

Introducing the Books of I and II Kings

Like the Books of I & II Samuel, I & II Kings were originally written as one book and were divided by the Septuagint translators about 300 BC. They record: the last days of David; the reign of Solomon, his death and the division of the kingdom; the parallel history of the two kingdoms, Israel in the North and Judah in the South; the carrying away of Israel into Assyrian captivity; and the subsequent history of Judah until its being carried away, incrementally, into captivity in Babylon.

Also like I and II Samuel and I and II Chronicles, in I and II Kings, when “LORD” appears, as an appellation of God, the unique YHWH name is consistently used, thus we see the all-capitals “LORD” rendering (rather than the alternative “Lord”). When this name is combined with "God" it is always "LORD God." ¹

As H.H. Halley observed, "I Kings opens with the Hebrew nation in its glory, and II Kings closes with the Hebrew nation in ruin." Together they cover a period of about 400 years, approximately from 1,000 BC to 600 BC.

In the Outside World

In the outside world, it is the time of Homer, the Trojan War, and the dawn of Greek history.

NOTE: Trying to keep the various kings of the divided kingdoms sorted out can be difficult. In fact, for most of us, it is difficult. The names themselves are sometimes difficult; some kings are called by more than one name; and, once, both kingdoms probably had kings with the same name, at the same time. To help in keeping these kings and their reigns straight, it will be extremely helpful to refer to “The Kings of Israel and Judah,” a simplified chart with explanatory notes, in Part V (Selected Topical Summaries), and to print it and keep it handy.

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The History, Book 6

I Kings

¹ For a more complete explanation of this, see the introductory statement in the study guide to I Samuel.

The Book of I Kings opens with the death of David, and the passing of the throne to his son Solomon. Then there follows the history of the unified kingdom under Solomon, his wisdom, the building and dedication of the Temple, his descent into idolatry, and his death. The kingdom is divided after Solomon's death into the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and the Southern Kingdom of Judah, and the Book of I Kings records about the first 75 years of the period of the two separate kingdoms. As the book closes, wicked King Ahab is killed, and succeeded by his son Ahaziah as King of Israel; and pious-but-gullible Jehoshaphat dies, and is succeeded by his son Jehoram (Joram) as King of Judah. Altogether, the book records a period of about 125 years.

A. Author. The human author is believed to have been the prophet Jeremiah (the Talmud identifies him as such); yet II Chron. 32:32 suggests that Isaiah compiled the records up to the time of Hezekiah, and that Jeremiah compiled the rest. The author (or authors) compiled earlier records, referred to in I Kings as: the Book of the Acts of Solomon; the book of Nathan the prophet, the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite; the visions of Iddo the seer; the Books of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel; and the Books of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah.

B. Place and Date. The compilation of the Book of Kings was probably done by Jeremiah, in Jerusalem, about 600 BC, and divided into the two books of I and II Kings in Alexandria by the Septuagint translators, about 300 BC.

C. Occasion. The occasion for I Kings was to compile the records of the Kings of Israel and Judah, from the death of David and the succession of Solomon, to the beginnings of the separate kingdoms.

D. Theme. The theme of I Kings is the blessed state when in obedience to the laws of God, compared with the awful consequences of disobedience and apostasy.

E. Highlights. Highlights of I Kings include the following:

1. Adonijah Makes His Move. (1:1-10)

David weakens and his death is near. A fair young virgin, a Shunammite named Abishag, is selected to nurse David, and to lie in David's bed to keep him warm.

Meanwhile Adonijah, David's son by Haggith, and Absalom's younger brother, knows that David will soon die, and he makes his move to succeed to the throne. Like his brother Absalom before him, Adonijah hires chariots, horsemen, and runners to go before him, behaving as if he were a king; he does this without consulting his father, but David does not correct him². Now people are choosing a prospect to follow, and Adonijah recruits Joab, David's general, and Abiathar the

² This was David's great failure as a father; he allowed his children to rear themselves and did not correct them. The same was true of Eli and Samuel before him.

priest; but Nathan the prophet, Zadok the priest, and Benaiah, with his mighty men, do not join up (in fact, they are not even invited).

NOTE: Adonijah was, by order of birth, the rightful heir to the throne. David's first-born son was Amnon, who later raped his half-sister, Tamar, and would be killed in Absalom's conspiracy of Revenge. The second-born son was Chileab, mentioned only once in the Bible as being the second son born; he appears to have died prior to these events, possibly while very young. David's third son was Absalom, who was killed in his attempt to seize his father's throne in a failed rebellion. David's fourth son was Adonijah.

Two more sons, Shephatiah and Ithream, were born to David in Hebron. Later, after David had conquered the Jebusites and occupied all of Jerusalem, more sons were born to him in Jerusalem, including Nathan, who would be the son included in the Messianic genealogy. Still later he would commit the sin with Bathsheba whose baby died, and then she would bear Solomon. Although Solomon was far from being next in line for David's throne by order of birth, at some point not recorded in Scripture David had promised Bathsheba that Solomon would be heir to his throne as king. He kept his promise. Of all the sons of David who were older than Solomon, thus rightful heirs to the throne, only Absalom, who attempted to seize the throne before his father's death, and Adonijah, who attempted to replace his father while he was dying, made any attempt to take the throne instead of Solomon.

2. Bathsheba's Counter-Move. (1:11-40)

Nathan the Prophet tells Bathsheba what Adonijah is doing, and advises her to speak with David about it. She does this and, on cue, Nathan also enters and gives David the details of Adonijah's move to seize the throne³. David declares that Solomon shall succeed him, and directs that he shall ride on David's mule and be anointed king by Nathan, and Zadok the priest, at Gihon⁴. Solomon is anointed with oil, the trumpet is sounded, Solomon is declared king with great shouting, and suddenly things are looking grim for Adonijah, Joab and Abiathar the priest; they had bet on the wrong horse.

NOTE: Verse 40 includes a curious bit of hyperbole, stating that there was such wild rejoicing that the earth was cracked by the sound. Did this actually occur? Probably not. It seems to be just a bit of Jewish poetic metaphor, attempting to describe the great noise as the people expressed their joy. Commentators usually

³ It appears that Bathsheba discretely leaves the King's room as Nathan enters, only to be re-called by David.

⁴ Gihon was the location of a large spring. Under King Hezekiah the spring would become the main water supply for walled Jerusalem, with the water carried into the city underground via Hezekiah's Tunnel, and the spring itself would be covered and concealed to prevent invaders from finding it, diverting the water, and depriving Jerusalem of its supply.

pass it by; neither Matthew Henry, nor Finis Dake, nor Henry Morris, attempts an explanation. Frances Siewert, in her Amplified Bible, renders it "so that the earth [resounded] with the joyful sound." I will follow the example of those much more knowledgeable and wiser than I, and leave the interpretation to the reader.

3. The Party's Over. (1:41-53)

With Adonijah's celebration at its peak, Jonathan, son of Abiathar the priest, is sent to Adonijah with the news of Solomon's being made king. This bad news instantly ends the party and the guests flee to their homes, leaving Adonijah alone with Joab and Abiathar (glad-handers and hangers-on always disappear when things go sour). Adonijah flees to sanctuary in the Tabernacle, clinging to the horns of the altar; Solomon, in his first pronouncement as king, states that no harm shall come to Adonijah as long as he goes home and behaves⁵. Thus ends Adonijah's attempted coup d' etat (but, as we shall soon see, not its consequences).

