flows down from the Anti-Lebanon to just south of Damascus. The modern name is the Awaj.

2Ki 5:13

**“his servants.”** In this context, Naaman’s “servants” are the officers under him, just as earlier in the chapter Naaman himself was called the “servant” of the king of Syria.

“**my father**.” Here used as “mentor” and “guide.”

[For more information on the uses of “father” in the Bible, see commentary on Gen. 4:20. For information on the disciples of a Rabbi being called his “sons,” see commentary on Matt. 12:27. For information on the disciples of a Rabbi being called “orphans” if the Rabbi died or left the area, see commentary on John 14:18, “orphans.”]

2Ki 5:14

**“seven times.”** The revelation of the man of God was to wash seven times. Naaman would not have been healed until his obedience was complete. He was not a little healed the first time he dipped, and a little more the second time. He was not healed at all until he dipped the seventh time, then he came up totally healed. Expect God’s promises to be fulfilled when we have fully obeyed Him. Jesus referred to this healing in Luke 4:27.

2Ki 5:15

**“stood before him.”** Elisha was likely sitting. That Naaman stood before him showed respect and recognition of one of higher authority.

**“a gift.”** The Hebrew is literally “a blessing,” but it is used idiomatically for a gift.

2Ki 5:16

**“before whom I stand.”** Naaman stood before Elisha, but Elisha stood before God, the ultimate authority. In this context, “before whom I stand” means “whom I serve.”

**“he urged him to take it.”** Naaman would have been embarrassed to return to Syria without giving something for the healing he received, so he would have seriously urged Elisha to take it all, or at least something, but Elisha stood firm and took nothing.

2Ki 5:17

**“two muleloads of dirt​.”** The belief at the time was that the various gods lived in specific places on earth. That is why when Jonah got a revelation from Yahweh he did not want to obey, he left Israel. Jonah thought that by leaving the land of Israel he could get away from Yahweh. In contrast, Naaman wanted to worship Yahweh, but how could he do that in Syria? The answer was to take some of the land of Israel back with him to Syria and worship Yahweh on the dirt from Israel.

[For more on people believing that different gods lived in different places on earth, see commentary on 1 Kings 20:23.]

2Ki 5:18

**“the house of Rimmon.”** That is, the temple of Rimmon. The god Rimmon is the same as the Syrian god Hadad (cf. Zech. 12:11).

**“worship...bow down...bow down.”** The Hebrew word translated both “worship” and “bow down” in this verse is *shachah* (#07812 שָׁחָה).” *Shachah* is translated as both “bow down” and “worship;” traditionally “worship” if God is involved and “bow down” if people are involved, but the verb and action are the same, the act of bowing down is the worship. The common biblical way of bowing down before people or God was to fall to one’s knees and bow the upper body and face to the earth. It is important to understand that “worship” in this context is to bow down, but bowing down does not indicate the posture of the heart. Many hypocritical Israelite kings bowed down like they were worshiping but had no intention of obeying God. This verse could, and even perhaps should, be translated, “when my master goes into the house of Rimmon to worship there and he leans on my hand and I worship in the house of Rimmon. When I worship in the house of Rimmon, may Yahweh pardon your servant in this thing.” A translation like that would help Bible students see that it was not the vocabulary word “worship” that made the worship sincere or just a motion without sincerity, but it was the posture of the heart that determined whether there was real “worship” or not. The act—the bowing down—could be done sincerely or insincerely, and it is up to the reader to be sensitive to the context and determine the posture of the heart of the person who bowed down. English versions differ in how they translate 2 Kings 5:18. There are some that have “bow down” in all three places (cf. NIV), but very few, if any, that have “worship” in all three places. Most have “worship” for the king of Syria but “bow down” for Naaman, trying to show that the king of Syria did worship but Naaman only bowed down without actually mentally worshiping.

[For more on bowing down, see the word study on “worship” and commentary on 1 Chron. 29:20.]

2Ki 5:19

**“a little way.”** This phrase only occurs here and in association with the burial of Rachel (Gen. 35:16; 48:7).

2Ki 5:20

**“said.”** That is, said to himself.

2Ki 5:21

**“got down.”** The Hebrew is literally, “fell down,” and has the implication that Naaman got down quickly.

2Ki 5:24

**“fortified part *of the city*.”** The Hebrew word is *ophel* (#06076 עֹפֶל), and it has a semantic range that includes a hill, mound, fort, stronghold, and citadel. Although most English versions read “hill;” other English versions have “elevated fortress” (CEB); “tower” (KJV); and “citadel” (NKJV, NLT, NRSV). In the Bible and other literature from the ancient Near East, there is an *ophel* in Samaria, the capital of Israel; in Jerusalem, the capital of Judah; and in Dibon (cf. the Moabite Stone). The noted Jewish archaeologist Yigael Shiloh defined *ophel* as an urban architectural term denoting the outstanding site of the citadel or acropolis.”[[7]](#footnote-29134)

It makes sense that Elisha would live in the fortified part of his city, and that Gehazi would have the Syrian men put down their loads and Gehazi take them from that point on. If Syrian soldiers went into the fortified part of the city, word of that would get around and uncomfortable questions would be asked.

**“and they departed.”** The servants of Naaman who carried the silver and garments left to go back and rejoin Naaman as he traveled back to Syria.

2Ki 5:25

**“lord.”** The Hebrew is a grammatical plural, “lords,” but it refers to Elisha.

**“Your servant did not go anywhere.”** The Hebrew is more literally, “Your servant went neither here nor there.”

2Ki 5:26

**“and olive groves, and vineyards, and sheep, and cattle.”** These would have been purchased with the silver.

**2 Kings Chapter 6**

2Ki 6:1

**“live before you.”** The Hebrew is literally, “live before you,” and in this context “before you” means “under your oversight,” “under your charge,” etc., (cf. ESV). The reading “live before you” might be taken to mean that they lived close by where Elisha lived, and that meaning is not necessarily correct.

2Ki 6:5

**“the log.”** That is, the man was cutting down the tree that would become the log that the man wanted, so he was said to be cutting down the log he wanted.

**“Oh no, my lord! It was borrowed!”** This could also be translated, “Oh no! O my lord *Elisha*, it was borrowed!” We do not know exactly how the man said it.

2Ki 6:6

**“whittled down a stick.”** The Hebrew does not use the common words that mean “cut down” or “chop down” as if Elisha just chopped a branch off the tree and threw it in the water. He took a stick and whittled down the end so it would fit in the ax head and then threw the stick into the water. The miracle is that the stick went right into the hole in the ax head and stuck firmly enough that the stick with the ax head floated to the surface. The Bible does not give us a hint as to how far from the bank of the Jordan the ax head fell, but depending on how hard the man was swinging the ax it could have been quite a ways out.

There is possibly a shadow of comparison here in 2 Kings 6:6 between Moses and Elisha. After the Exodus, when Israel came to Marah, the water was too bitter to drink, so Yahweh showed Moses a stick to throw into the water so the water would be drinkable and help Israel out of a difficult situation (Exod. 15:25). Here Elisha throws a stick into the Jordan River to help one of the prophets under Elisha out of a difficult situation.

2Ki 6:8

**“servants.”** In this context, the “servants” are his top military commanders, just as Naaman was the servant to the king (2 Kings 5:6).

2Ki 6:9

**“the king of Israel.”** Jehoram was reigning over Israel at this time (cf. 2 Kings 3:6).

2Ki 6:10

**“not once or twice.”** The idiom means many times.

2Ki 6:14

**“So he sent horses, chariots.”** These horses and chariots are no match for the horses and chariots of fire sent by Yahweh (2 Kings 6:17).

2Ki 6:18

**“blindness.”** This is a kind of mental blindness. See commentary on Genesis 19:11. The word for “blindness” is more literally a “blinding light.”

2Ki 6:19

**“Samaria.”** Samaria was the capital city of Israel and was well fortified and had Israelite troops in it.

2Ki 6:21

**“the king of Israel.”** Jehoram was reigning over Israel at this time (cf. 2 Kings 3:6).

**“My father.”** Here used as “mentor,” “guide,” or perhaps better here, “authority.”

[For more information on the uses of “father” in the Bible, see commentary on Gen. 4:20. For information on the disciples of a Rabbi being called his “sons,” see commentary on Matt. 12:27. For information on the disciples of a Rabbi being called “orphans” if the Rabbi died or left the area, see commentary on John 14:18, “orphans.”]

**“should I strike them down, should I strike them down?”** The king of Israel is very excited here.

2Ki 6:22

**“Would you strike down those whom you have taken captive?”** Elisha is asking Jehoram if he would kill people he had taken captive, the obvious answer being “no.”

**“bread and water.”** This is an understatement for a meal or a feast (cf. 2 Kings 6:23).

**“lord.”** A grammatical plural; literally “lords” but meaning “lord,” i.e., the king of Syria.

2Ki 6:23

**“the raiding bands of Syria stopped coming.**” The actions of Elisha stopped the raiding parties that had come into Israel from Syria, but that did not long preclude full-scale war between the two countries, as we see in 2 Kings 6:24.

**“lord.”** A grammatical plural; literally “lords” but meaning “lord,” i.e., the king of Syria.

2Ki 6:25

**“dove’s dung.”** This is almost certainly not actual dove’s dung, but is idiomatic for something that no one would normally eat. The NET text note points this out: “Based on evidence from Akkadian, M. Cogan and H. Tadmor suggest that ‘dove’s dung’ was a popular name for the inedible husks of seeds.”[[8]](#footnote-14976) The NIV follows this idea, and reads, “and a quarter of a cab of seed pods for five shekels.” The NJB has “wild onions” instead of “dove’s dung,” but that is an assumption. It has also been suggested that a “donkey’s head” was not the actual head of a donkey but was some other inedible thing, but there is less evidence for that than there is for the dove’s dung.

2Ki 6:26

**“the king of Israel.”** Jehoram was reigning over Israel at this time (cf. 2 Kings 3:6).

2Ki 6:28

**“What is troubling you?”** The Hebrew text is idiomatic, “What to you,” meaning, “What is your problem,” “What is wrong?” The idiomatic Hebrew explains why the English versions differ so greatly.

**“Give your son, that we may eat him today.”** Parents eating their children was part of the curse for disobeying Yahweh (Deut. 28:53).

2Ki 6:29

**“another day.”** Although most versions say “the next day,” the Hebrew word means “another.”

2Ki 6:31

**“May God do so to me, and more also.”** This is a curse formula. If literally fulfilled, Jehoram was saying that if Elisha was still alive at sunset, which was the start of the new day in Jewish time, then Jehoram should be executed. Of course, he never honored his statement.

**“if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat is left standing on him.”** This is an abrupt turnaround from Jehoram’s behavior in 2 Kings 6:20-23, when king Jehoram listened and apparently honored Elisha. But Jehoram was an ungodly man who did evil in the sight of Yahweh (2 Kings 3:1-2), and he was the son of Ahab and Jezebel (2 Kings 3:1; 9:22), so idolatry ran deep in his family and heritage. Although when he started to reign he put a stop to some of the outright worship of Baal, by the end of his life his kingdom was rife with Baal worship, which Jehu tried to end (2 Kings 9:21-26; 10:18-28).

Jehoram seemed to have governed his life like his father Ahab did; weak-willed and emotionally unstable, he acted on the way he was feeling at the time rather than on well-thought-out principles and practices. He likely thought that if he had killed the army of Syria when he had the chance that this attack would not have happened, and since Elisha advised him not to kill them, this siege and famine was his fault.

2Ki 6:32

**“the king.”** The Hebrew text is literally just “he,” but “the king” is inserted for clarity in English.

**“lord’s.”** This is a grammatical plural, but the reference is to the king of Israel.

2Ki 6:33

**“the messenger came down.”** Some English versions read “the king came down,” which seems to make more sense, but the Hebrew text reads “messenger.” If it is the messenger, he speaks the words of the king.

**2 Kings Chapter 7**

2Ki 7:1

**“a shekel.”** A shekel was roughly .4 ounces (11 or 11.5 grams). See commentary on Genesis 24:22, “shekel.”

2Ki 7:2

**“the officer.”** The Hebrew is “the third,” which was a military term that applied to an officer, but exactly why they were called “the third” is not clear.

**“on whose hand the king leaned.”** Naaman apparently had this position sometimes (2 Kings 5:18).

2Ki 7:6

**“the kings of the Hittites and the kings of the Egyptians.”** The Hittites would have been attacking from the north while the Egyptians would have been attacking from the south, so God made the Syrians hear the sound of a large army coming from both north and south. So the Syrians headed east to the Jordan River so they could get across it and head back through the Golan Heights (biblical Gilead and Bashan) to get back to Syria. (2 Kings 7:15).

2Ki 7:7

**“and their horses and their donkeys.”** In their panic, the Syrians could not think straight and left their fastest way to escape tied up in the camp. Panic creates mental blindness. It is a mark of mental maturity and control that people in difficult situations control their emotions and their fear so that they think clearly.

**“lives.”** The Hebrew reads “life,” using the collective singular for all the Syrians, but we say “lives” in English.

2Ki 7:8

**“it.”** The Hebrew is singular referring to all the treasure as one pile of loot.

2Ki 7:9

**“punishment will overtake us.”** The Hebrew can also be translated even more literally as “iniquity will find us.” Sometimes the word “iniquity” referred to the punishment for iniquity, and the idea that evil would “find” the sinner was a common idiom. 2 Kings 7:9 shows that the lepers were conscious of not doing what was right by keeping all the food and goods for themselves. These lepers could have been bitter at God and the kingdom for their disease, but instead, they show good conscience and end up doing what is right.

**“the king’s house.”** That is, the palace, which would mean the king and those in it.

2Ki 7:10

**“nor even the sound of a man.”** The lepers could not find anyone, nor could they hear anyone.

2Ki 7:13

**“in the city.”** The Hebrew is simply “in it,” referring to in the city.

Some scholars think that there has been an accidental doubling of the Hebrew text through dittography, reading and copying a line twice. The [NET text note](https://classic.net.bible.org/verse.php?book=2Ki&chapter=7&verse=13&tab=commentaries) says that the Hebrew text has been doubled. But the Masoretic Hebrew text may not have been doubled. It is different enough that it carries a different meaning.

2Ki 7:15

**“Then the messengers returned.”** It would have taken the men from Samaria a number of hours to reach the Jordan River and then return to Samaria. It was more than 20 miles (32 km) to the Jordan and depending on the route may have been 25 miles (40 km). Plus, although the trip from Samaria was downhill, the trip home to Samaria was a climb of over 2,000 feet (600 m). So due to the trip of over 40 miles, although it was night when the chariots left Samaria, it was almost certainly light when they arrived back, and at that time the people of the city would have been awake and, starving for food, would have charged out of the city to get food and goods from the Syrian camp.

2Ki 7:17

**“just as the man of God had spoken, just as he had spoken.”** This is a little awkward in English, but it emphasizes the point here, that it was the word of Yahweh that came to pass exactly as the man of God had spoken it.

**2 Kings Chapter 8**

2Ki 8:1

**“the woman whose son he had restored to life.”** This woman is the Shunamite woman (2 Kings 4:18-37).

**“Arise and go, you and your household, and stay for a while wherever you can stay, for Yahweh has called for a famine.”** It is not known exactly when Elijah said this to the woman, but it had to have been fairly early in the 12-year reign of King Joram of Israel (2 Kings 3:1).

**“and it has *now* come on the land.”** The famine that Israel was experiencing could well be the famine in the previous chapter. That would mean that the two chapters occur at the same time, but were written one after the other.

2Ki 8:2

**“She went with her household and stayed in the land of the Philistines for seven years.”** At first glance, this seems to be incongruous, that this woman would go to the Philistine territory. But there may have been some kind of alliance or loose alliance between Samaria and the Philistines. After all, when Ahaziah was sick, he sent to find out from Baalzebul, the god at Ekron, a capital city of the Philistines, if he would recover (2 Kings 1:2).

2Ki 8:3

**“to cry out.”** This phrase is used idiomatically here, and is used for supplication, such as when Israel cried out to God when they were slaves in Egypt.

2Ki 8:4

**“Now the king was talking with Gehazi the servant of the man of God.”** King Ahaziah of Israel died after reigning for only two years (1 Kings 22:51; 2 Kings 1:17), and his brother Jehoram (aka “Joram”) became king and reigned 12 years (2 Kings 3:1). Ahaziah was evil and worshiped Baal, just as his father Ahab had done. Jehoram also did evil (2 Kings 3:2). It was likely due to the evil that had been practiced in Israel for many years that there was a seven-year famine in Israel (2 Kings 8:1-6). Elisha warned the Shunamite woman to move to a different area and avoid the famine, and so for seven years the woman and her household moved west to the coast of Israel where the Philistines lived and then returned to Israel. The famine could have happened in the early years of Jehoram, in which case the record of the Shunamite woman coming to the king to get her land (2 Kings 8:1-6), could have, and must have come chronologically before 2 Kings 5, when Gahazi was struck with leprosy (2 Kings 5:27). As a leper, Gahazi would never have been allowed to get close enough to King Jehoram to have the conversation that is described in 2 Kings 3.

Interestingly, the timing of the events involving both Elijah and Elisha is not well recorded, even though it could have been. That tells us that God wants us to focus on what they did and not when they did it.

2Ki 8:9

**“40 camel-loads.”** The king of Syria was wealthy in the extreme, and it was customary to give a gift to a prophet when you asked for a prophecy or prediction of the future. Although Elisha refused the gift from Naaman (2 Kings 5:15-16), he apparently took this gift from the king of Syria, although no mention is made of what he did with it. A load of goods that required 40 camels to carry it, at several hundred pounds of stuff per camel, would have made Elisha fabulously wealthy if he kept it all.

**“your son.”** In this context, “son” is used idiomatically as a term of endearment, someone who respects the other. Ben-hadad, king of Syria, was not Elisha’s son, nor a disciple of Yahweh. He worshiped pagan gods, but he respected Elisha and knew of the power that he had shown.

2Ki 8:10

**“live, yes, live’...die, yes, die.”** The Hebrew text uses the figure of speech polyptoton for emphasis. The verbs “live” and “die” are each repeated twice but in different cases, the first verb is an infinitive and the second is an imperfect. The repetition emphasizes the irony here. Hazael is to tell king Ben-hadad that he will live, but in fact, he will die at the hands of Hazael himself, who will smother the king to death.

[For more on polyptoton and the way it is translated in the REV, see commentary on Gen. 2:16.]

2Ki 8:11

**“he was embarrassed.”** The text is not clear as to who was embarrassed, Elisha or Hazael.

2Ki 8:12

**“their little ones you will dash in pieces, and their pregnant women you will split open.”** These are cruel and heartless acts.

2Ki 8:13

**“you will be king over Syria.”** Yahweh had told Elijah to anoint Hazael as king over Syria (1 Kings 19:15), but it is never recorded that Elijah got to follow through and do that.

2Ki 8:14

**“lord.”** The word “lord” in this verse is a grammatical plural, “lords” but it is referring to one lord and is translated that way in the versions. It sometimes happens in Hebrew that a singular word like “lord” is pluralized, and that is done for different reasons, such as emphasis or to magnify the person, although the reasons may not be immediately apparent.

**“you will live, yes, live.”** Hazael quotes Elisha (see 2 Kings 8:10).

2Ki 8:16

**“Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah began to reign.”** This is showing the co-reign between Jehoshaphat and Jehoram.

2Ki 8:17

**“He was 32 years old when he began to reign.”** This is parallel to 2 Chronicles 21:5.

2Ki 8:18

**“just as the house of Ahab had done.”** In this context, the “house” of Ahab is the dynasty of Ahab. One king after another worshiped idols and committed other sins. This is a terrible indictment of Jehoram, who was the son of a godly king.

**“because he had the daughter of Ahab as a wife.”** Athaliah was the granddaughter of Omri (2 Kings 8:26), and a daughter of Ahab (2 Kings 8:18), but Athaliah was likely not the daughter of Jezebel or it seems the text would have made that point, instead she was likely the daughter of one of the other wives of Ahab. As the mother of Ahaziah, when Ahaziah was killed by Jehu, Athaliah took control of the throne of Judah, the only break in the Davidic dynasty from David to Jehoiachin and the suspension of the throne of David. The Bible had warned that if a man married a pagan wife that his heart might turn from Yahweh (Deut. 17:17; 1 Kings 11:3

2Ki 8:19

**“a lamp for his children.”** The “lamp” is the man in the line of David who is ruling as king on David’s throne. The metaphorical ‘lamp’ symbolizes the Davidic dynasty. In 2 Samuel 21:17, David’s men referred to him as the “lamp” of Israel, and so it makes sense that his descendants in the Davidic Dynasty are also referred to as lamps (see commentary on 1 Kings 11:36). The “lamp” is a symbol of life and hope. In this context, David’s “children” refer primarily to the one who would be on the throne, but the whole royal family would be blessed by a Davidic ruler.