4. The Death of David. (2:1-11)

David, knowing that his death is near, calls Solomon to his bedside and gives him two-part instructions. First, he admonishes his son to obey the commandments of God, and reminds him of God's promise that David's descendants will reign in Jerusalem as long as they walk faithfully in His statutes and commandments. Then David gives his son final instructions about some unfinished matters of justice: he tells Solomon to execute Joab and Shimei (the Benjamite who railed at, and cursed, David when he was fleeing from Absalom); but he tells Solomon to bless and care for the sons of Barzillai, who had bravely and generously helped David during those dark days⁶. With his final instructions given, David, the man after God's heart, dies in peace. He is 70, and he has reigned 40 years (seven years in Hebron and 33 years in Jerusalem)⁷.

5. Tying Up Loose Ends. Solomon deals with the loose ends of justice as requested by David, and handles them with admirable restraint.

a. Adonijah's Fatal Mistake. (2:12-25)

Adonijah, his life spared after trying to seize the throne from Solomon, and safely ensconced in the royal court, asks to marry Abishag, the fair maiden who cared for David and warmed his bed in his final sickness. He doesn't ask Solomon directly, but asks Bathsheba to make the request for him. Probably because of Abishag's unique, semi-marital relationship with David, Solomon perceives in

⁵ By this time, clinging to the horns of the altar of burnt offering seems to have been a place of refuge where one could flee for safety until a conflict could be sorted out and resolved. Soon, Joab will also flee there for safety (2:28).

⁶ II Samuel 17:27-29; 19:31-39.

⁷ David actually reigned for 7 1/2 years in Hebron; but here the number is rounded off, down, to the seven complete years.

Adonijah's request his lingering ambition to take the throne; this is shown when, rhetorically, Solomon asks his mother if she would "ask for him the kingdom also." Because of this apparently treasonous request, Solomon immediately has his half-brother put to death; and thus end both Adonijah's threat to the throne, and his life.

b. A Prophecy Fulfilled. (2:26-27)

Solomon spares Abiathar's life because of his faithful service to David, suffering with him, while being persecuted by Saul; but he removes Abiathar from the active priesthood, sending him to his home in retirement for the rest of his life. Thus is fulfilled the prophecy against Eli and his descendants more than 80 years earlier, that his line would cease to function as priests forever (I Sam 2:30-36)⁸.

c. Bloody Joab's Bloody End. (2:28-34)

Joab, David's captain of the host, had followed Adonijah in his failed attempt to take the throne, and flees to David's Tabernacle for sanctuary. He knows that he is to be executed, and clings to the horns of the altar, preferring to die there. This man of bloody violence, whose solution to almost all situations had been a short sword "under the 5th rib," apparently submits without resistance to his own bloody end. Bloody handed, violent Joab dies clinging to the altar, slain by Benaiah, his replacement as captain of the host; although it is not stated, it is a reasonable assumption that Benaiah finished Joab off with a thrust "under the 5th rib."

***NOTE:** Joab, David's nephew and his Captain of the Host (the commanding general of David's army), was a fascinating man. He seemed to think that the solution to every socio-political problem was a short sword thrust "under the 5th rib"; at times, his violent proclivities shocked even David, who was, himself, a mighty warrior whose killing in wars prevented him from being allowed to build the Temple. And yet, when spiritual David turned carnal, insisting on his illicit numbering of Israel, Joab was the more spiritual one, warning David that he would be offending God. And finally, facing execution for backing Adonijah's attempt to seize the throne, he flees to the Tabernacle, gripping the horns of the altar of burnt offering for safety, as Adonijah had done. But then, realizing that he would be killed anyway, even there in the sacred precincts, this mighty, violent warrior seems meekly to have accepted his death. If Joab is in Heaven, he will have fascinating stories to tell, and I will have many questions.*

6. Solomon's Wise Choice. (3:1-15)

Solomon gets off to a good start. Although his first wife is an Egyptian, chosen for political reasons, his heart is basically right ("And Solomon loved the LORD..."), and his love for the LORD moves him to make extravagant sacrifices at

⁸ Abiathar, the sole survivor of King Saul's insane slaughter of the priests at Nob, whom David had made High Priest, was 4th High Priest in descent from Eli. See I Sam 2:30-36 for the prophecy against the family of Eli.

the Tabernacle of Moses on "the great high place" at Gibeon. In a dream at Gibeon, the LORD tells Solomon to ask what he will, and it will be given to him. Solomon, in probably the most right thing he will ever do, says that he is young, lacking wisdom, and he is overwhelmed with the responsibility of ruling over such a great multitude; he asks for wisdom to know how to rule. The LORD is so pleased with his request that He replies that He will give Solomon the wisdom that he requests, greater than anyone before him or after him, and, because he had not asked for riches and power, He will also give him unprecedented riches and power. These are unconditional promises. Then the LORD adds one conditional promise: **if** Solomon will keep His statutes, and walk as did David before him, Solomon will live a long life. With this Solomon wakes, undoubtedly to ponder the dream and the life before him, and goes to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices and host a feast for all his servants⁹.

NOTE: David's Tabernacle in Jerusalem, erected to house the Ark of the Covenant, was not the original Tabernacle of Moses; it included an altar of sacrifice, for there Adonijah and Joab had clung to the horns of the altar. But the parallel passage in II Chronicles 1 reveals that the original Tabernacle was still at "the great high place" at Gibeon. By this time, the original Tabernacle was 500 years old. Its inner covering of animal skins was probably still intact, but its cloth outer covering had probably been replaced more than once.

7. Two Women with One Child. (3:16-28)

Very soon (immediately, it appears) Solomon is presented with a challenge to his newly imparted wisdom, a case widely known from that day until now, among both believers and unbelievers. Two women, harlots, appear before him with one baby boy, each claiming to be his mother. Solomon calls for a sword and commands that the baby be cut in half, and one half be given to each woman. One woman thinks this is a good idea, but the other pleads for the life of the baby, offering to give him up to the other woman. Solomon then knows that this second woman is the real mother, gives her the baby, and his reputation for God's wisdom immediately becomes notorious.

8. Solomon's Reign: Wealth and Peace. (4:1-28)

Solomon settles in to reign over the united kingdom of Israel with mind-boggling wealth. He has Benaiah as captain of the host, Zadok and Abiathar as high priests and 12 subordinate rulers over the 12 regions of the kingdom¹⁰. Each of these

⁹ We may wonder why Solomon "came to Jerusalem" to offer sacrifices and celebrate (v 15). The Tabernacle of Moses was at the Great High Place at Gibeon, where the LORD appeared to him in a dream; but the Ark of the Covenant was in David's Tabernacle at Jerusalem.

¹⁰ There were never two High Priests in office at the same time; because Abiathar was forbidden to function (2:26,27), he would have been High Priest Emeritus, and Zadok the active High Priest.

regional rulers is responsible for providing food for Solomon's court for one month of the year. Peace and prosperity reign.

9. Solomon's Unique Wisdom and Knowledge. (4:29-34)

As God had promised, Solomon possesses supernatural wisdom; he also has great knowledge and understanding of natural science. He is also generous. And he is a prolific writer, creating 3,000 proverbs, 1,005 songs, and (presumably) many volumes of botany and zoology¹¹. People come from far and wide to hear him speak.

10. Gathering Material for the Temple. (Chapter 5)

Hiram, King of Tyre, although a pagan ruler, had been a friend of David, and he sends greetings and blessings to Solomon as his father's successor. Solomon and Hiram make arrangements for materials for the Temple to be sent from Tyre, especially timber from the mountains of Lebanon. Solomon will pay the expense, provide workmen, supervisors, and large amounts of food and olive oil; Hiram will provide the skilled timber cutters and stone cutters and deliver the materials down the coast to Israel¹².

***NOTE:** Some information about the building of the Temple is found here in I Kings 6 and 7, some in the parallel passages in II Chronicles 3 and 4, and some in both. Even with the combined information it is difficult to know exactly how the Temple was arranged, as one quickly learns from careful reading of these chapters (this alone can make the head swim!). For this reason expert opinions differ, as do their various models and drawings of the Temple, although each may be described by its builder/author as "accurate" or "authentic." What follows is my best effort at following the literal wording of the passages and trying to keep it as simple as possible.*

11. Solomon Builds the Temple. (6:1-22)

In the 4th year of his reign, Solomon begins to build the Temple¹³. The stones and the timbers are cut to fit, away from the site, so that there is no noise of hammer or saw, and there is no rubble at the site. This interesting practice seems to be motivated by reverence for the project. The Temple proper is built of stone, 90 feet long, 30 feet wide, and 45 feet tall. The dimensions of the Temple proper are twice those of the Tabernacle of Moses. A porch is built across the front, the

¹¹ This broad-scope knowledge of Solomon is referred to in the book of Ecclesiastes, which he will write toward the end of his life.

¹² Hiram appears to have become a proselyte to the Jewish religion during his friendship with David. He not only gives generously in materials for the Temple and provides skilled workers, but in writing to Solomon about the project he praises "the LORD" (YHWH) in v 7. Don't be surprised if we meet King Hiram in Heaven.

¹³ For a precise chronology of the period between the Exodus and the 4th year of Solomon's reign, see the Dake Annotated Study Bible, p 626, note a.

width of the building (30 feet); it is 15 feet deep. Inside, the stone cannot be seen; the walls, floor and ceiling are lined with cedar, with an additional layer of fir on the floor. The wood floors, walls and ceilings of the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies are completely overlaid with gold, and the walls are decorated with carvings of cherubim, palms and flowers. Before the entrance to the Holy of Holies is a curtain of gold chains¹⁴; and the altar of incense, just outside the entrance in the Holy of Holies, is covered with gold.

NOTE: In the doctrines of Freemasonry there is a fictitious messianic character called Hiram Abiff who was supposedly the architect and builder of the Temple. In the ritual of initiation into the Master Mason (3rd) Degree, this Hiram is murdered (martyred) because he will not disclose the plans; he is then hastily buried in the construction rubble at the site. Yet the Bible is very clear in that God Himself is the architect, down to the most minute detail, the plans were never a secret, and there was no rubble at the building site for the burial of this fictitious character—or for the burial of anyone else. The legend of Hiram Abiff in Freemasonry is blasphemous fiction, actually based upon the pagan Egyptian legend of Isis and Osiris. For more information on the true nature of Freemasonry, based entirely on the writings of the most respected Masonic scholars, see the author's book, "33 Degrees of Deception," Bridge-Logos Foundation, Alachua, Florida, publisher.

12. A Larger Pair of Cherubim. (6:23-28)

Solomon has two huge cherubim (angels) carved, from olive wood and overlaid with gold, for the Holy of Holies. Each is 15 feet tall, with wings completely spread over the place of the Ark of the Covenant below. This was probably done because the new Holy of Holies is a much larger room than was the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle of Moses¹⁵.

13. Finishing the Temple. (6:29-38)

Bi-fold doors are made into the Holy of Holies. They are made of olive wood, with decorative carvings like the walls, and covered with gold; similar doors are made of fir for the entrance to the Holy Place, similarly carved and covered with gold. The next chapter will reveal that both sets of doors are hung on hinges of gold. Outside the Holy Place and Holy of Holies is a court containing the brazen altar of burnt offerings, brazen sea and other basins for washing by the priests; only

¹⁴ Also covering the entrance, within the Holy of Holies, was the Veil of the Temple; although it is not mentioned here, it is described in II Chron 3:14.

¹⁵ The Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle seems to have been a cube, 10 cubits (15 Ft.) in all three dimensions. Since the cherubim for the Temple were themselves 10 cubits (15 Ft) tall and their wings, touching, combined to make them 10 cubits (15 Ft) wide, the Holy of Holies (Most Holy Place) of the Temple must have been at least 15 cubits (22 ½ feet) in all three dimensions. It is more likely that it was 20 cubits (30 Ft.) in all three dimensions.

priests and Levites could enter here. Outside the Temple proper there seems to have been a large outer court, from which the common people could see the priests at work in the inner court. The complete construction of the Temple takes 7 1/2 years.

14. And Palaces are built. (7:1-12)

At this point the scriptural account tells of the palaces Solomon built. It appears that, once the Temple was built, construction was begun on his own palace, a project which proceeded at a slower pace, requiring 13 years to complete. It also appears that this building began while the furnishings and utensils for the Temple were being made (this passage interrupts the description of the Temple project). His palace, like the Temple, was lined with cedar from Lebanon, and included a porch with a throne where he could sit in judgment. A second, smaller palace was built for his Egyptian wife. The stones for the palace foundations, floors and walls were "costly stones," i. e., sawed and shaped to fit perfectly.

15. Pillars for the Temple Entrance. (7:13-22)

King Hiram of Tyre provides for Solomon a master craftsman named Hiram, an expert in casting things of brass¹⁶. This Hiram was the son of a Jewish widow from the tribe of Naphtali; his dead father had been a gentile of Tyre¹⁷. Hiram first cast 2 large brass pillars to be set up on the porch, flanking the Temple entrance. They were 27 feet tall, 18 feet in circumference, and were named Jachin ("He [God] establishes") and Boaz ("In Him [God] is strength"). At the top of each pillar is a chapiter (capital), a decorative cap of brass; it is 7 1/2 feet tall, decorated with chains, pomegranates, and lilies. To be able to cast something of brass, so large, with the technology of that day, is amazing.

16. And a Huge Brass Bowl. (7:23-26)

As amazing as is his accomplishment in casting the brass pillars for the Temple entrance, Hiram surpasses that by casting a huge brass bowl ("molten sea") for ceremonial washings by the priests and Levites in the inner court. The bowl is 45 feet in circumference, 15 feet in diameter, 7 1/2 feet tall, and its walls are 4 inches thick. It is ornamented with brass lilies and knops (knobs or flower buds), and the rim is rolled like the brim of a drinking cup. The brass sea sits on 12 brass oxen, six feet long and 4 1/2 feet tall, arranged in threes, facing outward, with three facing north, three facing east, three facing south, and three facing west. The brazen sea holds about 17,000 gallons of water; since it was too tall for reaching

¹⁶ Brass is an alloy of copper and zinc. Bronze, a much harder, but less pretty, metal is an alloy of copper and tin and was commonly used in making weapons and tools. There is controversy as to whether in various passages the single Hebrew word should be rendered brass or bronze, for it has both meanings. Here it seems to me that brass is correct, for it is brilliant and beautiful when polished; but the fact is that we do not know.

¹⁷ Thus, in the lessons and rituals of Freemasonry, their Hiram character is referred to as "Hiram, the widow's son."

into it to draw water, it probably had either steps up to the brim, or taps (faucets) around the bottom¹⁸.