2Ki 8:20

**“In his days Edom revolted.”** Here the Author makes a point that unfaithfulness to Yahweh leads to political instability.

**“under the hand of Judah.”** An idiom for under the authority of Judah.

**“enthroned a king over themselves.”** The Hebrew is more literally something like, “they kinged themselves a king.”[[9]](#footnote-12069)

2Ki 8:21

**“Joram.”** The Hebrew text has “Jehoram,” a variant of Joram.

**“Zair.”** This is likely the town of Zoar that Lot fled to (Gen. 19:22).

**“his army.”** The Hebrew text reads “people” instead of army, but that becomes unclear in English. Joram’s “people” in this context is his army. Joram made an attack on Edom, but it was of limited success because his army deserted him and went back to Israel, and so Edom’s revolt was successful.

2Ki 8:22

**“So Edom revolted from under the hand of Judah.”** Joram had more problems than just Edom and Libnah. We learn from 2 Chronicles 21:16-17 that the Philistines attacked from the west and the Arabians from the east, and they even sacked Joram’s palace and took away captive his wives and children.

**“Libnah.”** Libnah was a Levitical city in the Shephelah of Judah (Josh. 10:29-39; 21:13). The exact location of the city is disputed. This could well be a revolt of Judeans who were not happy with the rule of Jehoram, king of Judah, and took advantage of the fact that he was occupied with trying to subdue Edom and rebelled against him. Then, given Joram’s continued problems with outside invaders such as the Philistines and Arabians, he never seems to have regained control over Libnah, which was a powerful fortified city in its own right. Libnah was significant enough that it is mentioned in 2 Kings 19:8 as being attacked by the Assyrian king, Sennacherib. Later in Judah’s history, Josiah’s wife Hamutal came from Libnah (2 Kings 23:31; 24:18).

2Ki 8:23

**“the Book of the Chronicles.”** This is recorded in 2 Chronicles 21.

2Ki 8:24

**“Ahaziah his son reigned in his place.”** Ahaziah reigned over Judah with his evil mother Athaliah, of the house of Ahab, being the apparent power behind the throne, and she took over when Ahaziah died. In Matthew’s genealogy from Abraham to Christ, Ahaziah and Joash were skipped, and the genealogy goes from Joram to Uzziah (Matt. 1:8).

2Ki 8:25

**“Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah began to reign.”** This Ahaziah is not the same as Ahaziah the king of Israel (cf. 1 Kings 22:51; 2 Kings 1:2). Also, this Ahaziah, king of Judah, is called Azariah in 2 Chronicles 22:6.

2Ki 8:26

**“a *grand*daughter.”** The Hebrew word is “daughter,” but she would have been one of the granddaughters of Omri. There is no Hebrew word for “granddaughter” or “grandson,” just simply “daughter” or “son.” The same with “grandmother” or “grandfather,” which is why the Bible speaks of “our father Abraham” when Abraham would have been a distant ancestor. When the text uses “father,” “mother,” “son,” or “daughter” the exact relationship has to be determined from the context.

Athaliah was the granddaughter of Omri (2 Kings 8:26), and a daughter of Ahab (2 Kings 8:18), but Athaliah was likely not the daughter of Jezebel or it seems the text would have made that point, instead she was likely the daughter of one of the other wives of Ahab. Nevertheless, although her mother was likely not Jezebel, as a girl growing up in the palace of Ahab and Jezebel she would have been schooled in evil and in the pagan ways of worship, and also schooled against Yahweh. This all played out when her son Ahaziah was killed and she took over as queen and killed off all of the royal family except for Joash (2 Kings 11:1-3).

2Ki 8:27

**“He walked in the way of the house of Ahab.”** In this context, the “house of Ahab” was the dynasty of Ahab, which actually started with King Omri (1 Kings 16:21-22). The lineage was Omri, then Ahab (1 Kings 16:28-29), then Ahaziah (1 Kings 22:40), then Ahaziah’a younger brother Joram (2 Kings 1:17; 3:1; 9:24). With the death of Joram (also called Jehoram), the dynasty of Omri came to an end and Jehu began to reign as king over Israel.

**“house of Ahab.”** Joram was Ahaziah’s younger brother. Athaliah, Jehoram’s wife, was the granddaughter of Omri (2 Kings 8:26), and a daughter of Ahab (2 Kings 8:18), but Athaliah was likely not the daughter of Jezebel or it seems the text would have made that point, instead she was likely the daughter of one of the other wives of Ahab. So Ahaziah’s mother was Athaliah of the house of Ahab.

2Ki 8:28

**“Joram the son of Ahab.”** That is, Joram the king of Israel.

2Ki 8:29

**“at Ramah.”** This is another name for Ramoth-gilead (2 Kings 8:28).

**2 Kings Chapter 9**

2Ki 9:1

**“Elisha the prophet called.”** Years before this, Elijah the prophet had been instructed to anoint Jehu as king of Israel (1 Kings 19:16). It was accomplished through his disciple and agent, Elisha.

**“Tuck your cloak under your belt.”** The literal Hebrew is “belt up your loins.” This refers to the custom of a man tying up his long clothing so he could move more quickly. See commentary on 2 Kings 4:29.

**“go to Ramoth-gilead.”** The combined armies of Israel and Judah were not able to conquer Ramoth-gilead, but they were fighting there, which is why Jehu, a commander in the army of Israel, was there. Joram was the current king of Israel, but the fighting over Ramoth-gilead had been on and off for years. A previous king, Ahab, had been mortally wounded there (1 Kings 22:35)

2Ki 9:2

**“Jehu.”** This name likely means “He is Yahweh.” Yahweh is announcing that He will bring an end to the idolatrous house of Omri. Jehu is famously mentioned and depicted on the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III, called “Jehu, the son of Omri.” Assyrian kings called Israel “Omri Land” because of his dominance and dynasty. Since Jehu killed the last member in the dynasty of Omri and became king, it seems appropriate that the Assyrians would call him “the son of Omri,” even though there was no blood connection between Omri and Jehu. Jehu was Yahweh’s agent of judgment against Baalism and the dynasty of Omri-Ahab. Nevertheless, the biblical text expresses reservations about him, and one reason for that was he still followed the sin of Jeroboam, namely, the worship of the golden calves at Bethel and Dan.

**“Nimshi.”** The name “Nimshi” has been found on two storage-vessel potsherds at Tel Rehov in the Beth-Shean Valley. They have been dated to approximately the same period as the biblical Jehu. Of course, there is no way to know if this is the same person as Jehu’s grandfather mentioned here in 2 Kings 9:2, but it shows that Nimshi was a known name at that time.

**“an inner room.”** The Hebrew is idiomatic: a room within a room.

2Ki 9:7

**“You are to strike down the house of Ahab.”** Ahab was long dead, so this is one of the places where “the house of Ahab” clearly refers to the dynasty of Ahab, which was more properly the dynasty of Omri, Ahab’s father. The revelation here goes back to Ahab and not Omri almost assuredly because of the attack of Ahab and Jezebel on the servants of Yahweh.

**“lord.”** The word “lord” in this verse is a grammatical plural, “lords” but it is referring to one lord and is translated that way in the versions. It sometimes happens in Hebrew that a singular word like “lord” is pluralized, and that is done for different reasons, such as emphasis or to magnify the person, although the reasons may not be immediately apparent.

**“so that I avenge the blood of my servants.”** God “avenges” his servants, He does not take “revenge.” To “avenge” is to serve the ends of justice and the motive is to vindicate the victim or visit merited justice upon the wrongdoer. To take “revenge” is to get satisfaction for an offense, to pay back someone who is thought to have done wrong or harm, and thus “revenge” may well overstep true justice.

2Ki 9:8

**“who pisses against a wall.”** A crass idiom and cultural way of referring to the men.

**“him who is slave or free in Israel.”** The same phrase is used in 1 Kings 14:10 and 1 Kings 21:21 (see commentary on 1 Kings 14:10).

2Ki 9:9

**“I will make the house of Ahab like.”** The “house” of Ahab refers to the dynasty of Ahab, although it was actually the dynasty of Omri, who started it. It is called the “house (dynasty) of Ahab” because Ahab was the most prominent king in the dynasty. Here in 2 Kings 9:9, the prophet Elisha prophesies that the dynasty of Ahab would be like the dynasty of Jeroboam and the dynasty of Baasha, which were both totally killed off. The house of Ahab lasted for four kings and was killed off by Jehu. The “house” (dynasty) of Ahab consisted of Ahab’s father Omri (1 Kings 16:23, to 1 Kings 16:26), Ahab (1 Kings 16:26, 29, to 1 Kings 22:40), Ahab’s son Ahaziah (1 Kings 22:51, to 2 Kings 2:17), and Ahaziah’s younger brother Joram (also spelled “Jehoram,” who became king because Ahaziah had no sons) (2 Kings 2:17, to 2 Kings 9:22). The dynasty of Omri/Ahab was killed off by Jehu (2 Kings 9:24, 30-33; 10:4-7, 11, 17).

**“house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat.”** The “house of Jeroboam” was the dynasty of Jeroboam I, the first king of Israel, which lasted for only two kings and consisted of Jeroboam himself (1 Kings 12:20, to 1 Kings 14:20), then Nadab his son (1 Kings 14:20; 15:25, to 1 Kings 15:28). The dynasty of Jeroboam was killed off by Baasha (1 Kings 15:27-30).

**“house of Baasha the son of Ahijah.”** The “house of Baasha” was the dynasty of Baasha, which lasted for only two kings and consisted of Baasha (1 Kings 15:28, 33, to 1 Kings 16:6), then Elah his son (1 Kings 16:6, 8, to 1 Kings 16:10). The dynasty of Baasha was killed off by Zimri who was a chariot commander under Elah (1 Kings 16:11).

2Ki 9:10

**“As for Jezebel, the dogs will eat her.”** In a culture where family ties were strong and family tombs common, to not have anyone bury your dead body was considered a terrible curse. In fact, many people believed (falsely, but it was a very widely held belief) that a proper burial was important for a comfortable existence in the afterlife. Thus the threat of not being buried but having one’s dead body eaten by animals, birds, and vermin was a horrifying threat of unspeakable loneliness and rejection, both on this earth and in the afterlife (see commentary on Jer. 14:16).

2Ki 9:11

**“lord.”** The Hebrew is a grammatical plural, “lords.” Jehu’s “lord” was Jehoram, king of Israel.

**“Is it peace?”** This is an idiom, meaning, “Is all well.” Ironically, the word “peace” is throughout this chapter, but the chapter is about war and bloodshed, there is no “peace.” The word “*shalom*,” the Hebrew word translated “peace” but more accurately refers to wholeness, wellness, or prosperity (which things usually result in “peace” or being peaceful) occurs nine times in this chapter (2 Kings 9:11, 17, 18 (2x), 2 Kings 9:19 (2x), 2 Kings 9:22 (2x) and 2 Kings 9:31).

2Ki 9:12

**“This is what Yahweh says: I have anointed you king over Israel.”** The context of this seems like Jehu is trying to play down what the prophet said. He did not walk out and tell the other commanders, “I am king.” Apparently, Jehu was still trying to wrap his head around what the prophet said and did, but the other commanders immediately recognized the need for his leadership and his ability and pronounced him king right then and there.

2Ki 9:13

**“cloak.”** The Hebrew uses a general word for a piece of clothing, but it would have almost certainly been the cloak or outer garment that the men laid down.

**“shofar.”** The ram’s horn trumpet, not the metal trumpet.

2Ki 9:14

**“Joram.”** The Hebrew text goes back and forth in the spelling of the king’s name, and gives no reason for it. Here in 2 Kings 9:14 he is called Joram, but in 2 Kings 9:15 he is “Jehoram” in the Hebrew text, but the English text spells it “Joram” for clarity.

2Ki 9:15

**“Joram.”** The Hebrew text uses his longer name here: Jehoram.

**“your desire.”** The Hebrew uses “soul” (*nephesh*) as “desire” here.

[For more on nephesh being used for a desire of the mind or a thought, see Appendix 16: “Usages of ‘Soul.’”]

**“to go to tell it in Jezreel.”** At this time, both King Joram and Queen Jezebel were in Jezreel, and if they heard about Jehu they would form a quick response.

2Ki 9:16

**“rode in a chariot and went to Jezreel.”** This would not be an easy ride. Down from the Golan Heights, across the Jordan River, and into the plain of central Israel.

**“had come down.”** From Jerusalem to Jezreel was down in elevation.

2Ki 9:17

**“on the tower in Jezreel.”** This watchman would be on the east tower (or northeast corner tower) looking down the Harod Valley toward the Jordan River. Looking in that direction he could see Jehu coming up the valley from the east.

**“Is it peace?”** An idiom (cf. 2 Kings 9:11).

2Ki 9:18

**“but he is not coming back.”** The messenger was coming back, but as part of Jehu’s men.

2Ki 9:20

**“furiously.”** Or perhaps, “in a crazy way.”

2Ki 9:22

**“Is it peace?”** See commentary on 2 Kings 9:11.

**“the prostitutions.”** Jehu is referring to the idolatries of Jezebel. Jezebel’s many idols, and her enlistment of demons to do her evil work, which was her “witchcraft” (or “sorceries”), assured that there would be no peace in Israel for anyone who loved the true God.

2Ki 9:24

**“Jehu drew his bow with his full strength.”** The Hebrew text is idiomatic: “Jehu filled his hand with the bow.” The phrase means that Jehu took the bow and shot at Joram, whom he hit in the middle of the back. The arrow had enough force to go through King Joram’s robes and on through his heart, resulting in almost instant death.

2Ki 9:25

**“pronouncement.”** The Hebrew word can also mean “burden.” The word of the Lord can be a burden to the prophet, and then, when it is spoken, can be a burden to the people. It might have been more clear in English to say “burdensome message” instead of “burden,” but the Hebrew word is “burden.”

[For more information on “burden,” see commentary on Mal. 1:1.]

2Ki 9:27

**“Ahaziah the king of Judah.”** Both Joram and Ahaziah are mentioned on the Tel Dan Stele, which is a fragmentary Aramaic inscription on three pieces of basalt stone found in excavations of an Iron Age gate at Dan. The largest piece, 14.5 x 10 inches, was found in 1993. Two smaller pieces were found in 1994.

The inscription on the stele is an extraordinary parallel to the biblical narrative. Although the personal names of the kings of Judah and Israel are fragmentary, their titles are complete. The Aramean king (Hazael) boasts of killing both Jehoram…the king of Israel and Ahaziahu …of the House of David. The name of both kings are fragmentary: “[Jeho]**ram** son of [Ahab]” and “[Ahaz]**iah** son of [Jehoram]” (Heb. [יהורם] יהו בר[אחז] ,[אחאב] רם בר[יהו]. Although it was Jehu who actually killed these two kings, it is not without some justification that Hazael the king of Syria could take responsibility for the killing. Hazael’s successful attacks against Israel (2 Kings 10:32-33) allowed him to set up this stele and make his boast, and it was due to his fighting at Ramoth-gilead that Jehu had the opportunity to kill the kings. On the other hand, it was customary for ancient kings to greatly exaggerate what they accomplished, and this is an example of that.

Archaeological evidence, the language of the inscription, and the stele’s content help date the inscription to just after the purge of Jehu in 841 BC. At this time the king of Aram (Syria) could claim a victory over both the king of Israel (Joram) and the house of David (represented by King Ahaziah). Like the Moabite Stone, the Tel Dan Inscription takes on added significance since it mentions the house of David, furnishing extra-biblical evidence for the existence of the Davidic Dynasty.

**“he fled.”** So Ahaziah is fleeing south toward Samaria from the Jezreel Valley.

**“Beth-haggan.”** The word means “House of the Garden.” It is modern Jenin in the West Bank.

**“*Kill* him too!”** The Hebrew text is just “him too,” but it is in the context of killing the house of Ahab. Elijah had foretold the destruction of the house of Ahab, and the house of Ahab was tied by marriage to the house of Ahaziah. King Ahaziah of Judah had married Athaliah, who was a granddaughter of Omri and daughter of Ahab, kings of Israel, and thus some of Ahaziah’s sons were also related by blood to the house of Ahab, which was foretold to be destroyed (cf. 2 Kings 9:9).

**“and he fled to Megiddo.”** Once struck by the arrow, Ahaziah turned west and got to Megiddo where he could get help and protection, but he died there.

2Ki 9:28

**“with his fathers.”** Ahaziah’s ancestors were still in the tomb. It was not considered that they left.

[For more on the dead being dead and not alive in any form, see Appendix 3: “The Dead are Dead.”]

2Ki 9:30

**“When Jehu came to Jezreel.”** It is likely that Jehu chased Ahaziah and then returned to Jezreel.

**“she prepared her eyes with eye makeup.”** When Jezebel heard Jehu had come to Jezreel, she did her best to look pleasing. Although she may have done this to try to win his favor, she may also have wanted to look her best whatever her fate. She used eye makeup, which was common for women to do. Eye makeup occurs several times in the Bible (e.g., 2 Kings 9:30, Jer. 4:30; and one of Job’s daughters is called “Keren-happuch” which likely means “horn of eye paint” (Job 42:14)). Eye makeup was commonly used by women (and men in some cultures) to make the eyes look darker and larger.

The Hebrew phrase is difficult to bring into English because it involves actions and vocabulary that are more idiomatic than literal. A more literal translation of the Hebrew text is “and she set her eyes in the *pnkh*.” But “setting her eyes in” gives the wrong impression; it is idiomatic for her “putting on” her *pnkh*, her makeup. The word *pnkh* (#06320 פּוּךְ) is a noun that refers to a type of antimony-based eye makeup.

C. F. Keil writes that *pukh* “is a very favorable eye-paint with oriental women even to this present day.[[10]](#footnote-12008) It is prepared from antimony ore…which, when pounded yields a black powder with a metallic brilliancy, which was laid upon the eyebrows and eyelashes either in a dry state as a black powder, or moistened generally with oil and made into an ointment, which is applied with a fine smooth eye pencil of the thickness of an ordinary goose-quill, made either of wood, metal, or ivory. The way to use it was to hold the central portion of the pencil horizontally between the eyelids, and then draw it out between them, twisting it round all the while, so that the edges of the eyelids were blackened all round; and the object was to heighten the splendour of the dark southern eye, and give it, so to speak, a more deeply glowing fire, and to impart a youthful appearance to the whole of the eyelashes even in the extreme old age. Rosellini found jars with eye-paint of this kind in the very early Egyptian graves…”[[11]](#footnote-20645)

**“and adorned her head.”** There is general agreement among scholars that this refers to arranging her hair, but whether she added jewelry or other ornaments is unknown.

2Ki 9:31

**“As Jehu entered the gate.”** It is not known whether this is the outer gate to the city or some unlocated inner gate.

**“Zimri.”** Jezebel’s calling Jehu by the name “Zimri” is the figure of speech antonomasia, “name change,” where a person is called by a name other than his or her own name in order to import characteristics from that other person. Zimri killed the king to be king, but then only reigned for seven days (1 Kings 16:8-15). Jezebel called Jehu “Zimri” in an attempt to scare him into not killing her because of the implied threat of being killed soon himself. For more on antonomasia, see commentary on Matthew 17:10.

**“of his lord.”** The Hebrew is a grammatical plural, “lords,” but the plural is used for emphasis. Zimri killed his lord, the king, and Jezebel wanted Jehu to remember that.

2Ki 9:32

**“eunuchs.”** The word can mean “official,” but here it likely does mean eunuch, since eunuchs were used to guard the royal women.

2Ki 9:33

**“some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall and on the horses.”** For some of the blood to splatter on the horses Jehu had to be close to where Jezebel fell.

2Ki 9:34

**“cursed woman.”** The “curse” is likely referring to Elijah’s prophecy about her (1 Kings 21:23).

2Ki 9:36

**“the word of Yahweh that he spoke by his servant Elijah.”** See 1 Kings 21:23.

**2 Kings Chapter 10**

2Ki 10:1

**“70 sons.”** Some of these would be grandchildren, but still, Ahab had quite a harem.

**“Samaria.”** Samaria was the capital city of the country.

2Ki 10:2

**“lord.”** This is a grammatical plural, literally, “lords,” but made plural for emphasis (see also 2 Kings 10:3, 6).

2Ki 10:3

**“lord.”** Literally, “lords” (2x), see commentary on 2 Kings 10:2.

2Ki 10:5

**“the one who was Over the House.”** “Over the House” was the title of the palace administrator (see commentary on 1 Kings 4:6).