17. Ten Lavers and Ten Bases For the Inner Court. (7:27-39)

Next Hiram makes of brass 10 lavers (bowls) for ceremonial washing, set on 10 large, moveable, table-like bases. The bases are 6 feet square, 4 1/2 feet tall, with shelves, and 4 wheels; the wheels are 27 inches in diameter; the apparent purpose of the wheels is to be able to move the 10 lavers to and from the molten sea for refilling. The top of each base is made with a raised circular rim in the center, 9 inches high; this rim will hold a large laver (bowl). The 10 bases are richly decorated with lions, oxen, cherubim and palm trees, and are identical in size. The 10 lavers are large, round bowls, each holding 340 gallons of water. They are arranged in two rows of five each, with five on each side of the inner court.

18. Too Much to Calculate. (7:40-47)

The casting has been done in the Jordan Valley because of the availability of clay there for making molds. The total weight of the brass work that Hiram has made is so great that even the Israelite scribes, who keep detailed records of almost everything, do not attempt to record it. Apparently the amount is beyond their ability to calculate. And so Hiram, the widow's son, finished all the work in brass and, we may assume, went home to his mother in Tyre¹⁹.

***NOTE:** Another way in which the Masonic legend of Hiram of Tyre, the widow's son, is completely unscriptural is that in the legend (acted out in the initiation into the 3rd [Master Mason] Degree) he is heroically and tragically murdered before he can finish his work. Verse 40 makes it clear that the Hiram of the Bible finished "all the work that he made King Solomon for the house of the LORD [v 40]."*

19. And Gold Lamps Complete the Temple. (7:48-51)

The furnishings of the inner court are finished with 10 gold lamp stands ("candlesticks"), with oil basins, tongs, spoons and snuffers, all of gold. It seems that each lamp stand will be located with one of the brass lavers and bases, five on each side of the inner court. And, with the Temple finished, Solomon brings all the precious items which had been dedicated previously, and sanctified by his father David, into the treasury of the Temple. The Temple is now finished, and ready for dedication.

20. Bringing the Ark to the Temple. (8:1-9)

¹⁸ The combined height of the brazen sea and the oxen upon which it stood made the rim of the bowl 12 feet above the ground.

¹⁹ Verse 41 speaks of covered bowls in the chapters (tops) of the brass pillars, suggesting that they were topped with burning lamps.

With the new Temple ready to receive the Ark of the Covenant, Solomon summons the leaders from all over the kingdom, and they assemble at the Tabernacle David had erected for the Ark of the Covenant. With the priests carrying the Ark, they all proceed to the Temple, bringing also all the holy objects from the Tabernacle. As they proceed they stop to offer sacrifices of sheep and oxen--so many that those ardent record-keeping Jews cannot count them all! With the multitude standing outside rejoicing, the priests place the Ark in the Holy of Holies, beneath the wings of the large cherubim. By this time the Ark contains only the stone tablets with the Law engraved on them, which Moses had placed there on Mount Horeb (what had become of the gold pot of manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, is unknown)²⁰. With the Ark in its place, the priests "drew out" the gold-covered staves²¹.

NOTE: Many critical scholars insist that none of the Old Testament was put into writing until about 200-400 BC; yet this passage states clearly (as does the parallel account in I Chron 5:9) that the golden staves remained in that position "unto this day." Thus, the time of the writing was prior to the destruction of the Temple by Nebuchadnezzar about 600 BC; and it could have been much earlier, perhaps as early as 950 BC, for the Temple was looted and robbed of much of its gold by the King of Egypt, soon after Solomon's death.

21. "The Cloud Filled the House of the LORD." (8:10-11)

When the priests deposit the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies, draw out the staves, and come out into the Holy Place, the Presence of the LORD fills the Temple in the form of an awesome cloud. The power of this Presence is so great that the priests cannot function in ministry because they cannot stay on their feet. Oh, would that we might all experience, so powerfully, the Presence of God!

NOTE: This is part of the scriptural basis for the present-day phenomenon usually referred to as being "slain in the Spirit." The underlying principle seems to be that when confronted by the presence of the Holy Spirit, the presence can at times be so powerful and overwhelming that one cannot remain on one's feet. It is sad to relate, but true, that this phenomenon seems sometimes to be perverted and counterfeited today, more emotional than spiritual. At times it may be literally feigned. Yet the underlying principle is scriptural and valid, and many examples personally known to the author cannot be explained in any way, except that they were valid. For other examples in scripture, see II Chron 5:14; Ezek 1:27-2:2; Rev 1:10-17.

²⁰ "Horeb" in this passage is probably synonymous with Mount Sinai, or one of its peaks.

²¹ Exactly what was done here with the staves is unclear, but they remained in the Holy of Holies. Drawing them out symbolized the fact that the Ark would no longer need to be carried from place to place, for it was now in its permanent home (at least Solomon and the people believed it was never again to be moved)..

Another possible, and less likely, interpretation of "the priests could not stand to minister" is that the presence of the Holy Spirit was so manifestly powerful that they could not tolerate it, and fled from the glorious Presence.

22. The Altar Was Too Small! (8:54-66)

Solomon speaks to the people, then falls on his knees, with his hands lifted ("spread forth his hands to Heaven"), and praises the LORD for a very long time (8:12-53).

With this done, he stands, faces the people, charges them to be faithful to the LORD, and then offers as peace offerings 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep. The number of animals offered is so great that the brazen altar of burnt sacrifice, 30 feet by 30 feet, cannot hold them; so a spot in the middle of the outer court is sanctified and some of the animals are sacrificed there. With the Temple dedicated and functioning, Solomon declares a 14-day feast; and, at the end of the second period of seven days, he dismisses the people. The building and furnishing of the Temple had taken seven years to complete.

NOTE: Numbers in the Bible are always significant, and the study of them is called "biblical numerology." Although in many places the meaning of a number is not clear, in this case it is obvious: seven is the number representing completion or perfection.

23. The LORD Visits Solomon a Second Time. (9:1-9)

With the Temple and palaces finished, and with the promise of a long and prosperous life lying before Solomon, the LORD visits him a second time, apparently in a dream ("as he had appeared unto him at Gibeon"). The LORD repeats His conditional promise to give Solomon a long, peaceful and prosperous life; this time, however, the LORD lays heavy emphasis on the condition that Solomon must be faithful to the LORD and His statutes. And this time He describes in emphatic detail the bad things that will follow if either Solomon or his descendants should turn from His commandments and serve other gods.

24. The First Israeli Navy.

Solomon builds the first Israeli Navy, with a naval base at Ezion-geber on the Red Sea, at the northern end of the Gulf of Aqaba. Solomon, however, doesn't need a fighting navy, for (as God had promised) his entire reign is peaceful, and Israel is the most powerful nation in the world. Solomon's navy is a merchant fleet, built and operated with the guidance of Phoenician experts provided by King Hiram of Tyre. With it he imports gold, ivory, and other precious things from Ophir²². (9:26-28)

²² Archeologists have discovered sophisticated copper smelting facilities at Ezion-geber, indicating that Solomon was also a prosperous exporter of copper, brass and bronze, precious materials in that day for making tools, weapons

25. The Queen of Sheba Comes to Call. (10:1-13)

Word of Solomon's wisdom and wealth spreads over the known world, and the Queen of Sheba, an extremely wealthy ruler, travels to Jerusalem to see for herself²³. She comes to test Solomon's wisdom "with hard questions," bringing with her as gifts great quantities of gold, spices, and precious stones. She also brings "almug" (algum) trees, most probably in the form of logs, which are used for musical instruments and other wood implements for the Temple, and for Solomon's palace²⁴. She is dazzled by Solomon's wisdom and his wealth ("there was no more spirit in her") and declares that all that she had heard was not even half the reality she found. She also acknowledges that YHWH is the God of Israel, and honors Him (v 9). Solomon loads her down with similar gifts and she returns to her home.

26. Solomon's Amazing Wealth. (10:14-29)

As God had promised, Solomon's wealth is greater than that of anyone else the world has ever seen, or will ever see. His throne is made of ivory and covered with gold; all his drinking vessels are of gold (silver is considered too common); silver becomes as common in Jerusalem as rocks. He has horses and chariots in the thousands, and builds special cities for them; one, at Megiddo, has been excavated, revealing stone hitching posts and stone feed boxes. His enormous income from trade is increased by gifts and tolls, brought by those who come from all over the world to hear his wisdom. The valleys were forested with cedars; Israel was beautiful with green trees and herbs. One could accurately say that he now has it all, and with God's blessing.

27. But Things Go Sour at Jerusalem. (11:1-13)

Chapter 10 describes Solomon's unprecedented wealth and prosperity; then chapter 11 begins with the ominous word, "But," and describes his fall into corruption. Whoever it was who chose to place the chapter break here, I salute him; he could not have done better²⁵! Solomon has it made, as has no man ever before him, and as no man will after him. Yet he manages to ruin everything over strange (foreign, pagan) women--1,000 of them! Although the LORD has warned

and decorations. Ophir was the area of southern Arabia and adjacent Africa, with its most important gold mines in what is today Yemen.

²³ Jesus referred to her as "the queen of the south," because Sheba was south of Israel in the Arabian Peninsula. It was the land of an Arab people called Sabeans, was part of the region called Ophir, and included the rich gold mines in what is today the Arab nation of Yemen. The Queen made a desert trip of 1,200 miles to see and meet Solomon.

²⁴ Exactly what these trees were, or where they had grown, is today unknown. Whatever they were, their wood was rare, and such as to be ideal for shaping as musical instruments. Josephus wrote that the wood was similar to that of the fig tree, but whiter (Antiquities 8.7.1); most commentators suggest that it was red sandalwood. The reality is that we don't know.

²⁵ As we saw in the Introductory Material, the division of the books of the Bible into chapters is generally attributed to Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury (ca 1155-1228 AD).

him of the consequences, Solomon accumulates the world's largest harem, composed of pagan women, and when he is old they seduce his heart away from the LORD, and he foolishly adopts their paganism. In fact, he plunges into it with gusto, building temples to the various, hideous, pagan gods of Moab, Ammon, Edom, Sidon and the Hittites. He thus crosses a line his father David had never crossed: his heart is turned from the LORD his God to foul, pagan, gods. Unbelievably, in throwing away all God's blessings, Solomon even violates his own inspired teachings in Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon.

The wisest, most brilliant man in human history behaves as if he were the most stupid man in human history. The LORD tells him (perhaps through a prophet, for Solomon has now ruined his personal relationship with the LORD) that, because his heart is turned to other gods, the kingdom will be taken from him. Like Adam and Eve, Solomon has been given a life without care in a perfect situation, but has ruined it by choosing to sin. Because of the LORD's love for David and Jerusalem, the terrible consequences will be postponed until after Solomon's death, and one tribe will remain for Solomon's descendants to rule. In this way, the Messianic line will be preserved.

NOTE: Verses 14 through 25 describe the origins of two men who will become adversaries of Solomon: Hadad of Edom, and Rezon, who would found a kingdom in Damascus. Although they would be adversaries, they did not attack Solomon's united kingdom for, as we shall see in I Chron, as the word of the LORD came to David, Solomon's life will be lived out in peace, with no wars, in spite of the apostasy of his latter years²⁶.

28. A Dramatic Prediction of an Unpleasant Future. (11:26-40)

Jeroboam, a young man of Ephraim, a promising man of ambition and courage, catches the eye of Solomon and is put in charge of the regions of Ephraim and Manasseh ("the house of Joseph"). As Jeroboam, clad in a fine new garment, leaves Jerusalem (presumably having been there for an audience with Solomon), he is accosted by a prophet named Ahijah. As we have already seen, Old Testament prophets often illustrated their prophecies dramatically, and in the process were often called upon to do strange things. This is such an occasion. Although Jeroboam has been put in a position of power, and is undoubtedly proud of his expensive new garment, Ahijah stops him, rips his fine new garment into 12 pieces, hands him 10 of them, and tells him that the nation will be divided²⁷. He prophesies that Jeroboam will be king of 10 of the tribal areas, leaving only Judah

²⁶ I Chronicles 22:9

²⁷ The passage does not make it clear whose was the fine new garment. Although many authorities believe that it was Jeroboam's, there is reason to believe that it was Ahijah's; nevertheless, whose ever it was, the illustration was dramatic, and the message was the same.

and Jerusalem for Solomon's son²⁸. He is told that the cause of all this is Solomon's idolatry, and is promised that God will bless Jeroboam's kingdom if he will be faithful. Word of this prophecy reaches Solomon, and Jeroboam has to flee; he goes to Egypt for refuge, but the stage is set for the division of the kingdom.

29. Solomon Dies and Rehoboam Is King. (11:41-12:5)

Solomon dies and his son, Rehoboam, is crowned king to succeed him. The crowning takes place in Shechem, of the tribe of Ephraim, rather than in Jerusalem, which seems strange; perhaps Rehoboam knows of the prophecy of Ahijah, and wants to make a political statement that he will be king of all Israel and not just of Judah and Benjamin. At any rate, Jeroboam returns from exile in Egypt and apparently becomes spokesman for the 10 northern tribes. He announces (apparently with "amens" from the people) that Solomon had demanded too much from the people, and that they will acknowledge Rehoboam as their king and serve him, if only he will lighten their burden.

30. The Blind Leading the Blind. (12:6-11)

In the three days that follow, King Rehoboam consults with the elders who had advised his father. They wisely advise him to ease up on the people; in fact, they give him the very excellent advice to "be a servant unto this people," a concept unknown in the pagan world²⁹. Foolishly, Rehoboam rejects the counsel of the old men and consults with his young friends, who are just as young and inexperienced as he is; they advise him to get even tougher and, in a sense, "show those people who is in charge." It won't work.

31. Secession: the Kingdom is Divided. (12:12-19)

On the 3rd day the people reassemble and Rehoboam foolishly answers the people "roughly," saying that not only will he not ease the burden of the people, he will instead make it much worse ("My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke..."). He even spoke to the people in arrogant exaggeration: "My father *also* chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions." It may have made Rehoboam feel powerful and "in control" for the moment, but it split the kingdom, and ten tribes secede.

²⁸ There will actually be two tribes left to the southern kingdom, Judah and Benjamin. Perhaps they are spoken of here as one tribe because of the small size of Benjamin, having been rendered nearly extinct in the civil war in the time of the judges (Judg 20).

²⁹ This principle was restated by Jesus in His teaching about the good shepherd (Jn 10:11-15). It is at the heart of good leadership, in all walks of life; when subordinates know that the leader places their welfare above his own, they will follow, obey and place his welfare above theirs ("If thou wilt be a servant unto this people...they will be thy servants").

Rehoboam, unaware of the seriousness of what he has done, and not convinced that they have left him, goes into the region of the 10 tribes and sends his tax collector among them, to take from them heavy taxes. The tax collector is stoned to death and Rehoboam, finally convinced, flees for his life to Jerusalem. The split is orchestrated by the LORD, in fulfillment of Ahijah's prophecy ("the cause was from the LORD").