**“the one who was Over the City.”** That is, the mayor or governor of the city. This title would be similar to “Over the House.”

**“and the guardians of the children​.”** That is, those men and women who were charged with raising and teaching the royal children.

2Ki 10:6

**“lord’s.”** This is a grammatical plural, “lords’ sons.” See commentary on 2 Kings 10:2.

**“and come to me at Jezreel by tomorrow.”** Jehu was forcing the leaders in Samaria to act quickly. The journey from Samaria to Jezreel was some 20 miles, so to fulfill the terms of Jehu the leaders at Samaria did not have time to develop a plan for any kind of counterattack.

**“prominent.”** The Hebrew is “great,” which in this context is “great” in the sense of prominent.

2Ki 10:10

**“For Yahweh has done what he spoke by his servant Elijah.”** This prophecy was given by Elijah in 1 Kings 21:21-22.

2Ki 10:11

**“Jehu struck down all that remained of the house of Ahab in Jezreel.”** It is unclear whether Jehu killed all the male and female descendants of Ahab or just the men. He killed off Ahab’s descendants and close associates in Jezreel (2 Kings 10:11), then went to Samaria and killed off Ahab’s descendants there (2 Kings 10:17). But the text never specifically states if he killed both the men and women, and sometimes the women were left alive. The prophecy was that Ahab’s dynasty would be destroyed like the dynasty of Jeroboam and the dynasty of Baasha (cf. 2 Kings 9:9). When Baasha wiped out the dynasty of Jeroboam the indication is that he killed off all the men and the women who were descended from Jeroboam (1 Kings 15:29), but when Zimri wiped out the dynasty of Baasha, the indication of the text is that he only killed off the men (1 Kings 16:11). So it is unclear whether Jehu killed both the men and women of Ahab, or just the men.

[For information on the dynasties of Jeroboam I, Baasha, and Omri, see commentary on 2 Kings 9:9.]

2Ki 10:12

**“Beth-eked of the Shepherds.”** The versions are divided as to whether this is a place name, “Beth-eked,” or a description, more like, “when he was at the place that the shepherds tie the sheep [for shearing]….” The word “eked” refers to binding or tying up, and the sheep were tied up when they were sheared so they would not wiggle and get hurt. The weight of evidence seems to be that “Beth-eked” was the name of a place, but it would have gotten the name because it was the place where the sheep were shorn.

2Ki 10:13

**“brothers.”** In this context, “brothers” can mean, and probably does mean, relatives, not actual brothers.

**“pay our respects.”** The Hebrew is an idiom, literally, “seek the peace.” In this context it means to pay one’s respects or in that context, to visit with. These men were relatives of Ahaziah king of Judah, but because of the close ties between Judah and Israel at this time, they were going north to visit the relatives of King Joram of Israel and Jezebel, the queen mother.

**“queen mother.”** The Hebrew word translated “queen mother” is *gebereth* (#01404 גְּבֶרֶת), and in this context, the “queen mother” is the mother of the king.[[12]](#footnote-10387) The queen mother was the most powerful woman in the kingdom, much more powerful than any of the wives of the king, who often did not have much real power at all. That relatives of King Ahaziah, king of Judah, were going to see Jezebel the queen mother shows how much power and influence Jezebel had in the Kingdom of Israel.

2Ki 10:14

**“42 men.”** It is no accident that the specific number 42 is given, and this is the same number as the number of the young men who accosted Elisha and were attacked by bears (2 Kings 2:24). The numbers loosely connect Elijah and Elisha with the fulfillment of the prophecy of the destruction of the house of Ahab, which was tied by marriage to the house of Ahaziah. King Ahaziah of Judah had married Athaliah, who was a granddaughter of Omri and daughter of Ahab, and thus some of his sons were also of the house of Ahab, which was foretold to be destroyed (cf. 2 Kings 9:9).

2Ki 10:16

**“they had him ride.”** The Hebrew text reads “they.” The Septuagint, Syriac, and Aramaic Targum reads “he,” but that may not be original. There were other people in Jehu’s party that would have wanted Jehonadab to ride with Jehu.

2Ki 10:17

**“all who remained to Ahab.”** The word of Yahweh is recorded in 1 Kings 21:21.

2Ki 10:21

**“house of Baal.”** That is, the temple of Baal, just as the “house of Yahweh” is the temple of Yahweh. This temple, as well as Ahab’s palace, sat on Samaria’s acropolis. Herod later built a temple to Augustus more or less over it. When the palace/temple area was excavated in the early 1900s, there was a building discovered that could well be the temple of Baal, but the practice was to fill in each area or strip excavated with the next strip, so the remnants of the Israelite palace/temple are now covered up again.

**“the worshipers of Baal.”** The Hebrew is technically “those serving Baal,” but the word has the meaning of to worship by serving.

**“not a man left.”** The culture would be that this worship would be men only, not a mixture of men and women.

2Ki 10:22

**“And he said to the one who was Over the Wardrobe.”** It is likely that “Over the Wardrobe” is a title and thus should be translated “Over the Wardrobe,” in the same way that the administrator who was over the king’s palace was called “Over the House” (see commentary on 1 Kings 4:6). Everett Fox (The Schocken Bible) translates the phrase “Over the Wardrobe.”

2Ki 10:23

**“went.”** The subject is compound, Jehu and Jehonadab, but the verb is singular (see commentary on Gen. 48:16).

**“Then he said.”** This refers to Jehu, who was in charge.

2Ki 10:25

**“the mouth of the sword.”** Used to show great destruction, as if the sword was eating its victims (see commentary on Josh. 6:21).

**“cast them *aside*.”** The guards did not take time to deal with the dead bodies other than to get them out of the way.

**“went into the interior of the house.”** The Hebrew word translated “interior” is the usual word for “city.” Although there is no other place that “city” is used for the interior of the temple, it is logical that it was. Just as the city was a place of life and business, the inner part of the temple was where much of the life of the temple occurred. For example, in the next verse, 2 Kings 10:26, it seems clear that there were standing-stones in the inner part of the temple

2Ki 10:26

**“standing-stones.”** Standing-stones were set up for various reasons, some of them being godly memorials, but here the context is pagan worship. Standing-stones would often be set up as part of the worship of pagan gods, and God has no tolerance for idols. They are harmful in many different ways and are to be destroyed. Although usually the standing-stones were made of stone, this may be a case when the Hebrew word is used but the “standing-stone” was a pillar made of wood. Or it is quite possible that the standing-stones were burned. Often the most effective way of destroying a standing-stone was to get it very hot in a fire and then pour cold water on it so that it would crack in pieces.

[For more on standing-stones, see commentary on Gen. 28:18. For more on idols being harmful, see commentary on Deut. 7:5.]

**“the house of Baal.”** The temple of Baal.

2Ki 10:27

**“demolished the standing-stone.”** Following the decree of Deuteronomy 7:5.

**“the house of Baal.”** That is, the temple of Baal.

2Ki 10:29

**“the golden calves which were in Bethel and in Dan.”** It seems that Jehu and others somehow connected the worship of Yahweh with the worship of the golden calves. Thus their worship was misplaced. Christians do the same kind of thing today when they worship traditional things that are not God or the Lord Jesus, for example, Mary.

2Ki 10:30

**“your sons will sit.”** The word “sons” here refers to descendants, not direct sons of Jeroboam. The four kings that followed Jehu were Jehoahaz (2 Kings 13:1), Jehoash (2 Kings 13:10), Jeroboam II (2 Kings 14:23), and Zachariah (2 Kings 15:8). Zachariah was killed by Shallum, who was not a descendent of Jehu and who was killed after only reigning one month (2 Kings 15:13-15). It is noteworthy that none of the four descendants of Jehu were said to worship Baal, whom Jehu destroyed from Israel, yet all of them were said to do evil in the eyes of God and follow the sins of Jeroboam I, just like Jehu did (2 Kings 10:31).

2Ki 10:32

**“Hazael.”** Hazael was the king of Syria. That Hazael struck Israel is the context of the Tel Dan inscription, an inscription found at Tel Dan by archaeologists as they excavated Dan, on which Hazael boasts victories over Israel. Syria was dominant over Israel for the next 40 years. Unlike Hazael of Damascus, Jehu had submitted to the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III (c. 841 BC). However, within a matter of a few years, Shalmaneser III became preoccupied with matters in the east of Assyria and was unable to keep pressure on Damascus. That meant that Hazael of Syria was free to harass Israel once again. Since he viewed Jehu as an Assyrian ally, Hazael conquered all of Israel’s territory in Transjordan, including Bashan, Gilead, and the Plateau as far as the city of Aroer on the edge of the Arnon River (2 Kings 10:32-33). Thus, the Israelite tribes of Manasseh, Reuben, and Gad in Transjordan came under Syrian occupation. While the book of Kings portrays Hazael as an instrument of Yahweh for disciplining Israel, the prophet Amos later contended that the Syrian kings were overly cruel in their conquests of Transjordan: “This is what Yahweh says: For three transgressions of Damascus, yes, for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron” (Amos 1:3).

2Ki 10:34

**“mighty acts.”** The Hebrew just reads “might,” but it is a metonymy for the things Jehu did with his might, his “mighty acts.”

[See figure of speech “metonymy.”]

2Ki 10:35

**“they buried him in Samaria.”** There have been some chambers found beneath the Israelite palace in Samaria.[[13]](#footnote-16443)

**2 Kings Chapter 11**

2Ki 11:1

**“Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah...set out to destroy all the royal seed.”** Ahaziah the king of Judah had been killed by Jehu (2 Kings 9:27-29). Athaliah, the Queen-mother, took that opportunity to kill all the “royal seed,” which would mean all of Ahaziah’s children, but could include Ahaziah’s extended family as well, thus including brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews. Ahaziah’s wives are not mentioned, likely because Athaliah’s killing them would have been expected. After all, if Athaliah killed her grandchildren, she would have killed their mothers as well.

The horrific ungodliness of Athaliah can be seen in this one act, and there were surely many more. What grandmother murders all her own grandchildren just so she can have a position of power? No wonder the people of the land rejoiced when she was finally executed. This event is history, but in a sense it is not just ancient history but is also a lesson for us today because people like Athaliah are alive in every generation and they need to be dealt with harshly if society is going to be peaceful and safe.

2Ki 11:2

**“Joash.”** The Hebrew text uses both spellings of his name, “Joash” and “Jehoash.” Joash became the king of Judah.

**“and *hid* them in a bedroom.”** It is possible that Jehosheba hid Joash and his nurse in a bedroom in the palace until she could sneak him into a room in the Temple, or it is possible that this bedroom was one of the priest’s bedrooms in the Temple. Solomon’s Temple had three stories of side rooms along the sides of the Temple, and one of the things they would have been used for was to house the priests who came from out of town to serve in the Temple (1 Kings 6:5).

2Ki 11:3

**“And he was with her, hiding in the house of Yahweh for six years.”** Athaliah obviously had little or nothing to do with the Temple of Yahweh. She was likely a Baal worshiper and spent time at the temple of Baal (2 Kings 11:18).

2Ki 11:4

**“the Carites.”** The word “Carites” seems to be an alternative spelling of “Cherethites,” who were part of David’s army and were likely bodyguards. They may have been foreign mercenary soldiers, but their origin and identity are not known. What is known is that they were fiercely loyal to David, and were with him in times of crisis, for example, in Absalom’s rebellion (2 Sam. 15:18) and in Sheba’s rebellion (2 Sam. 20:7). They were also at Solomon’s anointing as king (1 Kings 1:38). Their leader was Benaiah son of Jehoiada (2 Sam. 8:18), who was also the leader of David’s bodyguard (2 Sam. 23:23). From 2 Kings 11:4 we learn that they apparently stayed as an intact group and as part of the army of the king long after David.

2Ki 11:5

**“This is the thing that you are to do.”** Exactly what Jehoiada commanded the priests to do is not clear, even though it was obviously well planned. The Hebrew text leaves some things unexplained, but it seems from 2 Kings 11:5-9 that Jehoiada had the priests that were coming on duty at the Temple divide into thirds and guard the palace (the king’s house) (2 Kings 11:5-6). Meanwhile, the priests who were coming off duty did not leave the Temple but stayed there and guarded the Temple (2 Kings 11:7-8). Jehoiada then armed the priests with weapons that were stored in the Temple so they could protect Joash, the seven-year-old descendant of David who was to be anointed king (2 Kings 11:10).

**“the king’s house.”** The palace. Jehoiada was coordinating protection for little Joash around both the palace and the Temple of Yahweh (2 Kings 11:7).

2Ki 11:6

**“the Sur Gate.”** The word “Sur” means to go out; to remove. In 2 Chronicles 23:5, this gate seems to be called the Foundation Gate. The Sur Gate and the gate behind the guards (called the Guard Gate in some versions) seem to be gates leading from the Temple to the palace. Athaliah would have had soldiers in the palace with her, and stationing guards at the Sur Gate and Guard Gate made sure they did not get into the Temple to harm the young king.

**“to keep watch over the house to defend.”** In this context, this “house” seems to be the Temple, because that is what these guards guarded (2 Kings 11:7-8, 11), although some scholars believe it refers to Athaliah’s palace.

2Ki 11:7

**“the house of Yahweh.”** The Temple. 2 Kings 11:5-6 were about the palace, while this verse is about the Temple, where the young King Joash was.

2Ki 11:8

**“when he goes out and when he comes in.”** An idiom and the figure of speech polarmerismos, where two extremes are put for all that comes between them. The idiom means “all the time.”

[For more on polarmerismos, see commentary on Josh. 14:11.]

2Ki 11:9

**“going on duty...going off duty.”** The Hebrew text is much more brief and expects the reader to understand the social context and that these were priests who served in the Temple. Thus, the Hebrew reads more like “those who were to go in on the Sabbath and those who were to go out.” But going in referred to going into the Temple to serve, in other words, going on duty to serve, while going out referred to leaving the Temple and going off duty. Many modern versions clarify this for the English reader.

2Ki 11:10

**“the spears and shields that had been King David’s.”** After Solomon died, during the reign of Solomon’s son Rehoboam, Pharaoh Shishak of Egypt attacked Judah and sacked it. He took all the gold weapons from the Temple (1 Kings 14:25-26). However, for there to be shields and spears from the time of David in the Temple at the time of Jehoiada, Pharaoh Shishak must have left them, likely because they were wood and bronze and not gold or silver.

2Ki 11:11

**“from the south side of the house to the north side of the house.”** The “house” is the house of God, the Temple, and the Temple faced east, so the right side was south and the left side was north. Thus the sentence is saying, “from the south side of the Temple to the north side of the Temple, on behalf of the king.”

**“in front of the altar.”** If the priests stood at the altar and the house, the altar would have been behind their protective wall of men, leaving the space between the Temple and the altar for Jehoiada to come out and present the king.

2Ki 11:12

**“the testimony.”** That is, the scroll of the Mosaic covenant.

**“*Long* live the king!”** The Hebrew text is idiomatic and contains an expression that can be loosely translated, “Let the king live.” This idiom gets translated into an English equivalent, “Long live the king.” Note that the King James Version, done in 1611, has an earlier equivalent phrase, “God save the king.”

2Ki 11:13

**“in the house of Yahweh.”** In this context, “in the house of Yahweh” meant in the outer court of the Temple. The “house of Yahweh,” in this context referred to the whole Temple complex. It included the Temple building itself and a courtyard that had the altar, the lavers, Solomon’s sea for washing, etc., and the whole complex was surrounded by a wall. Athaliah went through the outer gate into the Temple where the people were, but could not get behind the line of armed men to be where Jehoiada and the new king were.

2Ki 11:14

**“the king stood by the pillar as the custom was.”** The “pillar” in the Temple by which Joash stood would have been either Jachin or Boaz, but the exact custom is no longer known (1 Kings 7:15-22). The Hebrew word translated “custom” is more literally “law,” but this was a custom that became so fixed it was thought of as a law. Nevertheless, it was not a law of Moses or David, but was a custom that over time acquired the strength of a law.

**“all the people of the land rejoiced.”** It is obvious from this that Athaliah was not liked as a ruler. She must have been a terrible tyrant.

**“Treason! Treason!”** This is the ultimate hypocrisy. Athaliah became ruler because her son was dead and she was cunning and cruel enough to seize power and kill everyone she could find who could have been a legitimate ruler (2 Kings 11:1). She was the one who committed treason, but typical of evil and narcissistic people, she accused others of the treason that she herself committed. Jehoiada was a godly priest who protected the line of David and sought to restore the kingship to the rightful king.

2Ki 11:15

**“Bring her outside of the Temple, to the ranks.”** The priests/soldiers who were taking Athaliah out of the Temple were the “ranks” who would then execute her.

2Ki 11:16

**“So they seized her.”** The Hebrew reads, “So they laid hands on her,” but that can be misunderstood in English.

**“and when she went through the way that horses enter the king’s house, she was put to death there​.”** So Athaliah was put to death just outside the Temple, and likely near the gate that led inside her palace enclosure in Jerusalem. She would have been executed in the palace courtyard, not in the palace itself. Athaliah deserved the death penalty. At the very least she was guilty of the murder of the royal seed, the descendants of the king (2 Kings 11:1; cf. 2 Chron. 22:10).

2Ki 11:17

**“between Yahweh and the king and the people.”** In this covenant, “the king and the people” are one party of the covenant and Yahweh is the second party.

2Ki 11:18

**“his altars.”** So the temple of Baal had more than one altar to Baal.

**“*Jehoiada* the priest.”** The Hebrew text simply says, “the priest,” but in this context that refers to the head priest in this situation, Jehoiada.

**“arranged for oversight of the house of Yahweh.”** The word “oversight” is a feminine noun. Although it is translated as “officers” or “guards” in many versions, that is not its actual meaning. The New Jerusalem Bible captures the sense of the text: “The priest made arrangements for the security of the Temple of Yahweh.”

2Ki 11:19

**“brought the king down from the house of Yahweh.”** This is geographically accurate. The palace of the king is south and downhill from the Temple of Yahweh. Yahweh’s Temple faced east, so the palace and the king’s throne would be on the right hand of Yahweh (cf. Ps. 110:1).

**“the throne of the kings.”** This refers to the throne of the kings in the Davidic dynasty. In this instance, the use of the plural “kings” could refer to the essence of the kings, and so some versions translate it as “royal throne” (cf. NET, NIV, NLT).

2Ki 11:20

**“quiet.”** The Hebrew means, “quiet, at rest.” Athaliah’s reign of terror had kept everyone in a state of fear. Now people could live in peace. The New Testament directs believers to pray for their leaders so the people can lead peaceful lives (1 Tim. 2:2).

**2 Kings Chapter 12**

2Ki 12:1

**“Jehu.”** Jehu was reigning as king over Israel; Jehoash was now reigning as king over Judah.

**“Jehoash.”** Jehoash, king of Judah, is also called “Joash,” which is a variant of the name “Jehoash” (cf. 2 Kings 11:2). He was the son of King Ahaziah, who was killed by Jehu, king of Israel.

**“his mother’s name was Zibiah of Beer-sheba.”** Zibiah is only mentioned here and in Chronicles, where she is described as the mother of Jehoash. Nothing is known about her or how Ahaziah the king met her, but she would have been one of his wives. Since Jehoash and his nurse, not Jehoash and his mother Zibiah, were the two people hidden by Ahaziah’s sister Jehosheba (2 Kings 11:2), Zibiah would have been one of the royals who were killed by Athaliah when she grabbed the throne. Athaliah would not have allowed any of the wives of Ahaziah to live because any children they bore might have become a contender for her position as queen.

2Ki 12:2

**“Jehoiada the priest.”** Jehoiada lived to be 130 years old (2 Chron. 24:15).

2Ki 12:3

**“the *local* shrines.”** The Hebrew word “shrines” is *bamot*, which referred to a place that was leveled and built up and on which were placed various idols and objects of worship. Many of the towns had such shrines (see commentary on Num. 33:52).

2Ki 12:5

**“treasurer.”** The meaning of the Hebrew word is unknown, but something such as “treasurer” is suggested by the Ugaritic. The English versions vary greatly.

2Ki 12:9

**“guarded the threshold.”** An older term for guarding the gate.

2Ki 12:11

**“carpenters.”** More literally, “carvers of wood.” They were likely responsible for the decorative carvings on the Temple.