32. The Secession Will Not Be Resisted. (12:20-24)

The 10 seceding tribes invite Jeroboam to be their king. Rehoboam, with his political eyes finally open, assembles 180,000 warriors to force the seceding tribes to return to his control; but the LORD, through a man of God, Shemaiah, tells him to disband his troops and let the 10 tribes go, "for this thing is from me." Rehoboam at last realizes that the kingdom is permanently divided; the Northern Kingdom will be called Israel, and the Southern Kingdom will be called Judah. They will not be reunited until Jesus returns as King of Kings in the Second Advent.

33. Jeroboam's Official Religion: Paganism. (12:25-33)

Jeroboam establishes his capital at Shechem, settles in to enjoy being king, and thinks about his new situation³⁰. He ponders the fact that, although he now has his kingdom, Jerusalem and its Temple are in the Southern Kingdom, and his people will want to go there to worship. He fears that if his people continue to go there to worship it will undermine his people's loyalty to him. His solution: he makes paganism Israel's official religion. Jeroboam establishes two pagan worship centers, one at Dan in the north and one at Bethel in the south. In each he places a golden calf, and tells the people that these hideous things are the gods that brought the people up from slavery in Egypt! The people accept this outrageous lie, and he creates a pagan priesthood out of the most wicked of his people, all non-Levites, and makes himself High Priest. Jeroboam appeals to that which is most base in his people, and they happily respond; sexual license is easy to sell.

34. A Remarkable Prophecy. (13:1-3)

While Jeroboam is enjoying his new position as self-appointed pagan High Priest, burning incense on his home-made altar, a young, unnamed prophet from Judah boldly approaches and begins to prophesy. Without so much as a "by your leave," he ignores the king and prophesies **to the altar** (as we shall see, Old Testament prophets were often called upon to do strange things). He prophesies that a child will be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name, and that he will

³⁰ Shechem was about 25 miles north of Jerusalem in what came to be known as Samaria. Jacob's well is there, and it was there that Jesus had his famous encounter with the Samaritan woman (Jn 4). In Genesis the city is called Sichem; in John's Gospel it is called Sychar; and in Acts it is called Sychem.

offer upon this pagan altar the very pagan priests who make offerings to demons upon it. To be sure that he is not misunderstood, he says plainly “men’s bones shall be burnt upon thee³¹.” Furthermore he states that, as a sign, the altar will be split and the ashes that are already upon it shall spill to the ground.

36. A Sobering Experience for Jeroboam. (13:4-10)

By this time Jeroboam is over the surprise; he catches his breath, points a kingly finger at the young prophet and shouts, “Lay hold on him!” He is going to have this presumptuous intruder punished--probably killed on the spot. But another unexpected event gives Jeroboam pause: the all-powerful hand and arm that he is pointing at the prophet are suddenly withered and paralyzed! The arm stretched forth as an instrument of condemnation and death against the prophet of God, is now frozen in position and a ridiculous symbol of impotence; he can't move it. And then, behind him, Jeroboam hears the splitting of the altar and spilling of the ashes to the ground. Finally, he gets the message. He asks the prophet to pray for him, “to the LORD **thy** God” (emphasis mine) that his arm and hand be healed, the prophet prays and God, with mind-staggering grace, heals him. Jeroboam, now humble (but not repenting of his paganism), offers to take the prophet to his palace, to wine and dine him and to give him a reward, but the prophet declines. He quotes the LORD’s instructions to him to refrain from food or drink, and to return by a different way. The nameless young prophet leaves Bethel by a different route, perfectly obeying his instructions, and thus ends one of the most interesting confrontations between good and evil in human history, and one of my favorite scenes in the entire Bible.

37. But The Young Prophet Is Deceived and Doomed. (13:11-22)

One of my very favorite passages in the Bible is immediately followed by what is, for me, one of the most unpleasant. There is at Bethel an old prophet and, in that small town, word of this strange and exciting event gets around with the speed of lightning. The old prophet’s sons tell him what has happened to Jeroboam and his altar, and the old man hurries to catch up with the young prophet. He finds him resting under an oak tree and invites him to come back to his home for refreshments; but the young prophet repeats his instructions from the LORD, as he had to Jeroboam, and declines.

At this point the old prophet does a strange thing: he identifies himself as a prophet and deliberately lies to the young prophet, telling him that an angel had visited him with new instructions, and that the young prophet is to return to the old prophet’s home, rest and eat. Believing the old man’s lie, and apparently

³¹ This remarkable prophecy was spoken more than 300 years before Josiah’s birth, and approximately 350 years before its fulfillment.

intimidated by his age and seniority, the young man returns, and they dine together. After they have eaten in the old prophet's home, a most remarkable (and, I think, outrageous) thing occurs: the old prophet, who has deliberately deceived the young prophet and caused him to disobey the LORD's instructions, stands up and prophesies, rebuking the young prophet for disobeying the instructions! Speaking prophetically, he pronounces a punishment most terrible: that the young prophet, because he disobeyed, will die and he will not be buried with his ancestors (to a religious Hebrew of the time, to fail to be buried with his ancestors was a terrible thing). If "unfair" has an epitome, this is it³²!

38. Death of a Prophet with Multiple Miracles. (13:23-34)

Soon after the young prophet leaves the home of the old prophet, again headed home to Judah, a lion attacks and kills him in the road. The lion stays by the body but does not eat it or drag it home to his family; the ass also stands there, and does not flee for its life. This is supernatural. People pass by, are not attacked by the lion (another miracle, for he would protect his kill); and the passers by report all this in Bethel.

The news reaches the old prophet, who hurries on his jackass to the scene on the road; he picks up the body, places it on the dead prophet's jackass and returns to Bethel with the body. This is also supernatural, for the lion allows the removal of his kill. The old man buries the deceived young prophet in his own tomb, and asks that when he dies he be buried alongside the young prophet. He also predicts that all of what the young man had prophesied would come to pass. In spite of all the miracles performed there, Jeroboam does not repent of his wickedness.

NOTES:

a. In this study guide we do not dwell much on symbolism, basically taking the Scriptures to mean just what they say; but this episode is so unusual and, it seems to me, so outrageous, as to demand a pause for some thought. The corrupt old prophet is outrageous in that he deliberately deceived the young prophet, with a false prophecy, into disobeying the LORD, and then rebukes him prophetically for his disobedience! It seems to belong in the Book of Judges rather than here in I Kings. And yet the corrupt old prophet so admires the relative purity of his young victim's motives that he has him buried in his own tomb, and asks to be buried beside him when he dies. This old man is definitely a symbol of the spiritual and religious confusion in the Northern Kingdom, mixing truth with error.

The lion seems definitely to represent the LORD, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, for this lion definitely behaved in a supernatural way. He seems to represent

³² Here is an interesting example of the fact that once a prophet of God is anointed, even after he becomes corrupt, the LORD may occasionally speak through him. Another example of this is Balaam (Numbers 22-24).

divine judgment on disobedience, especially disobedience by one of God's own prophets.

And yet, even in my latter years and somewhat jaded outlook on the corruptibility of man, the whole thing seems so unfair! The young prophet's error, it seems to me, is that when presented with the old man's false prophecy about stopping in and eating with him, the young man did not ask the Lord if this change of plan was from the LORD, or if it was false. He, although young, was a prophet himself, and he didn't need guidance from some other mortal man--especially guidance from someone who was willing to live in the spiritual cesspool that was the Northern Kingdom. Perhaps the LORD, later, raised the young prophet from the dead, sadder but wiser; but if He did there is no hint of it in the text. I expect this young prophet from Judah to be in Heaven, however, and I look forward to discussing this with him.

b. *In the ritual of the Masonic funeral, this corrupt old prophet is quoted, with each member of the burial party, in turn, dropping a sprig of Acacia into the grave and saying, "Alas, my brother." The words, "Alas, my brother" are entirely appropriate in the Masonic funeral, for the dead Freemason being buried has been brought down to his grave in the sin of disobeying the Word of God, having been deliberately deceived by the Masonic system. To know why I would write such a thing about Freemasonry, see the author's book, "33 Degrees of Deception," Bridge-Logos Foundation Pub, Alachua, Florida.*

39. Jeroboam Loses a Son, Receives an Ignominious Title, and Dies. (14:1-20)

Jeroboam's son, Abijah, becomes ill and Jeroboam sends the boy's mother, disguised, into Judah, to the now-blind prophet Ahijah in Shiloh. The LORD tells Ahijah who the woman is and Ahijah prophesies that as the woman re-enters Tirza, her city, the child will die. He also predicts the complete extinction of the family of Jeroboam because of his idolatry, and refers to him as the one "who made Israel to sin." This terrible, ignominious title is to be used to refer to Jeroboam 23 times, all in I and II Kings. The boy does die as prophesied, as his mother enters her door, and Jeroboam seems never to recover from the loss. After reigning wickedly for 22 years, he dies and is succeeded by his son Nadab.

NOTE: *Tirzah (v17) was the capital city of the kings of Israel, the Northern Kingdom, until the time of Omri, 7th king of the Northern Kingdom. Tirza appears only once more in Scripture, as the scene of a conspiracy to seize the throne of the Northern Kingdom (II Kings 15:14) Its exact location is uncertain today.*

40. The Temple is Plundered and Rehoboam Dies. (14:21-31)

By the end of Rehoboam's life Judah has adopted the paganism of the Northern Kingdom, building idols, pagan altars and groves "on every high hill, and under

every green tree." There are also sodomites in the land, freely practicing and spreading their abominations. Unchecked sin has so weakened the Southern Kingdom that Shishak, King of Egypt, boldly comes to Jerusalem and takes the silver and gold treasures from the Temple and from Rehoboam's palace³³.

Rehoboam, who was so unwise at the beginning of his reign, and who has allowed the utter corruption of his kingdom throughout his dismal life, dies about four years before the death of Jeroboam, and is succeeded by his son, Abijam.

41. The Brief Reign of Abijam. (15:1-8)

Rehoboam's son, Abijam (also called Abijah and Abia), replaces his father as King of Judah, but fails to check the sins of his people. As will be seen in II Chronicles 13, he goes to war with Jeroboam and God gives him a great victory; but he fails to re-unite the two kingdoms. Abijam dies after only 3 years on the throne of Judah, and is succeeded by his son, Asa.

NOTE: This passage appears to be in error. Comparison of vv 2 and 10 make it appear that Asa was Rehoboam's brother, rather than his son, and that his mother was Absalom's daughter. It appears that the word "mother" is used here (and in v13) in the general Hebrew sense meaning "ancestor," as is often done with the word "father" (as in v3 where David is called Abijam's father, when David was actually his great-grandfather). The difficulty is finally resolved in the parallel passage, II Chron 13:2, where it is written that, "His mother's name also was Michaiiah, the daughter of Uriel." So, the mystery is resolved: Asa's mother had two names, and Absalom was probably her grandfather (not her father).

42. Asa Cleans House in Judah. (15:9-24)

Asa, Abijam's son and heir, somehow grows up to be a godly man and, less than two years before the death of Jeroboam, he becomes King of Judah. One wonders how Asa grew up to be a righteous man, for his father and his grandfather were extremely wicked; nor can we attribute his godly attitudes to his mother, for she was so wicked as to be an object of the spiritual housecleaning done by Asa. She had built a phallic idol in a grove, which he cut down and burned by the brook Kidron, and removed her from her position as queen mother³⁴. Asa cut down and burned all the groves of phallic idols, and "took away the sodomites out of the land." He also collected consecrated items of silver and gold and restored them to

³³ In 1939 archeologists found Shishak's tomb, intact, and his sarcophagus was covered with gold. It is possible that some or all of that gold was from his plundering of the Temple and Rehoboam's palace.

³⁴ The brook Kidron ("dark, gloomy") became the place for burning and disposing of idols and other unclean things whenever spiritual housecleaning occurred. According to Josephus (Antiquities 9.7.3), Athaliah, the only woman to reign over Judah or Israel, and perhaps the most wicked woman in Hebrew history, will be taken there for execution (II Kings 11:16). The place later became the common burying ground for Jerusalem.

the Temple. Like David, Asa's heart "was perfect before the LORD all his days"; it was a 41-year-long breath of fresh air for the Southern Kingdom. After having constant war with the Northern Kingdom, Asa dies and is replaced by his son, Jehoshaphat.

NOTE: the sodomites spoken of here were temple prostitutes used in pagan worship, apparently committed to this position for life; they were often castrated. Their wages were referred to as "the price of a dog," a reference to the dog-like manner in which they debased themselves (Deut 23:18).

43. A New King for Israel--Briefly. (15:25-30)

With the death of Jeroboam, the Northern Kingdom's original king, he is succeeded by his son Nadab; but Nadab lasts only about a year before being murdered by Baasha, a usurper. Baasha assumes the throne in the 3rd year of Asa's reign and murders all of Jeroboam's descendants, completely wiping out his family and fulfilling the prophecy of Ahijah (see 14:7-11).

44. Deja Vu: Jehu's Prophecy and Baasha's Posterity. (15:31-16:5)

Baasha rules for 21 years, during which he repeats the pagan wickedness of Jeroboam and is continuously at war with Asa and Judah. The prophet Jehu pronounces judgment on Baasha for his wicked leadership and for murdering Nadab, and prophesies doom for all his posterity. It is like the prophet Ahijah and Jeroboam all over again.

45. A Dizzying Succession of Kings of Israel. (16:8-28)

Baasha is succeeded by his son, Elah. Elah is king for two years when Zimri, one of his generals, murders him and all his family (and also his friends), thus fulfilling Jehu's prophecy. After only seven days as king, Zimri learns that he is to be deposed and commits suicide by burning the palace down around himself (a terrible way to commit suicide, it seems to me). After disposing of another claimant to the throne (killing him, of course), Omri, captain of the host, becomes king; he lasts 12 years. Omri's principal accomplishment is to build the city of Samaria, which becomes the capitol of the Northern Kingdom and will eventually give its name to the region around it³⁵. It is also recorded that he was more wicked than all who had gone before him, and that is an amazing accomplishment!

46. Enter Ahab and Jezebel. (16:29-33)

Upon the death of Omri, his son Ahab ascends to the throne of Israel; at this time Asa is still King of Judah (in his 38th year as king). Ahab will reign for 22 years

³⁵ The name of the city, and eventually the region, is derived from the name of its original owner, one Shemer, from whom Omri bought it. Such names evolve. As is the case with "Shemite" and "Semite," "Shemeria" has become "Samaria."

and surpass even his father in wickedness to set still another record for evil paganism!

He marries Jezebel, daughter of the king of Sidon, a woman whose very name will become a synonym for evil. Together, the two of them will blaze a trail of wickedness across the sky of ancient history that is undimmed to this day.