2Ki 12:12

**“masons.”** This is more literally, “wall builders.”

2Ki 12:17

**“then Hazael set his face to go up against Jerusalem.”** There is more detail in 2 Chronicles 24:18ff, explaining that this attack is due to Jehoram’s sin.

2Ki 12:18

**“so that he went away from Jerusalem.”** The writer of Kings did not mention that the Syrians killed all the leaders in Judah before they left (2 Chron. 24:23).

2Ki 12:20

**“at Beth-millo.”** This is someplace in or around Jerusalem, but the exact location is unknown, as is the identity and location of Silla.

2Ki 12:21

**“his servants.”** This would be the use of “servants” that refers to officers or officials. Jozacar the son of Shimeath and Jehozabad the son of Shomer killed Jehoash because he killed the son of Jehoiada the High Priest (2 Chron. 24:25).

**“Amaziah.”** Amaziah is also called “Uzziah.”

**2 Kings Chapter 13**

2Ki 13:4

**“entreated the face of Yahweh.”** Idiomatic for sought the favor of Yahweh.

2Ki 13:5

**“Yahweh gave Israel a savior.”** The Bible does not say who the savior is, and scholars have different opinions.

It is worth noting that this person is a “savior,” but is certainly not the Messiah. God “saves” Israel via different “saviors,” but they are human saviors.

**“as before.”** The Hebrew is idiomatic: “as yesterday *and* the day before.”

2Ki 13:6

**“the house of Jeroboam.”** The “house” of Jeroboam in this context is his dynasty.

2Ki 13:7

**“For he did not leave to Jehoahaz.”** The “he” refers to Yahweh (2 Kings 13:5). Yahweh did not fight for Israel so they were destroyed by the king of Syria.

**“army.”** The text reads “people,” but in this context, it refers to the people in the army, not the general population of the country.

2Ki 13:10

**“Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz began to reign over Israel.”** The book of Chronicles does not cover the kings of Israel, so Jehoash of Israel is not written about in Chronicles except in his war with, and defeat of, Amaziah, king of Judah (2 Chron. 25:17-28). However, Jehoash is mentioned again in 2 Kings 14.

2Ki 13:12

**“are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel?”** The event is 2 Chronicles 25:17-28, and also in 2 Kings 14:8-14. It is worth noting that Amaziah king of Judah lost the battle because he turned to pagan gods (2 Chron. 25:20).

2Ki 13:13

**“Jeroboam.”** This is Jeroboam II, not Jeroboam I, the Jeroboam who was the first king of Israel who reigned at the time of Solomon’s son Rehoboam (1 Kings 12:20).

2Ki 13:14

**“Joash the king of Israel.”** The text now goes back in time and captures an incident that occurred during the life of king Joash. It sometimes happens that events in the Bible are not in chronological order and that is the case here. Joash was recorded as dead in 2 Kings 13:13. It is somewhat ironic that Joash the king of Israel weeps over Elisha, but the king of Judah does not.

**“in his presence.”** The Hebrew is idiomatic. Literally, “wept over his face,” meaning Joash wept in his presence.

**“My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen!”** King Joash recalled how Elijah was taken from Elisha (2 Kings 2:12). The Hebrew text is exactly the same for Elijah and Elisha.

2Ki 13:16

**“mount on the bow.”** Elisha uses the unusual term “mount” or “ride,” which is likely an allusion to the military victory Elisha would like Israel to have over Syria.

2Ki 13:17

**“you have finished them off.”** The Hebrew text has no “you,” so the text just says, “until an end to them.” So is it that “you” have put an end to them, or until “they are finished off?” The text is unclear and could really refer to both.

**“the Syrians in Aphek.”** Aphek is likely where the Syrians were headquartered at this time. Unfortunately, there is more than one “Aphek,” and the scholars debate which one is meant here.

2Ki 13:20

**“And Elisha died, and they buried him.”** It is interesting that the text does not give us the location where Elisha was buried. In that, Elisha is again like Elijah, because we do not know where Elijah was buried either.

**“Now the raiding bands of the Moabites.”** It would have made the text easier to understand if this sentence had been put as the first sentence of 2 Kings 13:21. This is a case of putting the verse break in the wrong place.

2Ki 13:21

**“came alive.”** The Hebrew is more literally, “lived.” “He lived and stood up on his feet.”

2Ki 13:22

**“all the days of Jehoahaz.”** This is going quite a few years back in time.

2Ki 13:23

**“turned his face toward them.”** This is an idiom for “showed concern for them.”

2Ki 13:24

**“Ben-hadad.”** This is Ben-hadad III, and this is about 800 BC.

2Ki 13:25

**“Then Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz returned and took...Joash struck him three times and recovered the cities.”** In this verse, the same king is called both Jehoash and Joash, the longer and shorter versions of the same name. There is no known satisfactory explanation for why the Hebrew text uses both names in the same context.

**2 Kings Chapter 14**

2Ki 14:3

**“David his father.”** This is the use of “father” as “ancestor.”

**“He did according to all that Joash his father had done.”** This sentence is expressing a positive thing about Amaziah, that he did what Joash his father did, but did not walk with God as perfectly as David had done. Thus, like with Joash, the local shrines were not taken away (2 Kings 12:2-3).

2Ki 14:4

**“only the *local* shrines.”** The Hebrew word “shrines” is *bamot*, which referred to a place that was leveled and built up and on which were placed various idols and objects of worship. Many of the towns had such shrines (see commentary on Num. 33:52). Amaziah, like his father Joash, did not remove the pagan shrines (2 Kings 12:2-3).

2Ki 14:6

**“the Law of Moses.”** The Hebrew is “the *torah* of Moses,” where “*torah*” is much more than “law.” The *torah* involves instruction in many different ways (see commentary on Prov. 1:8). The reference in the Law is Deuteronomy 24:16.

2Ki 14:7

**“Joktheel.”** The name means “the blessedness of El (God).”

2Ki 14:8

**“Come, let’s look one another in the face.”** In this context, this is an idiom and is an invitation to war (cf. 2 Kings 14:11). To fight the Edomites Amaziah hired fighters from Israel to join his Judean troops, but sent them home because of the guidance of a prophet. However, on the way home, the Israelite warriors attacked towns of Judah. In part because of that, and in part because of his pride after winning the war with Edom, Amaziah now wishes to attack Israel. It is doubtful he wanted territory; it is more likely he wanted money as retribution for the damage done to the towns of Judah. However, Amaziah had brought back pagan gods from Edom and was worshiping them (2 Chron. 25:14-16), and so the favor of Yahweh was no longer with him, and Israel defeated him in battle.

2Ki 14:13

**“And Jehoash king of Israel captured Amaziah...the son of Jehoash, the son of Ahaziah.”** Two kings in 2 Kings 14:13 have the same name. The first Jehoash is king of Israel, the second Jehoash is long dead but was the king of Judah.

**“then he came to Jerusalem.”** 2 Chronicles 25:23 says that Jehoash brought Amaziah with him back to Jerusalem.

**“400 cubits.”** This would be about 600 feet (183 meters), or two football fields long.

2Ki 14:14

**“the hostages.”** The Assyrians would take hostages of the royal family and leave the defeated king on his throne to rule his kingdom, but the hostages assured that the king would be obedient to the conquering king. The Bible does not specify who the hostages were, but it is likely they were from the royal family. They were taken as hostages, not “slaves.” The Hebrew word is rare, and occurs only here in the Bible, and in the parallel record in 2 Chronicles 25:24.

2Ki 14:16

**“Jeroboam.”** This is Jeroboam II, under whom Israel greatly expanded its territory.

2Ki 14:19

**“made a conspiracy.”** The Hebrew is more literally, “they conspired a conspiracy,” but that is awkward in English.

2Ki 14:21

**“Azariah.”** Azariah is sometimes called “Uzziah” (cf. 2 Chron. 26:1, 3). Also, in 2 Chronicles 22:6, King Ahaziah of Judah (2 Kings 8 and 9) is called “Azariah.” The names of kings can be confusing because sometimes the same king is called by different names in the Bible.

2Ki 14:22

**“He built Elath.”** The “he” refers to King Azariah, who is also in 2 Kings 15:1-7. There is much more about Azariah in Chronicles than in Kings (cf. 2 Chron. 26:1-23).

**“after King *Amaziah* slept with his fathers.”** Azariah built Elath after Amaziah died. Amaziah only reigned six or seven years before Azariah co-reigned with him, and Azariah did not build Elath and bring it back under Judah’s control until after Amaziah died.

2Ki 14:25

**“He restored the border of Israel.”** Jeroboam II, who reigned in the latter part of the eighth century BC, was a bold and powerful leader who lived at a unique time because the ancient enemy Syria had been destroyed by the Assyrians, but the Assyrians had entered a period of weakness and were not able to control Israel, and Egypt was also not able to advance into Israel at that time. So with Uzziah (Azariah) in a long and stable reign in Judah, Jeroboam brought prosperity and economic and territorial expansion to Israel.

**“the sea of the Arabah.”** That is, the Dead Sea. So for Jeroboam to restore the border of Israel in the Transjordan (east of the Jordan), he restored the traditional borders of the Transjordan tribes of Manasseh, Gad, and Reuben.

**“Jonah.”** This is the same Jonah as in the book of Jonah, so Jonah was a prophet from Gath-hepher in the Galilee, which was in the tribal area of Zebulun (Josh. 19:10-13). Gath-hepher was just over 4 miles (over 6 km) north-northeast from Nazareth, and about 3.5 miles (5.5 km) southeast of Sepphoris. Although the text acknowledges that Jeroboam restored the traditional border of Israel in the Transjordan, he does it “according to the word of Yahweh the God of Israel that he spoke by his servant Jonah,” so the real credit goes to the prophet and to God, whose unseen hand is at work to give the land of Israel back to His people.

There is a wonderful lesson here for God’s people: Jeroboam “did what was evil in the eyes of Yahweh” (2 Kings 14:24) and his reign was corrupt and moral decay during his reign was rampant and increasing, but in spite of that God did not abandon His people and worked to seek their welfare in many ways, including restoring tribal boundaries and sending prophets such as Jonah, Amos, Isaiah, Micah, and Hosea, who were all of that same basic time period, to call Israel back to Himself and avert disaster for Israel. Israel had a chance to repent and be a strong and godly nation, but they ignored the prophets and the Law of Moses, and ended up being carried away in that same century by the Assyrians in 722 BC.

2Ki 14:26

**“for there was no one, slave or free.”** See commentary on Deuteronomy 32:36.

2Ki 14:28

**“Damascus and Hamath (which had *once* belonged to Judah) into Israel.”** Cities as far north as Damascus and Hamath were conquered by David and Solomon, but then rebelled and were lost to Israel. Jeroboam II captured them back. David controlled Damascus (2 Sam. 8:6), while Solomon controlling Damascus is seen in 1 Kings 4:24. That 2 Kings 14:28 would go back in time to the days of David and Solomon magnified what Jeroboam did, almost like a restoration of the Solomonic Empire.

2Ki 14:29

**“Zechariah.”** In the Hebrew text, Zechariah is called “Zechariyahu.”

**2 Kings Chapter 15**

2Ki 15:1

**“In the twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam.”** There are eight kings mentioned in this chapter.

**“Azariah son of Amaziah.”** Azariah is also called “Uzziah” in the Bible.

2Ki 15:4

**“at the *local* shrines.”** The Hebrew word “shrines” is *bamot*, which referred to a place that was leveled and built up and on which were placed various idols and objects of worship. Many of the towns had such shrines (see commentary on Num. 33:52).

2Ki 15:5

**“Yahweh struck the king so that he was a leper.”** The reason is covered in 2 Chronicles 26:16-21.

**“a separate house.”** It is possible that the house can be “the Separate House,” the name people gave to the house the king lived in.

**“Over the House.”** That is, ruling over the palace and royal family. The fact that Jothan was judging the people of the land shows he was acting as king. The phrase “Over the House” was an official title (see commentary on 1 Kings 4:6). Jotham took over the ruling of the kingdom as co-regent when his father could no longer go out and be with the public.

2Ki 15:6

**“written in the Book of the Chronicles.”** See 2 Chronicles 26.

2Ki 15:10

**“in the presence of the people.”** There is an Aramaic term at this point in the Hebrew text for “in the presence of” (or simply, “before”), which some scholars find problematic and assume is a late addition to the text, and thus they prefer to follow Lucian’s Greek version and thus read “at Ibleam.” Although there is no clear reason why an Aramaic term might appear here in the text, there is no clear reason to think it was not original.

2Ki 15:12

**“the word of Yahweh that he spoke to Jehu.”** See 2 Kings 10:30 for the prophecy to Jehu.

2Ki 15:13

**“one month of days.”** The Hebrew text is more literally, “a moon of days.” There is no ambiguity about the length of the reign of Shallum, you can count the days. A lunar month was usually 29 days.

2Ki 15:14

**“the son of Gadi.”** This phrase may refer to him being from the tribe of Gad. Or “Gadi” might be the actual name.

**“struck down Shallum the son of Jabesh in Samaria and killed him.”** There is no doubt in the text that Gadi killed King Shallum.

2Ki 15:16

**“Tiphsah.”** This is a city in the far north, in Syria. This is unlikely, so many scholars suggest other, more likely cities. The Septuagint reads “Tappuah,” and some versions adopt that reading.

**“and its territory.”** A powerful town would control the territory around it, and draw support from the people in that territory. The ancient versions differ as to the names of the towns. For example, the Septuagint text has Tirzah instead of Tiphsah, and thus has Tirzah twice.

**“and he split open all the women in it who were pregnant.”** Tyrants are generally cold and heartless, and use horrific methods to produce fear in people and thus control them.

2Ki 15:19

**“to hold the kingdom in his *own* hand.”** To hold power in Israel at Menahem’s time was not easy, as we can see by the number of times the king was killed and replaced. So Menahem turned to Assyria to help him hold on to the kingdom. Also, Assyria itself was also a threat, so paying them money paid them off so they would not attack Manahem. Eventually, they attacked Israel anyway (cf. 2 Kings 17).

2Ki 15:20

**“50 shekels.”** Fifty shekels is roughly 1.25 pounds (567 grams). A shekel was roughly .4 ounces (11 or 11.5 grams). See commentary on Genesis 24:22, “shekel.”

**“all the mighty men of wealth.”** An idiom for all the very wealthy men. The Bible does not say how many men contributed money, but it was enough money to satisfy the king of Assyria and get him to leave.

2Ki 15:25

**“in the stronghold of the king’s house.”** This refers to the fortified part of the king’s palace.

**“with Argob and Arieh.”** Most likely two well-known warriors.

**“with Argob and Arieh; and with him were 50 men of the Gileadites.”** This was a well-organized conspiracy with anchor people coming from the Transjordan.

2Ki 15:27

**“In the fifty-second year of Azariah king of Judah.”** Azariah reigned 52 years, so this is his last year as king.

2Ki 15:29

**“Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, came and captured.”** This is the first verse that mentions the Assyrian attack on northern Israel. They came south into Israel from Baqa Valley which toward the south becomes the Hulah Valley.[[14]](#footnote-15434) Eventually, the Assyrians left army contingents in cities that they captured. The Assyrians had their eye on controlling the trade routes to Egypt, and a later Assyrian king even had designs on conquering Egypt, and did conquer it into Upper Egypt.[[15]](#footnote-28125)

2Ki 15:30

**“struck him down and killed him, and reigned in his place.”** The fact that Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria had conquered much of Israel but then went home validates what was written in the Assyrian annals from the time of Tiglath-pileser, that he placed Hoshea on the throne and took back to Assyria ten talents of gold and 1,000 talents of silver. Tiglath-pileser had Hoshea as a vassal king over Israel and received yearly tribute from him. This lasted through the reign of Tiglath-pileser, and then Hoshea revolted during the reign of the next king of Assyria, Shalmanezzar (2 Kings 17:3).

2Ki 15:33

**“Jerusha.”** Her name is spelled differently in 2 Chronicles 27:1.

2Ki 15:35

**“the *local* shrines.”** The Hebrew word “shrines” is *bamot*, which referred to a place that was leveled and built up and on which were placed various idols and objects of worship. Many of the towns had such shrines (see commentary on Num. 33:52).

**“He built the Upper Gate of the house of Yahweh.”** Jotham built the northern gate in the wall of the “house of Yahweh,” the Temple, which may have been also called “the gate of Benjamin” (Jer. 20:2; Ezek. 9:2) because being on the north of the Temple, it led out in the direction of the tribe of Benjamin. This was not the northern gate in the city wall, but the northern gate in the wall surrounding the Temple. It was called “the upper gate” because the Temple was not on perfectly flat ground, but the northern wall was a little bit higher up in elevation than the rest of the Temple.

2Ki 15:37

**“In those days.”** This is actually going back in history and is a summary statement, summing up some of the things that happened during the rule of the previous king. For example, Pekah was killed in 2 Kings 15:30.

**“Pekah the son of Remaliah.”** Pekah was the king of Israel, so at that time Israel and Syria were both attacking Judah. By the time of Ahaz, Syria and Israel were allies and were working together to fight Judah (Isa. 7:1).

**“against Judah.”** The attack of Syria and Israel against Judah occurred before Assyria attacked Israel, which is recorded in 2 Kings 15:29.

**2 Kings Chapter 16**

2Ki 16:1

**“Ahaz the son of Jotham king of Judah began to reign.”** The reign of Ahaz is also covered in 2 Chronicles 28.

2Ki 16:3

**“made his son pass through the fire.”** Ahaz practiced human sacrifice in the form of burning his children to death. Although the text here in Kings says “son,” Chronicles lets us know he sacrificed many of his children (2 Chron. 28:3).

2Ki 16:4

**“at the *local* shrines.”** The Hebrew word “shrines” is *bamot*, which referred to a place that was leveled and built up and on which were placed various idols and objects of worship. Many of the towns had such shrines (see commentary on Num. 33:52).

2Ki 16:6

**“Elath.”** Elath was a city on the northern tip of what is today called the Gulf of Aqaba. It was located near Ezion-geber.

**“the Edomites came to Elath and lived there to this day.”** There is some debate about whether the Syrians came to Elath. Although the Masoretic text is pointed as “Syrians,” the Jewish scribes understand the reading to be “Edomites.” The Septuagint text reads “Edomites,” which is almost certainly correct. The Hebrew word for “Syrians” (more technically, Arameans), is very similar to the word for “Edomites.” The Edomites lived in Elath at the time the book of Kings was written, in fact, when 2 Kings was written down, the Assyrians had destroyed Syria. Also, 2 Chronicles 28:17 records Edomite attacks on Judah.

2Ki 16:7

**“I am your servant and your son.”** Ahaz should be saying this to Yahweh, but instead he is saying it to Tiglath-pileser.

2Ki 16:8

**“the house of Yahweh.”** That is, the Temple.

**“the treasuries of the king’s house.”** That is, the treasures of the palace.

**“as a gift.”** This is not the normal Hebrew word for a free gift. The king of Assyria did not demand this tribute, so this “gift” is basically a bribe, and it was effective. That Ahaz took the treasures from the Temple of Yahweh to hire the Assyrians to attack Syria and Israel was why when he spoke to Isaiah the prophet he pretended to be so holy and not ask God for a sign that he would not be conquered by Syria and Israel (Isa. 7:11).

2Ki 16:9

**“went up against Damascus and captured it​.”** Damascus was the capital of Syria and the location of the palace of Rezin the king of Syria. The Assyrians conquered it in 732 BC.

**“Kir.”** The location of Kir is not known.

2Ki 16:10

**“Urijah.”** The name means “light of Yahweh” or “Yahweh is light,” but in any case, this is one example that shows that a person’s name did not always reflect his character.

**“a likeness of the altar and its pattern.”** Although many translations have “model,” this is less likely to be a model and more likely to be a sketch or drawing (cf. NIV).

2Ki 16:12

**“the king approached the altar and offered on it.”** There is nothing godly about this! There is a pagan altar in the Temple of Yahweh and the king is a Judean not a priest, yet he is offering on the altar.

**“and offered on it.”** The Hebrew can also be understood as, “he went up on it.” A conflation would be “he went up on it to offer sacrifices.”

2Ki 16:13

**“burned...into smoke.”** See commentary on Exodus 29:13.

2Ki 16:14

**“The bronze altar that was in the presence of Yahweh.”** Here Yahweh is represented as being in the Temple, and the bronze altar was in His presence.

**“the north side.”** That is the left side, the place of lesser honor. This shows the lack of respect that Ahaz had for God and the things of God.

2Ki 16:15

**“will be for me to inquire by.”** Perhaps to deliberately humiliate Yahweh, Ahaz uses his new altar to offer the offerings required by the Law of Moses, but uses the altar from Yahweh’s Temple to perform his acts of divination. Divination was strictly prohibited in the Mosaic Law (Deut. 18:9-14).

2Ki 16:17

**“King Ahaz cut off the panels of the bases.”** There is more detail on this in 2 Chron. 28:24. This was done “on account of the king of Assyria,” that is, it seems Ahaz used the bronze to help pay tribute to the king of Assyria.

2Ki 16:18

**“The covered place.”** The exact meaning of this word is unknown, but it seems to refer to some kind of covering or covered place. In modern Hebrew, the word is used for a garage for cars.

**“because of the king of Assyria.”** The covered pathway that was apparently made of bronze and perhaps other valuable things became part of the tribute Ahaz paid to the king of Assyria.[[16]](#footnote-18052)

2Ki 16:19

**“Now the rest of the acts of Ahaz that he did.”** One of the notorious things that Ahaz did that is not mentioned in Kings is that he closed down the Temple of Yahweh and shut its doors (2 Chron. 28:24).

**“the Chronicles of the kings of Judah?”** See 2 Chron. 28. Ahaz takes the entire chapter.

**2 Kings Chapter 17**

2Ki 17:1

**“In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah, Hoshea the son of Elah began to reign.”** 2 Kings 17 is about the destruction of the Northern Kingdom, Israel, by Assyria. There is no description of battle or heroism, just a very short description of Israel’s conquest, and then the exile of Israel. The reason the Bible gives for the disaster is clear: idolatry—Israel abandoned the true worship of Yahweh to follow pagan gods and pagan practices.

The fall of Samaria is a watershed event in the history of Israel. The Northern Kingdom had lasted over 200 years (c. 940-722 BC). Twenty kings from 10 dynasties sat on the throne of Israel, including Hoshea, all of whom did evil in the eyes of Yahweh. From a purely political point of view, Israel (and other nations in the Levant) was too weak to oppose Assyrian expansionist policies and military might. But from a theological point of view, which is God’s point of view, the prophets and the author of 2 Kings interpreted Israel’s downfall as a result of continued sin against Yahweh. Yahweh enabled His faithful servants to defeat powerful enemies, as we learn with the Exodus from Egypt and many other such records. But now Israel had abandoned God and in doing so abandoned their Deliverer. The book of Judges shows the Israelites behaving like the Canaanites but without a king and becoming enslaved. But now they had become like Canaanites with a king, but became exiled for their rejection of Yahweh.

Israel’s last king was Hoshea (c.731-722 BC). Biblical and Assyrian records show that he came to the throne as an appointee of the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III. When Assyria’s next king, Shalmaneser V, became preoccupied with rebellions in Babylon, Hoshea thought it was an opportune time to throw off the Assyrian yoke. He withheld tribute and appealed to So, Pharaoh of Egypt, for help (2 Kings 17:3-4).

Hoshea’s plan did not work. Shalmaneser V returned to restore order. Hoshea was captured and the city of Samaria besieged. The city withstood a long siege of three years, but fell in 722 BC. There is uncertainty about which Assyrian king was responsible for the capture of Samaria since Shalmaneser V died and was replaced by Sargon II in the same year that Samaria fell. We have no records from Shalmaneser, but Sargon took credit for the conquest even though Samaria may have already fallen by the time he came to the throne. In the Assyrian records, Sargon wrote: “I besieged and conquered Samaria, led away as booty 27,290 inhabitants of it…I installed over them an officer of mine and imposed upon them the tribute of the former king.”[[17]](#footnote-10151)

2Ki 17:3

**“Shalmaneser king of Assyria.”** King Hoshea of Israel had become a vassal to Assyria when Tiglath-pileser (Tiglath-pileser III) ruled Assyria (see commentary on 2 Kings 15:30).

2Ki 17:4

**“So king of Egypt.”** The identity of the pharaoh referred to as “So” is debated by scholars.

2Ki 17:6

**“the king of Assyria captured Samaria.”** The “king of Assyria” who started the campaign against Israel and Samaria was Shalmanezzar V, but he died before the campaign was finished, and Sargon II took over as king of Assyria and completed the conquest of Israel and destruction of Samaria.

**“and carried Israel away to Assyria.”** In accordance with Assyrian policy, the population of Samaria was deported to various places throughout the Assyrian Empire. Also, the Assyrians transferred other conquered peoples into Samaria. The main purpose of the population transfers was to wipe out independence movements among the conquered peoples, but often another purpose was to create buffer zones between the heartland of the conquering nation and any enemy attacks from outside the empire.

The Assyrian deportation is the origin of the “ten lost tribes of Israel.” The author of Second Kings mentions three destinations of the deported Israelites: “Halah, and Habor, on the River of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes” (2 Kings 17:6, 18:11). The book of 2 Chronicles notes similar destinations for earlier deportations from Transjordan (1 Chron. 5:26). Habor is probably the modern Habur River of the upper Euphrates, which flows 60 miles east of ancient Haran. Gozan is either a site, a river, or a region along this river. Halah is unknown, though some locate it in northern (Kurdish) Iraq. The cities of the Medes are quite a distance further east. The scattering of the tribes of Israel, which even to this day have not returned to the land of Israel, sets the stage for the fulfillment of the many prophecies that in the future, when Christ rules the earth, the tribes of Israel will be regathered (cf. Isa. 11:11-12; 27:13; 56:8; 66:20; Jer. 12:15; 15:15-17; 23:3-8; 29:14; 31:8; 32:37-38, 42-44; 33:10-13; Ezek. 11:17, 28:25; 34:11-13; 36:24; 37:21; 39:28; Hos. 1:11; Amos 9:14-15; Mic. 2:12; Zeph. 3:18-20; Zech. 8:7-8; 10:6).

The capture and deportation of Israel, and the Assyrians repopulating it with pagans, is completely missing from the record in Chronicles.

[For more on the future time when Israel will be regathered and Jesus Christ will rule the earth, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.”]

**“the Habor.”** A tributary of the Euphrates River.

**“the river of Gozan.”** This could be another name for the Habor. This is close to Haran, where Abraham came from.

2Ki 17:8

**“and *in the statutes* of the kings of Israel, which they had made.”** Here God says that although the people had followed the statutes that their kings had made, because those statutes were against God’s laws, the people suffered the consequences of disobeying God. 2 Kings 17:8 shows that sometimes kings and rulers make laws that believers should not follow (see commentary on Rom. 13:1).

2Ki 17:9

**“​attributed words that were not so to Yahweh their God.”** Many English versions have a reading similar to the King James Version (AD 1611): “And the children of Israel did secretly those things that were not right against the LORD their God.” But the Hebrew word that is translated as “secretly” is *chapha* (#02644 חָפָא), and this is the only place it occurs in the Old Testament. Years ago, the translators were not sure of its meaning, and so, for example, the BDB,[[18]](#footnote-14705) first published in 1906, has “do secretly” for its definition of *chapha*, and many modern Bibles still hold to that definition, even though it does not fit the context. Israel did not sin secretly, but openly, as the Bible says many times.

Modern Hebrew lexicons do not have “secretly” as a definition of *chapha*. The lexicon by Holladay (1972) has “attribute,” and *HALOT* (1994-2000), has “to ascribe, impute,” and that is its meaning in 2 Kings 17:9. Modern versions, especially independent modern versions, are picking up on the more newly understood meaning of *chapha*. For example, The JPS reads, “the children of Israel did impute things that were not right unto the LORD their God.” The NET Bible reads, “The Israelites said things about the LORD their God that were not right.” The NJB reads, “The Israelites spoke slightingly of Yahweh their God.” Everett Fox has, “the children of Israel had imputed things that were not so to Yahweh their God.”[[19]](#footnote-18205) *The First Testament* by John Goldingay has, “the Yisraelites [Israelites] had imputed things that were not so to Yahweh their God.” The *Koren Tanakh*, done by Koren Publishers in Jerusalem, reads, “The Israelites ascribed falsehoods to the LORD their God.” Also, the Hebrew word translated “words” in 2 Kings 17:9 is *dabar* (#01697 דָּבָר), which is the common word for “word,” but also, like the Greek word *logos*, has a wide semantic range, including “word,” “thing,” and “matter.” Thus the verse might well be translated as “attributed words,” or “attributed things,” or even “attributed matters” that were not so to God.

This certainly happens today. Many people claim that God says things or does things that He does not do, and that is a serious fault in God’s eyes.

[For more on attributing to God things that are not so, see commentary on Exod. 20:3.]

**“*pagan* shrines.”** The Hebrew word “shrines” is *bamot*, which referred to a place that was leveled and built up and on which were placed various idols and objects of worship. The context indicates these shrines were pagan in nature (cf. NLT, “pagan shrines”). Many of the towns had such shrines (see commentary on Num. 33:52).

**“from watchtower to fortified city.”** This phrase is likely somewhat hyperbolic, describing the huge number of places of pagan worship. They were “in all their cities,” from any place that had a watchtower to the fortified cities in the land. This interpretation seems to be supported by the next verse, that there were also places of worship on every high hill and under every green tree. Israel was wholly given over to pagan worship. Although some scholars believe the verse is a way of describing the whole city, from the watchtower on the edge of the city to the most fortified part of the city, that interpretation does not fit the context well, nor does it fit well with the rest of the history of Israel as it is given in Kings, Chronicles, and the prophetic books.

2Ki 17:10

**“standing-stones.”** Most standing-stones were set up as part of the worship of pagan gods, and that is the context here. God has no tolerance for idols. They are harmful in many different ways, and God commanded that they be destroyed.

[For more on standing-stones, see commentary on Gen. 28:18. For more on idols being harmful, see commentary on Deut. 7:5.]

2Ki 17:12

**“*disgusting* idols.”** The word translated “idols” is *gilluwl* (#01544 גִּלּוּל or (sometimes shortenedגִּלֻּל gillul)). It is not the normal word for “idols,” but has a distinct negative aspect to it, and in fact, may be related to the word “dung.” Walter Maier writes that “the exact sense of this noun, for which the conventional translation is ‘idols,’ is uncertain. Some scholars think it comes from the verb…‘to roll,’ explaining that these idols have no life of their own but have to be rolled about from place to place. Other scholars suggest that it comes from a word meaning ‘dung’…Omanson and Ellington conclude that, ‘in any case, this Hebrew word has a strong negative aspect’ which is not fully captured by the English word ‘idols.’”[[20]](#footnote-22980)

2Ki 17:14

**“stiffened their neck.”** An idiom for being stubborn and obstinate. The idea is that a person is going in a certain direction and when called to change, they stiffen their neck and refuse to look or move in a different direction. Animals on a leash often stiffen their neck when they don’t want to be led in a direction different than the one they want to go.

2Ki 17:15

**“worthless *idols*.”** The Hebrew is just the singular noun “empty” (or “worthless,” related to a breath or vapor), and perhaps could more literally be translated “worthlessnesses.” A number of English versions use “vain,” and although “vain” can mean useless or worthless, its more common meaning, “to have an excessively high opinion of one’s appearance, abilities, or worth,” seems to make it a poor choice, because that is not what is being said in the verse. In this context, it refers to idols, which from God’s perspective are indeed worthless. They certainly cannot keep a person from everlasting death. In that sense, the person who follows worthless idols becomes worthless themselves.

2Ki 17:16

**“and made cast *metal* images for themselves—two calves.”** These calves were made by Jeroboam I, the very first king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and he set one up in Bethel and the other up in Dan (1 Kings 12:28-30). The Hebrew vocabulary tells us that the cast images were not solid metal, but were hollow inside.

**“worshiped.”** Or “bowed down to.”

[For more on bowing down, see the word study on “worship.”.]

**“and worshiped all the army of heaven.”** In this context, the “army of heaven” refers to the stars and planets (also thought of as “stars”) which appeared organized and thus were referred to as an “army.” Worship of the stars was forbidden by God (cf. Deut. 4:19; 17:3).

2Ki 17:17

**“used divination and interpreted omens.”** See Deuteronomy 18:10.

**“and sold themselves.”** The idiom means to be totally dedicated, and may involve dedication to the point of self-enslavement.[[21]](#footnote-23070)

2Ki 17:18

**“removed them from his presence.”** More literally, “removed them from before his face.” The idea of God removing Israel from before His face, that is, removing them from His presence, is emphasized here in 2 Kings 17, occurring in 2 Kings 17:18, 20, and 17:23, each written slightly differently. God’s presence was understood to be in Israel, especially in Jerusalem and in the Temple. God sent Israel, and much of Judah, away from Him to Assyria.

2Ki 17:19

**“that Israel did.”** The Hebrew can also be translated, “that Israel made.” No doubt some of the sins of Israel were picked up from the neighboring pagans, and some were invented within Israel itself.

2Ki 17:20

**“cast them out of his presence.”** More literally, “cast them from before his face.”

2Ki 17:21

**“For he had torn Israel from the house of David.”** This happened soon after the death of Solomon (cf. 1 Kings 11:11-13, 31).

**“sin a great sin.”** Some sins are more serious than others (see commentary on Exod. 32:31).

2Ki 17:22

**“it.”** The Hebrew text is singular, “it,” which is a collective singular. The sins together are an “it,” which adds weight to the idea that if you break one law and sin you break all the laws. All the sins are a “sin,” an “it.”

2Ki 17:23

**“Yahweh removed Israel from his presence.”** More literally, “removed them from before his face.”

2Ki 17:24

**“Avva and from Hamath.”** These are cities in northern Syria.

**“and placed them in the cities of Samaria.”** The policy of most of the conquering kings at that time was to not destroy the cities they conquered unless absolutely necessary, but rather it was to use the cities for their own purposes, and we see that here too.

2Ki 17:25

**“so Yahweh sent lions among them.”** This is the third time in the books of Kings that lions are an instrument of judgment (cf. 1 Kings 13:24; 20:36, and here in 2 Kings 17:25).

2Ki 17:26

**“do not know the law of the god of the land.”** It was commonly believed that different gods lived in different places, so if a person went to a different area they would have to learn how to please the god in that area.

[For more on people believing that different gods lived in different places on earth, see commentary on 1 Kings 20:23.]

2Ki 17:27

**“and let him go.”** Although the Masoretic Hebrew text has “them,” the Septuagint, Vulgate, and Syriac text read “him,” and in most of the rest of the verse and in 2 Kings 17:28 the priest is a singular person, but there are plural verbs (cf. “let go” and “live” there).

2Ki 17:28

**“whom they had carried away from Samaria.”** The priest who came from Samaria would have had a very warped idea of what it was to worship Yahweh, and there was a golden calf god at Bethel. Given that this priest, if he worshiped Yahweh at all, worshiped Him in a polytheistic setting along with golden calf gods and other gods, there is no way that he could have taught these newcomers the true worship of Yahweh. They would have been trained in a manner accepting of polytheism, and thus remained polytheistic themselves.

2Ki 17:29

**“temples of the shrines.”** The Hebrew is more literally, “the houses of the shrines,” and it refers to the temples that were built at the local shrines (see commentary on Num. 33:52). The temples in Samaria might have been empty if the gods of Samaria were covered in silver and gold and the Assyrians had carried them off when they carried away the people.

**“each nation in their cities.”** The nations brought into Samaria by the Assyrians around 720 BC remained in their own nation-groups. At first they did not intermingle among themselves, however, over time they intermingled and were very intermingled by the time of Christ. The process of intermingling was no doubt helped by the large number of conquests of that area. After the Assyrians placed people of different nationalities in the area of Samaria and the Northern Kingdom of Israel, that area was again conquered by the Babylonians, then the Persians, then the Greeks, and then the Romans. In each of those conquests there would have been shuffling and resettling, and with each of those conquests, the leadership of the area changed. For example, Ezra 5:3 mentions that one of the governors of the area during the Persian period was Tattenai. During the time of Nehemiah, Sanballat seems to be the governor of the area (Neh. 2:10), and secular literature attests to that fact.

2Ki 17:30

**“The people from Babylon.”** The city of Babylon was destroyed by Sennacherib (c. 689 BC) and the people were dispersed. Here we see that some of them were exiled to Samaria.

**“Sukkoth-benoth.”** This god is unknown except for here in the Bible.

**“Nergal.”** Nergal was a Babylonian god of the plague and god of the underworld.

**“Ashima.”** Ashima is unknown outside of the Bible.

2Ki 17:31

**“the Avvites made Nibhaz and Tartak.”** Avva is a city in Elam, near the Persian Gulf, and “Nibhaz” and “Tartak” are the gods known as Ibnahaza and Dirtaq.[[22]](#footnote-31001)

**“Adrammelech and Anammelech.”** These gods do not appear outside the Bible and nothing is known about them.

2Ki 17:32

**“shrines.”** The Hebrew word “shrines” is *bamot*, which referred to a place that was leveled and built up and on which were placed various idols and objects of worship. Many of the towns had such shrines (see commentary on Num. 33:52).

**“the temples at the shrines.”** The Hebrew is more literally, “the houses of the shrines,” and it refers to the temples that were built at the local shrines (see commentary on Num. 33:52).

2Ki 17:35

**“But Yahweh had cut a covenant.”** This is the covenant that Yahweh made with Israel at Mount Sinai, commonly known as “the Old Covenant.”

**“bow down.”** The word translated “bowed down,” *shachah* (#07812 שָׁחָה), is the same Hebrew word as “worship.”

[For more on bowing down, see the word study on “worship.”]

2Ki 17:37

**“Do not worship other gods.”** The Hebrew text is “Do not fear other gods,” but in this case, “fear” is being used in the sense of “respect,” “awe” and “worship.” This is one of the places where a strictly literal translation of the original text could be misleading in English. The text is not saying, “Do not be afraid of pagan gods,” it is saying “Do not worship pagan gods.”

2Ki 17:41

**“so they do to this day.”** This tells us that 2 Kings was written before the Babylonian Captivity. Sometime during the Babylonian Captivity, and likely continuing after it, the people of Samaria gave up the worship of pagan gods and adopted a worship that was much more like we see in the Four Gospels, and they also became much more thoroughly mixed and homogeneous as a society. They believed a perverted version of the Law of Moses, but they had rid themselves of the overt worship of the various pagan gods. Also, they likely retained a historical memory of their ancient homes, much like we do today. Today many people in the United States (and other countries) think and act quite homogeneously, but if asked about their ancestry they can tell you if they are Irish, German, or French, etc., and we can expect that would have happened in the ancient world as well.

**2 Kings Chapter 18**

2Ki 18:2

**“He was 25 years old when he began to reign.”** God blessed Hezekiah in many ways, and one of them certainly was that although his father Ahaz had sacrificed some of his children in the fire, Hezekiah was not sacrificed when he was a baby (2 Kings 16:3; 2 Chron. 28:3).

**“and his mother’s name was Abi.”** In Chronicles, the mother’s name is “Abijah.”

2Ki 18:4

**“the *local* shrines.”** The Hebrew word “shrines” is *bamot*, which referred to a place that was leveled and built up and on which were placed various idols and objects of worship. Many of the towns had such shrines (see commentary on Num. 33:52).

**“standing-stones.”** Standing-stones were set up for various reasons, some of them being godly memorials, but here the context is pagan worship. Standing-stones would often be set up as part of the worship of pagan gods, and God has no tolerance for idols. They are harmful in many different ways and are to be destroyed.

[For more on standing-stones, see commentary on Gen. 28:18. For more on idols being harmful, see commentary on Deut. 7:5.]

**“the bronze serpent that Moses had made.”** The bronze snake that Moses made would now be about 700 years old (cf. Num. 21:4-9). The serpent may have been made of bronze or copper, the Hebrew is unclear.

**“for in those days the children of Israel burned incense to it.”** When the worship of Moses’ serpent began is not known. The idolatrous Judeans turned a priceless artifact of history into an idol, and that being the case, Hezekiah did the right thing and destroyed it. Too often believers are tricked into keeping things that have become idols, “protective amulets,” etc., just because those things have historical or family significance. But demons are attracted to the love, devotion, and even forms of worship that some objects receive, and so believers must be on guard to keep historical pieces and heirlooms as just that, and not begin to ascribe protective power, “luck” or any kind invisible power to them and thus turn them into idols, which only invites spiritual problems.

2Ki 18:5

**“there was none like him.”** Because of David and Josiah, this is likely hyperbolic.

2Ki 18:7

**“he succeeded.”** The Hebrew word translated “succeeded” has the idea that what Hezekiah did, he did wisely. The Douay-Rheims version has, “ in all things, to which he went forth, he behaved himself wisely.”

2Ki 18:8

**“from watchtower to fortified city.”** That is, all the towns from the least of them to the greatest (cf. 2 Kings 17:9).

2Ki 18:11

**“and put them in Halah.”** The information in 2 Kings 18:11 is also stated in 2 Kings 17:6.

**“and in the cities of the Medes.”** For more on the country of Media, see the REV commentary on Jeremiah 51:11.

2Ki 18:12

**“They would not listen nor do it.”** In Exodus 24:7 the Israelites said they would listen and obey what God said, and they made a covenant to that effect.

2Ki 18:13

**“Sennacherib king of Assyria.”** Sennacherib’s attack is recorded in 2 Kings 18; 2 Chronicles 32; and Isaiah 36.

2Ki 18:17

**“Then the king of Assyria sent.”** Sennacherib, the king of Assyria had accepted the gold and silver from Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:14-16), but did not withdraw as he had apparently promised, but instead attacked Jerusalem. Sennacherib was ruthless and a liar. Hezekiah knew that surrender to him meant the deportation of the people to foreign lands, as Assyria had already done to Israel, and Hezekiah was desperate that that did not happen.

**“the highway of the Launderer’s Field.”** That is, the highway by the field where cloth is washed and dried. Although many versions say “fuller’s field,” is it not well-known today that a person who washed clothing used to be called a “fuller.” This was the place where Isaiah had met Ahaz some years before and told Ahaz to ask for a sign from God that Judah would be delivered (Isa. 7:3), but Ahaz would not ask for a sign because he had already hired the Assyrians to attack Syria and Israel. Now that evil tactic bore evil fruit and the Assyrians were back.

2Ki 18:18

**“when they had called for the king.”** When the Assyrian leaders Tartan and Rab-saris and Rab-shakeh called out for Hezekiah, he sent his people to meet them and did not come himself.

**“Eliakim the son of Hilkiah who was Over the House.”** “Over the House” was the title of the palace administrator (see commentary on 1 Kings 4:6). Eliakim replaced Shebna, who nevertheless remained an important figure in the kingdom for a while anyway (cf. Isa. 22:15-21).

2Ki 18:19

**“this trust in which you are trusting.”** The first “trust” is a noun, an object of trust, while “trusting” is a verb. “What is the object of trust on which you are trusting?” Rab-shakeh asks the question and then gives what seem to be the two most obvious answers: Egypt or Yahweh. Although Rab-shakeh denigrates both answers (2 Kings 18:21-22), Hezekiah did trust in Yahweh and that trust was not in vain.

2Ki 18:22

**“But if you say.”** 2 Kings 18:22; 2 Chronicles 32:11-12, and Isaiah 36:7 are very similar.

**“isn’t he the one whose shrines and whose altars Hezekiah has taken away.”** Sennacherib was very well informed about what was going on in Judah, and it is almost certain that he had spies there and/or had other sources of information, after all, he had already conquered a large number of the cities of Judah and would have learned a lot from the people he captured (2 Kings 18:13). So what he said was not a guess. Hezekiah had taken away the high places and pagan altars (2 Kings 18:3-4), and told the people to worship in Jerusalem. Hezekiah had also told his people and his army that they were to trust in Yahweh (2 Chron. 32:8). Hezekiah’s reform was so extensive, and his life and actions so important, that 2 Chronicles has four chapters on Hezekiah (2 Chron. 29-32).

The ungodly and pagan acts of King Ahaz, Hezekiah’s father, would have penetrated the culture quite deeply in the 16 years of Ahaz’s reign. So when Hezekiah abruptly put an end to those pagan practices he would have upset quite a few people. That meant that the reforms of Hezekiah, although welcomed by the godly people of Judah, would have been hated and opposed by the ungodly people. This was one of those situations where the leader cannot please everyone. Hezekiah did what he knew was right, and did it in spite of the fact that it would have upset and angered many people, and so Hezekiah would have been pressured and perhaps even threatened because of his reforms.

Also, this verse reveals both that Sennacherib the king of Assyria misunderstood Hezekiah’s reform, and that there was syncretism and perversion of the worship of Yahweh going on in the cities of Judah. God had commanded that He was to be worshiped “in the place that Yahweh your God will choose” (Deut. 12:1-14), and He chose Jerusalem. But the people ignored that command and worshiped God in many different places—and “worshiped” meant that they sacrificed, performed rituals, etc., in many different places. Furthermore, much of that service and “worship” would have involved people who were not Levitical priests and also involved practices borrowed from the worship of pagan gods. The people may have thought they were worshiping Yahweh, but in reality, they were being disobedient and ungodly. Nevertheless, when Hezekiah put a stop to the ungodly worship, Sennacherib naturally concluded that Hezekiah was being tyrannical by insisting that everyone come to worship in the city where he lived, Jerusalem, and to the Temple where he worshiped. It is quite possible that Sennacherib thought that if he communicated directly with the people of Jerusalem that he could start a popular uprising against Hezekiah and take the city without a fight, and he tried that tactic (cf. 2 Kings 18:25-35). Thankfully, that tactic did not work.

**“shrines.”** The Hebrew word “shrines” is *bamot*, which referred to a place that was leveled and built up and on which were placed various idols and objects of worship. The context indicates these shrines were pagan in nature (cf. NLT, “pagan shrines”). Many of the towns had such shrines (see commentary on Num. 33:52).

**“worship.”** The Hebrew word translated “worship,” *shachah* (#07812 שָׁחָה), is the same Hebrew word as “bow down.”

[For more on bowing down, see the word study on “worship.”].

2Ki 18:23

**“make a wager with my lord.”** Rab-shakeh is taunting the Judeans.

2Ki 18:24

**“my lord’s servants.”** Here “servants” refers to commanding officers in the army. Basically, Rab-shakeh is saying, “So how will you Judeans be able to defeat even one captain—even an unimportant one—of the king of Assyria’s army officers?” The Assyrian army was indeed mighty from a five-senses point of view, and from that fleshly point of view, Rab-shakeh was probably correct. But Yahweh is mighty to save, and He did save Judah.

2Ki 18:25

**“Have I now come up without Yahweh against this place to destroy it?”** The Bible does not tell us why Sennacherib king of Assyria would say this. It is extremely unlikely that a prophet of Yahweh said that to him. The most likely explanation is that Sennacherib’s spies and contacts in Judah reported to him the words of Yahweh’s prophets to the Judeans that the Assyrians were going to come and attack Judah (cf. Isa. 8:7-8; 10:5-6).

2Ki 18:26

**“Please speak to your servants in Aramaic, for we understand it.”** The difference between the imperial Aramaic spoken in Assyria and the Judean, the Hebrew language spoken in Judea, was great enough that the average Judean could not understand the Aramaic spoken by the Assyrians.

**“within earshot.”** Literally, “in the ears.”

2Ki 18:27

**“to your lord.”** The Hebrew is a grammatical plural, literally, “to your lords,” but it refers to Hezekiah the king of Judah.

**“urine.”** Here in 2 Kings 18:27 and in Isaiah 36:12, the Hebrew text uses an idiom: “the water of the feet.” The word “feet” was sometimes used for the genital organs (see commentary on Judg. 5:27).

2Ki 18:29

**“his hand.”** That is, the hand of the king of Assyria.

2Ki 18:30

**“rescue, yes, rescue us.”** The Hebrew text repeats the verb for emphasis, using the figure of speech polyptoton.

[For more on polyptoton and its translation, see commentary on Gen. 2:16.]

2Ki 18:32

**“a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of olive trees and of honey.”** This is not a total deception, but some of the places people were taken were not as abundant as promised.

2Ki 18:34

**“Have they rescued Samaria from my hand?”** Rab-shakeh is using abbreviated language. The people of Judah understood what he was saying. The NET expands the translation for clarity: “Indeed, did any gods rescue Samaria from my power?”

2Ki 18:37

**“Eliakim the son of Hilkiah who was Over the House.”** “Over the House” was the title of the palace administrator (see commentary on 1 Kings 4:6). During the reign of King Hezekiah, Eliakim replaced Shebna, who had been Over the House, but who nevertheless remained an important figure in the kingdom for a while anyway (cf. Isa. 22:15-21).

**2 Kings Chapter 19**

2Ki 19:1

**“And when King Hezekiah.”** 2 Kings 19 is almost the same as Isaiah 37.

**“the house of Yahweh.”** That is, the Temple.

2Ki 19:2

**“Then he sent Eliakim.”​** Cf. Isaiah 37:2.

**“Over the House.”** “Over the House” was the title of the palace administrator (see commentary on 1 Kings 4:6). During the reign of King Hezekiah, Eliakim replaced Shebna, who had been Over the House, but who nevertheless remained an important figure in the kingdom for a while anyway (cf. Isa. 22:15-21).

2Ki 19:4

**“his lord.”** The Hebrew is a grammatical plural, literally, “his lords,” but referring to the king of Assyria.

**“the remnant that is left.”** Sennacherib had captured the fortified cities in Judah (2 Kings 18:13). According to the Assyrian records, Sennacherib captured 46 cities. Hezekiah rightly wanted prayer for everyone who was left.

2Ki 19:7

**“I will put a spirit in him.”** Due to the extreme flexibility of the Hebrew word *ruach*, the exact meaning of 2 Kings 19:7 and Isaiah 37:7 is difficult to determine. The Hebrew word translated “spirit” in the REV is *ruach* (#07307 רוּחַ), and it can refer to a large number of things. In this context, “spirit” may refer to the gift of holy spirit God put upon some people in the Old Testament; an evil spirit (by way of the idiom of permission), or a thought, attitude, or message given by spirit.

[For more on the usages of *ruach*, spirit, see Appendix 15: “Usages of ‘Spirit.’”]

**“rumor.”** Or “report.”

2Ki 19:8

**“he had departed from Lachish.”** Sennacherib, the king of Assyria had left Lachish and was attacking Libnah, so Rab-shakeh found him at Libnah. Although the exact location of Libnah is not known, archaeologists think that it is a tell only five or six miles from Lachish.

2Ki 19:9

**“Sennacherib.”** The Hebrew is “he,” but since the “he” in the immediately preceding sentence in 2 Kings 19:8 was Rab-shakeh, the “he” in this verse was replaced with “Sennacherib” for clarity.

2Ki 19:10

**“Do not let your god in whom you trust deceive you.”** Sennacherib does not deny Hezekiah’s “god,” or that Yahweh can direct Hezekiah. Sennacherib would have believed that Hezekiah’s god, like any god, could speak through prophets, dreams, visions, signs, divination, etc. But Sennacherib believed his gods and his army were more powerful than any force with Hezekiah.

2Ki 19:11

**“devoting them to destruction.”** That is, destroying them.

[For more on things “devoted” to Yahweh and devoted to destruction, see commentary on Josh. 6:17.]

2Ki 19:14

**“Then he went up to the house of Yahweh.”** This is geographically accurate. The Temple, the “house of Yahweh,” was north of Hezekiah’s palace and uphill from it. It is not clear where Hezekiah would have gone in the Temple to spread out the letter. Not being a priest or Levite, he would not have gone into the Holy Place or Holy of Holies, but would have gone into one of the side rooms where Temple business was carried out.

**“and Hezekiah spread it out before Yahweh.”** The letter would have been rolled up in scroll fashion, so Hezekiah unrolled it and held it open so Yahweh could read the entire letter. Hezekiah would have believed that Yahweh knew what was in the letter, but sometimes people need to do things that help them become more intimate and connected to their Creator, and this desperate time was one of those times.

2Ki 19:15

**“Then Hezekiah prayed before Yahweh.”** This is one of the many verses that show that great people in the Bible believed in the power of prayer. Hezekiah knew he did not have the military might to defeat Assyria; his only hope was in getting help from God. Hezekiah was in the Temple, and thus “before Yahweh” or “in the presence of” Yahweh.

**“sits *enthroned*.”** The Hebrew is more literally “sits,” but it was the custom for kings to sit on thrones, not just regular chairs, so translating according to the culture of the day, “enthroned” is a good translation and adopted by many English versions (CEB, CSB, ESV, NAB, NASB, NET, NIV, NJB, NRSV).

**“between the cherubim.”** Yahweh dwelt between the cherubim that were on the atonement cover (traditionally “mercy seat”) of the ark of the covenant (see commentary on 1 Sam. 4:4).

**“you are the God, you alone.”** The Bible has many verses that say there is only one God, “Yahweh.”

[For more on Yahweh being the only God, see Appendix 6: “Jesus is the Son of God, Not God the Son,” point 11, and the REV commentary on Deut. 6:4.]

**“You have made the heavens and the earth.”** Hezekiah correctly believed that Yahweh alone (the “you” is singular) made the heavens and the earth. He did not have help from other gods, nor did the universe “just evolve” somehow.

2Ki 19:16

**“he has sent to defy the living God.”** This statement is accurate. Sennacherib did not just send words “that defied Yahweh,” he sent words “to defy Yahweh.” Sennacherib knew Judah’s god was Yahweh, and knew that defying the Judeans and their king also meant defying their God, so what Sennacherib wrote, he wrote in part to defy and challenge Yahweh, Judah’s God. Sennacherib would have understood that conquering Judah meant conquering their god and showing that his gods were more powerful than Yahweh. In a similar vein, at the Exodus from Egypt, in order for Yahweh to give Moses power over Pharaoh, He had to execute judgments against the gods of Egypt (Exod. 12:12).

2Ki 19:17

**“It is true, O Yahweh.”** More literally, “Truly,” but we would commonly say, “It is true.” Hezekiah sets forth an important principle of prayer here, which is to be honest about the facts and the situation. God knows the situation, and it does not help our prayers to hide the truth from God. Sometimes Christians try too hard to “pray positive prayers,” and say positive things, and end up misrepresenting the situation. While it is important to work to keep a positive attitude, that is because it is a reflection of what we think about God and His delivering power, and the power of hope, and not because our words have any power in and of themselves. It is God who has the power, and we come to Him with honest and frank speech, asking for His help. The “positive” part of prayer in a desperate situation comes from stating our dependence upon God and our trust in Him, not from watering down the gravity of the situation with words that are overly optimistic.

Hezekiah’s prayer was honest, simple, and powerful. The Assyrians had indeed laid waste the nations and had attacked and captured many cities in Judah (2 Kings 18:13; according to the Assyrian annuls, Assyria captured 46 cities in Judah). God would have to help the Judeans at this point or Judah would be lost like Israel had been lost and carried captive to Assyria some years before. But God did hear Hezekiah’s prayer and He did rescue Judah.

2Ki 19:18

**“and have put their gods in the fire.”** This verse is repeated in Isaiah 37:19. People draw strength and hope from their gods, so destroying them was one of the tactics of demoralizing and controlling a conquered (or about to be conquered) people. Sometimes sanctuaries with gods and altars were outside the cities at holy sites, so an attacking army could destroy some of the gods before conquering the city.

**“so they have destroyed them.”** It was because the gods of the nations were not actually gods that the Assyrians could destroy them. In the future there will come a day of God’s vengeance against sin when on earth “and the idols will completely pass away…In that day, *each* person will cast away their idols of silver and their idols of gold that they made for themselves to worship, to the moles and to the bats” (Isa. 2:18, 20).

2Ki 19:19

**“But now, Yahweh our God.”** 2 Kings 19:19 is almost identical to Isaiah 37:20.

**“so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know.”** The acts of God give people a chance to see God’s greatness, but they do not guarantee that people will believe. Nevertheless, it can help if believers point them out to others to give them a better chance to see and believe.

2Ki 19:20

**“Because you have prayed to me.”** 2 Kings 19:20 differs from Isaiah 37:21 somewhat. We must not see 2 Kings 19:20 and Isaiah 37:21 as being a contradiction of what Isaiah said, any more than we should think that Hezekiah, in that desperate time, only prayed a prayer that was five verses long (2 Kings 19:15-19); Hezekiah would have prayed a much longer prayer than that. Almost always, what is recorded in the Bible is the core of what was said or done, and that gives us an understanding of the situation. There is no need for us to know every word that was spoken or action that was taken in these situations, in fact, that would be a distraction. In this case, 2 Kings and Isaiah give us an important picture of prayer: in 2 Kings, God lets us know that He hears what we pray (“I have heard”). In Isaiah, God lets us know that the fact that we do pray is important (“Because you have prayed to me”).

2Ki 19:21

**“Daughter Zion.”** The Hebrew is idiomatic for Zion itself, i.e., Jerusalem (see commentary on Isa. 1:8).

**“Daughter Jerusalem.”** The Hebrew structure and idiom is similar to that of “Daughter Zion” (see commentary on Isa. 1:8). Here in 2 Kings 19:21 (and also Isaiah 37:22), Jerusalem is referred to twice in the verse by two different names, “Daughter Jerusalem” and “Daughter Zion.” It is typical of Hebrew poetry to refer to the same thing in two different ways.

2 Kings 19:21 and Isaiah 37:22 are a good portrayal of God showing that with His help great feats can be accomplished and horrible and impossible-looking situations can be turned into great victories. Jerusalem is portrayed as a young woman, a virgin daughter, thus likely in her early teens, being approached by the “big, bad man,” Assyria, who is intent on raping and pillaging her the same way he raped and destroyed her sister, the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Yet with God’s help she defies him, ridicules him, and shakes her head at him. She trusts God, and God, her protector, steps in and takes care of the situation. Ultimately those who trust in God will always have the victory, even over death. “Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15:57; cf. 1 Cor. 15:54-57).

2Ki 19:24

**“I will dry up all the rivers of Egypt.”** The king of Assyria had not yet ventured into Egypt (and historically never did), but he is boasting that the “rivers” of help for Israel that might flow out of Egypt would never materialize. But Assyria was wrong to assume that Israel’s only help and hope was Egypt, because the real help was Yahweh their God.

2Ki 19:25

**“Long ago I made it and I formed it in ancient times.”** What God is saying is that “long ago” He made and formed the principles that are the basis of the events that occur in life—in this case the principles and covenants that led to the trouble that Judah was in. God is not saying here that long ages before Hezekiah’s time He decided that the Assyrian army would lay waste many cities in Judah. If that was what He was saying, then why would He have sent prophets to tell the Judeans to repent and obey His commands? If He had already decided ages before that the Assyrians would destroy Judah (and Israel), then sending prophets to get the people to repent would have just been some sort of pretend game. For God to send a prophet to tell the people to repent when He already knew they would not repent would only be some kind of immature “I told you so” one-upmanship.

God was sincere when He sent the prophets to the people of Israel and Judah, and those people had a genuine chance to repent and not only avoid destruction but to live and prosper. But when God’s people rejected Him and the laws He gave them, then the principles that God had set in place long before influenced what happened on earth, and in this case, the Judeans suffered at the hands of the Assyrians.

2Ki 19:26

**“weak.”** An idiom. The literal Hebrew is “their inhabitants—small in hand.”

**“like the plants of the field and like the green vegetation.”** The ancient and powerful cities are here compared by the figure simile to the grass of the field and green vegetation, which is very short-lived.

**“grass on the housetops.”** The houses had flat roofs that were often surfaced with hardened mud, which grew weeds. But the weeds had no depth of earth and were not watered, so during the dry season, they were quickly scorched and died.

2Ki 19:27

**“I know your sitting down.”** That is, where you stay.

**“your going out and your coming in.”** That is, what you do, how you live. This is the figure of speech polarmerismos, where two ends or extremes are put for the whole. An English example is, “That is the long and short of it,” meaning the essence of the whole matter. A person would go out of his tent or house in the morning and go back in at night, so to know their going out and coming in was to know their life.

[See figure of speech “merismos.”]

2Ki 19:29

**“the sign to you, *Hezekiah*.”** The “you” changes from Sennacherib to Hezekiah.

**“what grows on its own.”** It was too late to plant this year, and the year following there will not be enough grain harvested this year to sow like normal. Some will be sowed, but not like normal. People will still have to depend on the “volunteer” grain that grows of itself.

**“and in the second year what springs up that same way.”** One reason that they may not plant the second year is that second year might be a Sabbatical Year.

2Ki 19:30

**“that has escaped.”** See commentary on 2 Kings 19:4.

**“take root downward and bear fruit upward.”** That is, begin to get reestablished and to flourish. People will have food, water, and shelter, and families will begin to grow in number again.

2Ki 19:31

**“Yahweh.”** Some manuscripts read “Yahweh of Armies” (traditionally, “LORD of hosts”).

2Ki 19:34

**“and for my servant David’s sake.”** God rescued Jerusalem because of the promises God made to David, and the promises of the coming Messiah. Those things saved Jerusalem this time (Sennacherib’s campaign into Judah started in 701 BC), but it was also saved by the godliness of Hezekiah and the people he influenced. Sadly, after Hezekiah, although there were some godly kings, by about 608 BC there was a series of ungodly kings and the people turned to ungodly behavior, and in 586 BC the Temple and Jerusalem were burned by Nebuchadnezzar, and the Judeans were deported to Babylon.

2Ki 19:35

**“And that night.”** This verse is almost identical to Isaiah 37:36.

**“And when they got up early in the morning.”** The ones who got up in the morning were the Israelites, the Assyrians were dead. This verse is a good example of why reading the Bible requires logic and knowing the context. God expects us to read with care and build our background knowledge of His Word.

2Ki 19:36

**“So Sennacherib.”** Cf. Isaiah 37:37.

**“Nineveh.”** The capital city of Assyria.

2Ki 19:37

**“And as he was worshiping.”** This is repeated in Isaiah 37:38. The Hebrew word translated “worship,” *shachah* (#07812 שָׁחָה), is the same Hebrew word as “bow down.”

[For more on bowing down, see the word study on “worship.”]

**“Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons.”** There is ancient manuscript evidence for “his sons” here, and also in Isaiah 37:38.

**2 Kings Chapter 20**

2Ki 20:1

**“In those days.”** This chapter is out of chronological order. This sickness occurred before the Assyrian attack on Judah (2 Kings 18:13). This can be calculated from the death of Hezekiah, and also from what God says in 2 Kings 20:6.

**“sick to *the point of* death.”** The record of Hezekiah’s sickness and recovery is in 2 Kings 20:1-11; 2 Chronicles 32:24-26; and Isaiah 38:1-22.

2Ki 20:3

**“And Hezekiah wept; *it was* a great weeping.”** See commentary on Isaiah 38:3.

2Ki 20:5

**“I have heard your prayer. I have seen your tears. Behold, I will heal you.”** The record of the healing of Hezekiah is one of the most profound and obvious examples in the Bible about God answering prayer, and about how God reacts and adjusts when people obey Him and have intimate fellowship with Him. In this instance, God had told Isaiah that Hezekiah would die, but when King Hezekiah truly humbled himself and prayed, God changed His mind and healed Hezekiah.

[For more on God changing His mind, see commentary on Jer. 18:8.]

2Ki 20:9

**“steps.”** The Hebrew word can mean “degrees,” like degrees on a sundial, or it can mean “steps,” which can also apply to a sundial, but can also apply to a staircase. The scholars are divided, and the variations among the English Bibles reflect the lack of certainty on the part of the translators.

2Ki 20:11

**“the sundial of Ahaz.”** The Hebrew can refer to a sundial or to steps. E. Fox[[23]](#footnote-26031) has “step-dial” in 2 Kings 20:11.

2Ki 20:12

**“Berodach-baladan.”** He is called “Merodach-baladan” in Isaiah 39:1, and there are Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic, and Latin manuscripts that have that name here in 2 Kings as well. It may be a copyist’s error, or there may be an intentional change of the name here in 2 Kings.

**“sent letters and a present to Hezekiah.”** This event is also recorded in Isaiah 39:1-8.

2Ki 20:13

**“Hezekiah listened to them and showed them all his treasure house.”** Hezekiah’s actions are prideful but understandable. Historically, it seems that at this time Merodach-baladan was the king of Babylon and the son of an earlier well-known king named Baladan. It is understandable why the King of Babylon would send a present to Hezekiah. It was at Jerusalem that Babylon’s enemy, the Assyrians, were defeated and much of their army killed (2 Kings 19:35), and no doubt Merodach-baladan was trying to establish closer ties with Hezekiah that would lead to an ultimate defeat of Assyria and give Babylon control of Mesopotamia. Hezekiah was no doubt flattered by the attention of Babylon and could not have foreseen in 721 BC or so that by 586 BC it would be the Babylonians who would destroy Judah, burn the Temple down, and carry the Judean people captive to Babylon.

2Ki 20:18

**“eunuchs.”** The Hebrew word can refer to eunuchs or to court officials, and the English versions are divided as to the meaning in this context. Actually, it is likely that both meanings are true. Some men were likely made eunuchs while others rose to prominence in the kingdom.

2Ki 20:19

**“trustworthy peace.”** The Hebrew text is most likely a hendiadys where two nouns are stated but one is meant as an adjective. The literal text is “peace and truth,” but the idea seems to be that the “truth” is that the Assyrians that Hezekiah was concerned about would not conquer Jerusalem if the treasures and his family was going to still be there years later, and he had been guaranteed 15 years by the prophet Isaiah. So the “peace and truth” is “truthful peace” (we would say, “trustworthy peace”) based on the word of Isaiah, which Hezekiah trusted.

Hezekiah is encouraged by the word of Isaiah that Judah will survive the impending Assyrian attack, so even though there will be trouble later, for the present the word of Yahweh is “good.” Also, Hezekiah knew well from personal experience that the word of Yahweh could change if people changed, and so he likely also thought that he might be able to somehow change this problematic word from Isaiah by repentance and prayer in a similar manner to how the revelation about his death was changed and 15 years were added to him.

[See figure of speech “hendiadys.”]

2Ki 20:20

**“tunnel.”** The Hebrew word is more properly a watercourse, conduit, or channel, but in this case the conduit was a tunnel.

**2 Kings Chapter 21**

2Ki 21:3

**the *local* shrines.”** The Hebrew word “shrines” is *bamot*, which referred to a place that was leveled and built up and on which were placed various idols and objects of worship. Many of the towns had such shrines (see commentary on Num. 33:52).

**“worshiped.”** The Hebrew word translated “worshiped,” *shachah* (#07812 שָׁחָה), is the same Hebrew word as “bow down.”

[For more on bowing down, see the word study on “worship.”]

2Ki 21:6

**“pass through the fire, and he practiced sorcery and used enchantments, and made *contact with* spirits and familiar spirits.”** These kinds of things are forbidden by God (cf. Deut. 18:10-11).

2Ki 21:7

**“the house of which Yahweh said.”** The “house” is the Temple.

2Ki 21:13

**“the measuring line of Samaria and the plumb bob of the house of Ahab.”** Here in 2 Kings 21:3, God uses instruments used in measuring and building to show that He will use the same standards of judgment on Judah that He had used on Israel.

**“turning it over on its face.”** That is, to turn the plate upside down. However, to “turn on its face” brings the emotion that the world of the plate was completely disrupted, and the world of Judah was about to be completely disrupted.

2Ki 21:15

**“ever since the day their fathers came out of Egypt.”** So Judah had been provoking God to anger for some 700 years.

2Ki 21:19

**“Jotbah.”** A town of this name is mentioned in Josephus and the annals of Tiglath-Pilesar III, but even so its location is unknown.

2Ki 21:23

**“and put the king to death.”** Exactly who “the servants” are who killed Amon and why they killed him are not known. Part of the obscurity of the assassination is the lack of clarity as to who Amon’s “servants” were. In the biblical culture, everyone in the kingdom was a “servant” to the king, from his highest officials, leaders, and military officers to the lowest slave in his kingdom (see commentary on 2 Sam. 11:1). This could have been a case where Amon’s “servants” (whoever they were) were happy that his father Manasseh had reformed and become a godly person and they were upset that Amon was returning to his father’s pagan ways and decided the best course of action was to obey the Mosaic Law and kill Amon. But if that were the case it seems the people of Judah would have been glad he was dead and thus not kill the conspirators. Or, perhaps the “servants” in this case were the actual palace servants who felt that Amon was treating them badly in some way and killed him out of anger. The Bible does not give us enough information to know the truth about what happened.

2Ki 21:24

**“the people of the land.”** This phrase is ambiguous, because sometimes it refers to the more wealthy landowners, and sometimes it refers to the countryfolk.

**2 Kings Chapter 22**

2Ki 22:1

**“Bozkath.”** In Joshua 15:39, a town by this name is located between Lachish and Eglon, and since it only occurs there and here that is likely the same town. If so, Bozkath is in western Judah.

2Ki 22:4

**“house of Yahweh.”** That is, the Temple.

**“guards of the threshold.”** More than just “doorkeepers,” these men guarded the Temple entrances and protected it and its contents.

**“gathered from the people.”** The record in 2 Chronicles 34:9 gives much more detail.

2Ki 22:8

**“I have found the Book of the Law in the house of Yahweh.”** Being the High Priest, it is possible that Hilkiah had access to areas of the Temple that others could not get to, or it is possible that Yahweh led him to it or he simply discovered it while in the process of repairing the Temple.

This is a very important statement because in general, liberal scholars say that this time of Josiah was when Deuteronomy was written. But it seems clear that the Law had been written and an ancient copy had been found at this time.

2Ki 22:9

**“reported.”** The Hebrew is idiomatic, more literally, “returned a word to the king.”

**“emptied out the money.”** The money had been collected and would have been put in some kind of chest or container, and now that container had been emptied out and the money—the silver—given to the workers. At this point in history, “money” was in the form of pieces of silver or gold, not in coin form.

2Ki 22:13

**“listened to.”** The Hebrew text is “heard” or “listened to,” but it also carries the connotation of “obeyed.”

2Ki 22:14

**“keeper of the wardrobe.”** It seems that this was a description and that the actual title was “Over the Wardrobe” (see commentary on 2 Kings 10:22, where this phrase is also used). The “keeper of the wardrobe” would be Shallum, and Huldah would have been his wife.

**“in the second *district*.”** This would be the western hill, west of the city of David. It would have been called “the second” district because it was an addition to the city of Jerusalem, added during the time of Hezekiah in the early 700s BC. The Hebrew text does not have the words “quarter,” “district,” or “section” like many English versions do. It just has “the second.”

2Ki 22:17

**“making me angry by all the work of their hands.”** This refers to the idols that the people had made. The NIV adds to the Hebrew text for clarity and reads, “and aroused my anger by all the idols their hands have made.” But the Hebrew text emphasizes that the idols were “the work of their hands.” God is understandably angry that Israel would ignore the One who created them to worship and serve something they had created.

2Ki 22:18

**“the words that you have heard.”** That is, the words of the scroll that the king heard when they were read to him.

**2 Kings Chapter 23**

2Ki 23:1

**“The king sent, and they gathered.”** This verse is very similar to 2 Chron. 34:29.

2Ki 23:4

**“second rank.”** That is, the rank just below the High Priest.

**“and carried their ashes to Bethel.”** The idea was to pollute Bethel and make it unclean (cf. 2 Kings 23:15).

2Ki 23:5

**“shrines.”** The Hebrew word “shrines” is *bamot*, which referred to a place that was leveled and built up and on which were placed various idols and objects of worship. Many of the towns had such shrines (see commentary on Num. 33:52).

2Ki 23:6

**“on the graves of the common people.”** This was not to defile the graves, for graves were already “unclean.” This was to show contempt for, and defile, the Asherah.

2Ki 23:7

**“in the house of Yahweh.”** The fact that Manasseh and Amon allowed cult prostitutes to live and serve in the Temple of Yahweh shows how far from God Judah had turned before Josiah’s reforms, and why, even after his reforms, the sins of Manasseh, which had become part of the culture of Judah, had dire consequences (2 Kings 24:3-4).

**“coverings.”** The word is difficult because it literally means “houses,” but the women did not weave houses. It could have been coverings that were used to “house” the Asherah from the elements, they could have been little enclosures to set the Asherah apart from the rest of the shrine, or they could have been coverings like clothing around the Asherah. The ancients sometimes decorated the statues of their gods and goddesses.

2Ki 23:8

**“shrines.”** The Hebrew word “shrines” is *bamot*, which referred to a place that was leveled and built up and on which were placed various idols and objects of worship. Many of the towns had such shrines (see commentary on Num. 33:52).

**“Geba to Beer-sheba.”** This phrase describes the heartland of Judah, with Geba on the north and Beer-sheba on the south.

**“the shrines at the gates.”** Archaeologists have uncovered shrines at some gates of the ancient cities.

**“the gate of Joshua the governor of the city.”** The exact city is unknown, but it is quite possible the city being referred to is Beer-sheba.

2Ki 23:9

**“did not come up.”** It is likely that these priests who had served the pagan shrines in their cities were not allowed to minister at the altar of Yahweh in Jerusalem.

**“their brothers.”** That is, their brother priests, not their biological brothers.

2Ki 23:10

**“Topheth, which is in the valley of the sons of Hinnom.”** The “valley of the sons of Hinnom” is the valley just south of the city of Jerusalem, which was called “Gehenna” in the New Testament. “Gehenna” is the Greek for the Hebrew word *ge*, meaning “valley,” and Hinnom, which was the name of the Israelite man who originally owned the valley (Josh. 18:16).

“Topheth” was the name of the place (cf. Jer. 7:32; 19:6, 11), or the “fireplace” itself, in the Valley of Hinnom where children were burned to death as sacrifices to pagan gods. It is associated with Moloch and Baal (Jer. 32:35).

“The name was probably derived from a word meaning ‘cook stove,’ ‘oven,’ pronounced *tepāt* but purposely perverted to Topheth by the substitution of the vowels of the Hebrew *bst*, cognate to Ugaritic *btt*, ‘shame,’ ‘abomination.’ The rabbinic etymology from Hebrew *tp*, ‘drum’ is farfetched. The name occurs only in the OT [Old Testament].”[[24]](#footnote-11057)

Jeremiah 19 contains the record of the prophet Jeremiah confronting some of the elders ruling Jerusalem and some of the ruling priests. First, Jeremiah buys a pot from a potter, then he takes the elders from Jerusalem into the Valley of Hinnom to the area of Topheth and confronts the elders about their pagan practices and about burning children to their gods. Then he smashes the clay jar in front of them and foretells that Jerusalem will be smashed as well, and that the area where they are standing will be so filled with dead bodies that there will be no room to bury them, and the birds and animals will eat the dead bodies. This prophecy was partially fulfilled when the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem, and it will be completely fulfilled when Christ comes back and fights the Battle of Armageddon (cf. Rev. 19:17-18, 21).

2Ki 23:11

**“the horses.”** It is unclear whether these were real horses or statues, but the fact that they were placed at the entrance of the Temple lends credence that these were statues. Josiah “put an end” to them; he likely destroyed them.

**“Nathan-melech.”** The name Nathan-melech appears only here in the Bible. It was announced in March of 2019 that a clay bulla (the impression in clay made by a stamp-seal) was found in the City of David inside the remains of a public building that had been destroyed in the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC. The clay bulla read, “[Belonging to] Nathan-melech, servant of the king,” and it was written in ancient Hebrew script. While it is impossible to conclude that the Nathan-melech of the seal was the same Nathan-melech in the Bible, the dating and location of the find, and the status of the person himself, establish at least a very good possibility.

**“colonnade.”** The Hebrew word only occurs here and the meaning is uncertain, so the English versions vary greatly.

2Ki 23:12

**“hastily removed *them* from there.”** The Hebrew is debated by scholars and the English versions vary. The Hebrew phrase “from there” is clearly in the text, however.

2Ki 23:13

**“south side.”** The Hebrew is the “right hand,” which is to the south.

**“Mountain of Corruption.”** A derogatory term for the Mount of Olives, which had been defiled by the pagan temples that Solomon built on it (1 Kings 11:7).

**“for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Sidonians and for Chemosh the abomination of Moab and for Milcom the abomination of the children of Ammon.”** It is amazing that these pagan shrines on the Mount of Olives, which overlooked Jerusalem from the east, survived the reign of Hezekiah.

2Ki 23:14

**“standing-stones.”** Most standing-stones were set up as part of the worship of pagan gods, and that is the context here. God has no tolerance for idols. They are harmful in many different ways, and God commanded that they be destroyed.

[For more on standing-stones, see commentary on Gen. 28:18. For more on idols being harmful, see commentary on Deut. 7:5.]

2Ki 23:15

**“he broke down that altar and the shrine.”** This fulfilled the prophecy of the young prophet in the book of Kings (cf. 1 Kings 13:2-3).

2Ki 23:18

**“along with the bones of the prophet.”** The bones of the old prophets were buried with the bones of the young prophet (1 Kings 12:30-31).

2Ki 23:19

**“all the temples at the shrines.”** The Hebrew is more literally, “the houses of the shrines,” and it refers to the temples that were built at the local shrines. These “houses” were the temples of the pagan gods. A temple was often called the “house” of the god (see commentary on Num. 33:52).

**“in the cities of Samaria.”** So Josiah went through the territory of Israel as well as Judah destroying the pagan shrines.

2Ki 23:20

**“slaughtered.”** The Hebrew text uses the word that is used in animal sacrifice: “slaughtered,” or “sacrificed.”

**“shrines.”** The Hebrew word “shrines” is *bamot*, which referred to a place that was leveled and built up and on which were placed various idols and objects of worship. Many of the towns had such shrines (see commentary on Num. 33:52).

2Ki 23:21

**“as it is written.”** See Deuteronomy 16:1-6.

**“the Book of the Covenant.”** See commentary on Exodus 24:7.

2Ki 23:24

**“eradicated.”** The Hebrew word is “burned,” in this case figurative for totally removing them.

**“had familiar spirits.”** See commentary on Deuteronomy 18:11 (Deut. 18:10-12).

**“and the teraphim.”** Teraphim were household gods (see commentary on Gen. 31:19).

2Ki 23:25

**“all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength.”** Cf. Deuteronomy 6:5.

**“the Law of Moses.”** The Hebrew is “the *torah* of Moses,” where “*torah*” is much more than “law.” The *torah* involves instruction in many different ways (see commentary on Prov. 1:8).

2Ki 23:26

**“Yahweh did not turn from the fierceness of his great wrath.”** This is not because God does not forgive sins, because He does. It was because the sin and idolatry in Judah ran so deep that Josiah’s reforms did not penetrate into the hearts of the people. As soon as Josiah was killed in battle, his three sons who were three of the next four kings of Judah, all did evil in the sight of Yahweh, and the fourth king, who was a grandson, did too (2 Kings 23:31-32, 36-37; 2 Kings 24:8-9, 17-19). In this verse, God piles on words for anger to express how angry He was because of the sins of His people, Judah, who had entered into a covenant with Him to obey Him. The “anger words” include: *Aph* (#0639 אַף 'aph) a noun, literally “nostril, nose, face” but used idiomatically of anger because of the way the face changes when someone is angry. *Charon* (#02740 חָרוֹן), a noun, “heat, anger.” *Charah* (#02734 חָרָה), a verb, “be hot, be burning, be angry.” *Kaas* (#03708 כַּעַס), a noun, “anger, vexation, provocation.” *Kaas* (#03707 כָּעַס), a verb, “to be angry, be vexed, be provoked.” All these words are used leaving the abundantly clear message that God was very angry with Judah because of their sins, especially the sins of King Manasseh, some of which are listed in 2 Kings 21:2-3.

2Ki 23:27

**“and the house.”** The “house” is the Temple.

2Ki 23:28

**“the Book of the Chronicles.”** The parallel chapters in Chronicles that cover Josiah are 2 Chronicles 34-35.

2Ki 23:29

**“went up to *help* the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates.”** Pharaoh Neco saw that Assyria was falling, and the king of Assyria was fleeing west to escape from Babylon. Pharaoh Neco saw that Babylon was getting stronger and stronger, so he traveled north to help the Assyrians because he foresaw that the real problem he would have in the future was with Babylon. Josiah likely felt that Assyria had been the historical enemy of Judah, and besides that, if the Assyrians were defeated there would have likely been a power vacuum in the Middle East, and Josiah likely thought that Egypt would be the natural power to fill that vacuum and take over territory in Judah. In any case, Josiah unwisely attacked Pharaoh Neco’s army and was defeated and killed. This record is also spoken of in Jeremiah 46:2.

Although a few English versions say that Pharaoh Neco was going up to the Euphrates River to fight against the Assyrians, that is not the case (cf. ASV, CEB, JPS, KJV, YLT).

**“but Pharaoh Neco killed him.”** The Hebrew text reads that “he killed him,” but the pronoun use is confusing so many English versions change the “he” to Pharaoh Neco for clarity. Josiah’s death is recorded as happening almost by accident because he disguised himself when he entered battle and was killed by archers (2 Chron. 35:20-25). Thus his death was somewhat similar to the death of wicked King Ahab of Israel (1 Kings 22:30-37).

**“when he saw him.”** In this case, “saw” means much more than just “to see,” it means to see and to engage in battle.

2Ki 23:30

**“took Jehoahaz...and anointed him and made him king.”** Cf. 2 Chron. 36:1. There is not a lot about Jehoahaz in the Bible. He is only mentioned in 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles, unlike the other last kings of Judah, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin (also called Jeconiah and Coniah), and Zedekiah, who are not only written about in Kings and Chronicles, but are also written about in the prophets such as Ezekiel and Jeremiah.

2Ki 23:31

**“Jehoahaz.”** Jehoahaz is also known as Shallum (1 Chron. 3:15; Jer. 22:11).

**“Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah.”** This is not Jeremiah the prophet, but someone else named Jeremiah. Hamutal is the mother of two of Josiah’s sons: Jehoahaz and Zedekiah, who was the last king of Judah to reign in Jerusalem.

2Ki 23:33

**“Riblah.”** A town in northern Syria.

**“in the land of Hamath.”** There is a town in northern Syria that was called Hamath and is now called Hama, and the area around Hamath is “the land of Hamath.”

**“fine.”** This is a penalty, so “fine” captures the meaning of the text very well.

**“100 talents of silver and a talent of gold.”** At this time in history, a “talent” was 75 pounds, with each pound being 16 ounces. Thus the fine leveled on Judah by Pharaoh Neco was 7,500 pounds of silver and 75 pounds of gold.

2Ki 23:34

**“Eliakim.”** The name means “God will raise up.”

**“Jehoiakim.”** The name means “Yahweh will raise up.”

2Ki 23:36

**“Rumah.”** Rumah is a city in the Galilee, but there are a couple of possible candidates for its location. If Josiah married a woman from the Galilee then we have an indication of how large his influence was in the ancient territory of Israel.

**2 Kings Chapter 24**

2Ki 24:1

**“and Jehoiakim became his servant.”** Jehoiakim had been appointed king of Judah by the Pharaoh Neco (2 Kings 23:34), but by now Nebuchadnezzar was more powerful and influential than Egypt.

2Ki 24:2

**“And Yahweh sent against him.”** This is the idiom of permission, where Yahweh allows something to happen because someone’s sins, or a nation’s sins, prevent Yahweh from righteously protecting the people. As we see from the scope and context (cf. 2 Kings 24:3), the sins of Manasseh had so infiltrated and involved the people of Judah, and the people of Judah were so sinful themselves, that Yahweh could not righteously protect them from demonic oppression and control.

**“and he sent them against Judah to destroy it.”** Although the verb translated “sent” at the beginning and end of the verse is the same, the last “sent” is more intensive than the first one. God had said He would send the foreign nations against Judah because of their sins (cf. Jer. 25:9; 35:11).

2Ki 24:3

**“because of the sins of Manasseh.”** Some are listed in 2 Kings 21:2-3.

2Ki 24:4

**“the innocent blood that he had shed.”** This is also mentioned in 2 Kings 21:16.

**“and Yahweh was not willing to forgive.”** God will forgive sin if people truly repent and confess, so this verse is not saying that God will not forgive the killing of innocent people. History is full of murderers who God has forgiven, including the apostle Paul. What this verse is saying is that the sins of Manasseh were still affecting the people of Judah over 30 years after Manasseh died, and so because of the ongoing sin God could not forgive Judah. By the time of 2 Kings 24:4, during the reign of Jehoiakim, it had been over 30 years since Manasseh died, and those 30 years included Josiah’s reform during which the Temple was repaired and the feasts kept. But as good and godly as Josiah tried to be, he never cleansed Judah of its deeply-rooted sin. What was really going on such that God could not forgive Judah was happening both in the spiritual and the physical realm.

On the physical level, people who had participated in the terrible sins of Manasseh were still around and still affecting Judah. Some of those people were likely in the royal family, some were likely high officials in the kingdom, and some were likely high-ranking military officers. These people would still be doing evil, even if it was not being done on a national level or very openly. On a spiritual level, the heinous sin opened the door for demons to infiltrate the kingdom and influence people’s thoughts and actions, as well as cause other types of disasters such as famines, floods, destructive weather, etc. When demons are empowered by sin to work in a family or kingdom, they work to get deeply rooted in it, and therefore do not leave just because a righteous ruler comes to power. It takes years and diligent work to clean a kingdom or family of the influence of demons, and stopping egregious sins such as murder and idolatry—and there are other such sins as well—is part of cleansing the kingdom in the sight of God.

The fact that a kingdom or nation can be adversely affected by sin and evil long after the primary sinner or sinners are gone is the same reason that God says in the Ten Commandments that if people are involved in idolatry that they will suffer the consequences of that idolatry to the third and fourth generation (Exod. 20:5). Although some idolatry is simply the result of ignorance, a lot of idolatry reveals the disdain and defiance that a person has for God, and that attitude is usually passed down in whole or in part from parents to children. Furthermore, the idolatry also allows demons to come into the family in various ways, including demon possession and oppression, and also direct demonic influences that cause destruction, sickness, and poverty.

The world is a war zone between Good and Evil, and when we humans are evil, God cannot protect us from the evil spirits that we allow into our lives through our ungodly behavior. Also, sadly, as in any war, there is collateral damage, and other people who are doing their best to be godly often get hurt.

2Ki 24:5

**“Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim.”** The book of Chronicles, and especially the book of Jeremiah, have a lot more to say about Jehoiakim, who was an evil king. Chronicles tells us that Nebuchadnezzar had Jehoiakim put in chains to bring him to Babylon, but he never made it there. From Chronicles and Jeremiah, we learn that Jehoiakim died in chains and was not even buried but was ingloriously thrown outside the gate of Jerusalem to rot and be eaten by vermin. That is the meaning of being buried with the burial of a donkey; donkeys were not buried (Jer. 36:30; Jer. 22:18-19). It is likely that Jehoiakim’s body was dragged into the Valley of Hinnom (Greek: “Gehenna”) just south of the city wall and left there to rot.

**“the Book of the Chronicles.”** Jehoiakim is mentioned in 2 Chronicles 36:4-8. However, there is much more about Jehoiakim in the book of Jeremiah (cf. Jer. 22:18-19) .

2Ki 24:6

**“So Jehoiakim slept with his fathers.”** This is a very understated way to describe the death of Jehoiakim, who was a very evil person. For example, he cut up the scroll of the Word of God and burned it in the fire (Jer. 36:19-25). Jehoiakim rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 24:1), who put him in chains to take him to Babylon (2 Chron. 36:6). However, Jehoiakim died in chains, although the cause of his death is not given. Nebuchadnezzar then had his dead body thrown out of Jerusalem, where it lay to be eaten by the birds and vermin of the earth (Jer. 22:19; 36:30).

**“Jehoiachin.”** Jehoiachin in 2 Kings is known as Jeconiah in 1 Chronicles 3:16-17, and as Coniah in Jeremiah.

2Ki 24:7

**“the Brook of Egypt.”** This is the Wadi El-Arish, which runs across the Sinai and drains into the Mediterranean Sea.

2Ki 24:8

**“Jehoiachin was 18 years old.”** In 2 Chronicles 36:9, the Hebrew text says Jehoiachin was eight, not 18, but 18 seems correct.

2Ki 24:12

**“went out *in surrender* to the king of Babylon.”** Jehoiachin left the walled city of Jerusalem and surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar. This was 597 BC, and Ezekiel was in this captivity and taken to Babylon at this time (Ezek. 1:2).

**“in the eighth year of his reign.”** That is, in the eighth year of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign. Jehoiachin only reigned for three months (2 Kings 24:8).

2Ki 24:13

**“the Temple of Yahweh.”** The Hebrew text could also refer to the “Holy Place” in Yahweh’s Temple.

2Ki 24:16

**“strong and apt for war.”** It seems that these people who were carried as captives to Babylon became part of the war effort in Babylon, not as fighters, but more as people who would contribute to the machinery of war.

2Ki 24:17

**“Mattaniah, Jehoiachin’s uncle, king in his place.”** So “Mattaniah” was a son of King Josiah, who was killed in a battle with Egypt (2 Kings 23:29). Pharaoh Neco made Eliakim king and changed his name to Jehoiakim. Jehoiakim made peace with Nebuchadnezzar but then rebelled against him, so when Jehoiakim died, Nebuchadnezzar replaced Jehoiakim with his son Jehoiachin. But Jehoiachin rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar and so was taken captive to Babylon. Jehoiachin had no sons, so Nebuchadnezzar replaced him with one of his grandfather Josiah’s sons, Mattaniah.

**“and changed his name to Zedekiah.”** The fact that Nebuchadnezzar changed Mattaniah’s name to Zedekiah indicates that the two of them had made a covenant of peace, which is something that more powerful kings required of kings they conquered. The peaceful relationship that Zedekiah had with Nebuchadnezzar is why Zedekiah made a trip to Babylon in the fourth year of his reign (Jer. 51:59). It was sometime after that trip to Babylon that Zedekiah rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, but the Bible does not say in which year of Zedekiah’s reign that rebellion started, and that is possibly because the rebellion happened in stages, with small and less noticeable disobedience at first and only later large scale rebellion.

2Ki 24:18

**“Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah.”** This is not Jeremiah the prophet, who was from Anathoth.

2Ki 24:20

**“And Zedekiah rebelled.”** The Hebrew of this phrase can be translated as a purpose clause like the KJV, “that Zedekiah rebelled,” or it can be translated like the REV (cf. CJB, ESV, NASB, NET, NIV), in which case Zedekiah’s rebellion is not “because of” God’s anger, but in spite of it. King Zedekiah ignored the revelation that would have saved his life, the lives of his family members, and the lives of many of his people.

Zedekiah was a weak king who was fully aware of the disasters that had happened to Judah, and was also aware that some prophets and Scripture said—although he did not act like he believed it—that sinning against Yahweh brought destruction while repenting and obeying Him would bring relief (although at this point it was likely too late for any real salvation of the Kingdom of Judah, but individuals could still be saved; cf. 2 Kings 23:27). At this point, sin and ungodliness had become so embedded in the culture and the people of Judah, and especially the leaders, that God was fighting against Judah, not for it (Jer. 21:3-7). Zedekiah was concerned about his safety and likely realized that he could not defeat the Babylonians, and therefore his best course of action was to surrender. However, he eventually gave into his fear of, and pressure from, the elite of Judah and false prophets (Jer. 38:19; 28:1-4). He rebelled against Babylon, and so the prophecies of Jeremiah about what would happen to him if he did that came to pass (Jer. 27:12-15; 38:18, 21-23; Ezek. 17:16-21). He was not executed, but died a captive in prison (Jer. 34:4-5), but it must have been a miserable captivity: the last thing he saw on earth was his sons being executed, then he was taken as a prisoner to Babylon where he died (Jer. 52:9-10).

Every leader has good advisors and bad advisors, and it is often the case that the bad advisors use fear and pressure to manipulate and get what they want. A good leader finds ways to ignore the advice of bad advisors and overcome the fears and trouble they predict. A good leader must have the strength and courage to do things God’s way, if not to make things better in this life, to make them better in the next. God no doubt tells us what He does about Zedekiah, and shows him to us as an example, so we can see the personal and social disaster that a weak and self-centered leader brings upon himself and those he leads. Zedekiah knew God’s will, but did not have the courage to obey it.

**2 Kings Chapter 25**

2Ki 25:1

**“And in the ninth year of his reign.”** This event and chronology are in 2 Kings 25:1-4 and in Jeremiah 39:1-2 and 52:4-5. The siege of Jerusalem took from the tenth day of the tenth month of the ninth year of Zedekiah (2 Kings 25:1; Jer. 39:1; 52:4) to the ninth day of the fourth month of the eleventh year of Zedekiah (2 Kings 25:2-3; Jer. 39:2; 52:6-7). So the siege of Jerusalem took about 18 months.

**“and they built a siege wall around it.”** This siege wall the Babylonians built around Jerusalem is mentioned in 2 Kings 25:1, Jeremiah 52:4, and Ezekiel 17:17. It was a common practice for an army to build a wall that surrounded the city that they were attacking if the city was well fortified and the siege would take a long time. This kept the enemy from escaping and thus being able to fight another day, and it also kept supplies and weapons from being smuggled into the city. In part because of this siege wall, there was a famine in Jerusalem (2 Kings 25:3). The siege wall that the Romans built around Masada is still very visible after nearly 2000 years, but the siege wall around Jerusalem has been dismantled over time.

2Ki 25:3

**“On the ninth day of the *fourth* month.”** The word “fourth” is supplied from Jeremiah 52:6.

2Ki 25:4

**“Then a breach.”** This verse is very similar to Jeremiah 52:7.

**“the way of the gate between the two walls.”** There were likely two walls on the east and west sides of the south end of the old city of David, but the gate Zedekiah and the people with him used was the gate on the east side, because the Bible says, “the gate...that was by the king’s garden, and the location known as the king’s garden was on the southeast end of Jerusalem. The Babylonians would have thrown up their siege ramps on the north walls of Jerusalem, because that would have been the easiest attack spot, so Zedekiah likely tried fleeing from the southern side of the city and headed east.

**“Chaldeans.”** The word Chaldeans here likely refers to people who came from the southeast part of the Babylonian Empire, the heart of ancient Babylon.

**“by the road that led to the Arabah.”** The Arabah in this context is the desert-like section of the Jordan Valley east of Jerusalem, so Zedekiah was fleeing east. His likely destination was Ammon or Moab, where it is likely that he thought he could find refuge from the Babylonians or go from there further east into Arabia or south into Egypt or Ethiopia.

2Ki 25:5

**“But the army of the Chaldeans.”** Cf. Jer. 52:8.

**“the plains of Jericho.”** That would be still on the west side of the Jordan River, before Zedekiah could cross the Jordan River.

2Ki 25:6

**“Then they took the king.”** Cf. Jeremiah 52:9.

**“Riblah.”** This is Riblah in Syria on the Orontes River. It is where Pharaoh Neco had taken Josiah’s son, Jehoahaz the king of Judah, and judged him (2 Kings 23:33). Riblah in Syria is about 200 miles north of where Zedekiah was captured, and the Bible never gives the period of time between his capture and when he was judged and punished by Nebuchadnezzar.

**“and they pronounced judgment.”** The “they” would be Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon and his advisors, but Jeremiah has “he” because the final decision would have been made by Nebuchadnezzar.

2Ki 25:7

**“and *then* put out the eyes of Zedekiah.”** The punishment of Zedekiah was especially severe because Zedekiah had sworn allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar in the name of God (2 Chron. 36:13; Jer. 52:10-11). It was commonly done by kings who ruled over large areas to have very severe punishments for rebellious kings; that was a major way that empire rulers kept their vassal kings from being rebellious.

**“and he bound him in bronze chains.”** The “he” is Nebuchadnezzar, who gave the order to bind Zedekiah.

**“and carried him to Babylon.”** Zedekiah was carried to Babylon and died in prison there (Jer. 52:11).

2Ki 25:8

**“on the seventh day.”** Jeremiah 52:12 says the tenth day. One of the two dates is a copyist’s error, but it is unclear which date is wrong. Some scholars have dated this to August 14, 586 BC (cf. [NET text note](https://classic.net.bible.org/verse.php?book=2Ki&chapter=25&verse=8&tab=commentaries)).

2Ki 25:9

**“the house of Yahweh.”** Cf. Jer. 52:13. The house of Yahweh is the Temple, in this case, the Temple that Solomon had built. The burning of the Temple in Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar’s army is mentioned in 2 Kings 25:9; 2 Chron. 36:19, and Jeremiah 52:13.

**“and the king’s house.”** The king’s house is the palace, and the palace of the kings of Judah goes back to when Solomon spent years and much money to build his palace.

**“every great house.”** The “great houses,” the large and magnificent houses, are mentioned separately because they might normally be spared, especially if Nebuchadnezzar planned to have an administrative center in Jerusalem. The houses had been defiled by pagan worship. The people had been burning incense to Baal on the roofs of the houses (Jer. 32:29). The burning of Jerusalem was so horrific and widespread that there is archaeological evidence of that burning being found in Jerusalem to this day.

2Ki 25:10

**“All the army of the Chaldeans.”** Cf. Jer. 52:14, which is slightly different.

2Ki 25:13

**“the stands.”** The stands were the stands that all the washing basins were set in (1 Kings 7:27; cf. Jeremiah 52:17).

2Ki 25:15

**“the sprinkling bowls.”** Cf. 1 Kings 7:40.

**“whatever was of gold, as gold, and whatever was of silver, as silver.”** The idea was that whatever was of gold was taken away as gold, and the same with silver. So the Babylonians took away all the gold and silver before they burned Jerusalem to the ground. If they hadn’t, the gold and silver would have just melted into the ground. Compare the expanded list in Jeremiah 52:19.

2Ki 25:17

**“the latticework.”** Cf. 1 Kings 7:18.

2Ki 25:18

**“Chief Priest.”** This is the same position as the High Priest (cf. Jer. 52:24).

2Ki 25:19

**“and five men.”** Jeremiah 52:25 says “seven men,” and there is no known reason for the difference.

**“Those Who See The King’s Face.”** That is, the advisors to the king. Most people were not allowed to see the king close up, but his close advisors were allowed to (cf. Esther 1:14).

**“present in the city.”** The Hebrew text reads “found in the city,” but the use of “found” is idiomatic. The people were not necessarily hiding, they were still present in the city when the Babylonian officials came into the city.

2Ki 25:21

**“struck them down and put them to death.”** This is written in such a way that there is no mistake as to what happened to these men. Nebuchadnezzar killed the leadership so that there would be no possibility of an organized rebellion (cf. Jer. 52:27).

**“Riblah.”** This is Riblah in Syria.

2Ki 25:23

**“Mizpah.”** Thought to be the site about eight miles north of Jerusalem in the tribal area of Benjamin.

2Ki 25:24

**“Do not be afraid *to be* servants of the Chaldeans.”** The word “servants” is a noun (cf. Jer. 40:9. See also DBY, DRA, KJV, NET). This exhortation was important because the Jews were not supposed to be servants to a pagan king, but that seemed to be a necessity now because of their sin.

2Ki 25:27

**“It came to pass in the thirty-seventh year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah.”** There is a big jump in time between 2 Kings 25:26 and 25:27, about 25 years or so.

2Ki 25:29

**“Jehoiachin.”** The Hebrew text reads “he,” but it seems to point to Jehoiachin. It would be the lesser king who would eat “before” or “in the presence of” the greater king, the king of Babylon.

1. See W. Schlegel, *Satellite Bible Atlas*, map 6-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-18004)
2. James B. Pritchard, *ANET*, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 320. [↑](#footnote-ref-21370)
3. Schlegel, *Satellite Bible Atlas*, map 6-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-30739)
4. See Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*, 263, 394, “repetitio.” [↑](#footnote-ref-25941)
5. Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor, II Kings [AB], 47. [↑](#footnote-ref-20526)
6. Cogan and Tadmor, II Kings [AB], 47. [↑](#footnote-ref-23103)
7. M. Cogan and H. Tadmor, *II Kings* [AB], 66. [↑](#footnote-ref-29134)
8. M. Cogan and H. Tadmor, *II Kings* [AB], 79. [↑](#footnote-ref-14976)
9. Cp. Fox, *The Schocken Bible*. [↑](#footnote-ref-12069)
10. I.e., in the late 1800s. [↑](#footnote-ref-12008)
11. C. F. Keil, Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament: 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles*, 3:243. The ten-volume commentary was originally published between 1866 and 1891, which is apparent from the spelling and the illustration of the quill pen. [↑](#footnote-ref-20645)
12. *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*. [↑](#footnote-ref-10387)
13. Cp. Norma Franklin, “The Lost Tombs of the Israelite Kings,” BAR, 33:4, 26-35. [↑](#footnote-ref-16443)
14. Cp. Bill Schlegel, *The Satellite Bible Atlas*, map 7-5, 95 [↑](#footnote-ref-15434)
15. Schlegel, *Satellite Bible Atlas*, map 7-4, 93. [↑](#footnote-ref-28125)
16. See Koehler and Baumgartner, *HALOT,*  for the definition “removed.” [↑](#footnote-ref-18052)
17. James Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 284-85. [↑](#footnote-ref-10151)
18. *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*. [↑](#footnote-ref-14705)
19. Everett Fox, *The Schocken Bible*. [↑](#footnote-ref-18205)
20. Walter Maier, *1 Kings 12-22* [ConcC]. [↑](#footnote-ref-22980)
21. Koehler and Baumgartner, *HALOT* *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon*. [↑](#footnote-ref-23070)
22. See Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor, *II Kings* [AB], 212. [↑](#footnote-ref-31001)
23. E. Fox, *The Schocken Bible*. [↑](#footnote-ref-26031)
24. Merrill C. Tenney, *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, “Topheth,” 5:779. [↑](#footnote-ref-11057)