NOTE: the Oriental Institute of Chicago University (1924), excavating at Megiddo, found in the stratum of Ahab's time a temple of Ashtoreth, goddess/wife of Baal. In its adjacent cemetery were found numerous clay jars containing the remains of infants, sacrificed in the temple; the priests of Baal and Ashtoreth were professional baby killers. This may help us to understand why Elijah, without hesitation, later puts the Baal priests to death at Megiddo/Mount Carmel.

47. Joshua's Prophecy Fulfilled. (16:34)

More than 500 years earlier, at the time of the conquering and burning of Jericho, Joshua had prophesied, pronouncing a curse on the man who should rebuild Jericho (Josh 6:26). Under Ahab a man named Hiel undertook to rebuild Jericho, and in the process he perfectly fulfilled Joshua's prophecy. He was probably aware of Joshua's curse and may have done this deliberately to defy the LORD (only the LORD knows Hiel's motives, for they are not recorded). This single verse is his only appearance in Scripture; he appears here, and disappears here. Also, the wording of this verse is difficult to interpret with certainty in terms of Hiel's sons. The great commentator Matthew Henry (1662-1714) believed that it speaks in some way of the death of his sons during the rebuilding of Jericho ("He built for his children, but God wrote him childless.")³⁶.

48. Enter Elijah the Tishbite. (17:1-7)

As Ahab and Jezebel bring about a sweeping establishment of evil Sidonian paganism, there appears on the scene one of the greatest of God's prophets in mighty counterpoint. Elijah, of the town of Tishbeh in Gilead, appears abruptly, without introduction, and confronts Ahab³⁷. He tells Ahab that there will be a massive drought in the Northern Kingdom, and that there will be no more rain until he (Elijah) commands the drought to end. In fact, he says, there will not even be any dew. With this he leaves, and the LORD sends him to hide by the brook

³⁶ Hiel is never mentioned again in Scripture, and there is no parallel passage in II Chronicles to shed light on this. It was, however, a common practice in ancient paganism, when undertaking a major building project, to sacrifice one's own children and bury them in the foundations. This may mean that Hiel sacrificed his first-born at the beginning of the project (wall foundation), and his youngest at the end (gates).

³⁷ Because Elijah appears suddenly in the Scriptures, with no introduction, and no identification of family lineage, some have believed him to have been a supernatural personage on the order of Melchizedek. James 5:17, however, makes it clear that Elijah was human ("a man, subject to like passions as we are").

Cherith, where he is fed, supernaturally, by ravens. They bring him bread and meat twice daily, and he stays there until the brook dries up.

NOTE: It is interesting to note that, after the dividing of the kingdom, two of the mightiest of God's prophets (Elijah and Elisha) are sent to the Northern Kingdom, which is by far the more-wicked of the two. Also ministering there were Jonah, Amos and Hosea, whose books are part of the Old Testament canon. Perhaps this sending of what we might think of as God's "first string," plus others of His chosen prophets, into the more-wicked kingdom is an eloquent expression of His gracious desire to provide opportunities for the wicked to repent, even when they have deliberately turned their backs on Him.

49. Elijah and the Pagan Widow Woman. (17:8-16)

The LORD tells Elijah to go to "Zarephath which belongeth to Zidon [Sidon]," a walled town on the north coast, and dwell there with a widow whom He has commanded to feed Elijah³⁸. Arriving outside the gate, Elijah finds the woman collecting sticks to make a fire. When he asks her for water and some bread she tells him that she has no bread, and that she and her small son are starving. All that she has left consists of a handful of meal and a little bit of oil. She is preparing to make a small last bit of bread with what little she has so that she and her son can eat it and die. Elijah tells her to fear not, but to use the little that she has to make bread for him, and then make more for herself and the boy. This, of course, meant that she would have to make bread for herself and her son with non-existent meal and oil; nevertheless, she obeys and, miraculously, the cruse of oil and the meal barrel are replenished. They never become empty, no matter how much she uses. Elijah moves into the loft (attic) and the three of them are supplied with an inexhaustible supply of bread.

50. Raising the Boy from the Dead. (17:17-24)

The widow's son sickens and dies (from unknown causes), and she thinks Elijah has caused her son's death to punish her for an unnamed sin. He takes the boy up to his loft, places him on his bed, stretches himself over the boy's body, three times, and asks the LORD to restore him to life. Life returns to the boy, the mother rejoices, and repents of blaming Elijah.

51. A Desperate Search for Water and Grass. (18:1-6)

At the end of 3 1/2 years, the LORD promises that the drought will end, and tells Elijah to go see Ahab³⁹. Amazingly there is in the court of Ahab a man of great rank, Obadiah, governor of the palace, who is a godly man. He is also a brave

³⁸ This woman was not even a citizen of the wicked Northern Kingdom, Israel--she was a citizen of the evil kingdom of Sidon, home land of Jezebel, who was the daughter of its king. Truly, the sovereign LORD has His servants everywhere, and we should be encouraged by this.

³⁹ The length of the drought (3 1/2 years) is not stated here, but is recorded in Luke 4:25 and James 5:17-18.

man, for when Jezebel had sought to slaughter all the prophets of the LORD, he had rescued and hidden 100 of them. By now the drought and resulting famine are so severe that Ahab himself, and Obadiah, search throughout the kingdom, seeking pasture for Ahab's horses and mules.

52. Obadiah Meets Elijah. (18:7-14)

While Obadiah searches for pasture he encounters Elijah and falls on his face before him in fear⁴⁰. Elijah tells Obadiah to go tell Ahab that Elijah is coming to see him. Knowing that Ahab has spared no expense in a search for Elijah, Obadiah sees danger for himself; already on thin ice with Ahab for hiding the prophets from Jezebel, he fears that if he tells him that Elijah is there and Elijah disappears ("...the Spirit of the LORD shall carry thee whither I know not"), that Ahab will surely kill him. Elijah's reputation for supernatural acts has preceded him, and Obadiah is taking no chances.

53. Exchanged Accusations: Elijah Confronts Ahab. (18:15-18)

Elijah assures Obadiah that he really will appear before Ahab, and Obadiah carries the news to Ahab, who is so anxious to find Elijah that he goes to meet him. Seeing Elijah, and probably immediately convicted of his own sinfulness, Ahab asks the often-quoted accusatory question: "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" Not at all intimidated, Elijah makes his equally famous reply: "I have not troubled Israel, but thou...."

54. Showdown on Mt. Carmel: Elijah versus the Baal Priests. (18:19-40)

Elijah challenges Ahab to gather all the pagan priests and prophets for a showdown on Mt. Carmel, and Ahab calls them in: 450 priests of Baal, and 400 priests of Ashtoreth ("prophets of the groves"). These men serve directly at Jezebel's pleasure, and are under her protection ("which eat at Jezebel's table"). Elijah challenges the Baal priests to a showdown: "...if the LORD be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." He orders them to prepare two calves for sacrifice and to put one on their altar, but not light the fire; they are to call on Baal to send fire and burn the sacrifice supernaturally. They do so, and then cry, shout, cut themselves and dance until they are exhausted, while Elijah mocks them; but no fire comes. Elijah repairs a broken-down altar, which had previously been used to worship the LORD, has wood placed on it, and has his calf placed on the wood. He then has water poured over it all, three times, until all is soaked and the water fills the trench around the altar. When he prays, fire immediately falls from Heaven and consumes not only the wood and the calf, but even the stones, the dust, and dries up all the water around the altar! The people are convinced and,

⁴⁰ Note that in v 8 Elijah is careful not to reply, "I am" for that would have been a blasphemous claim to divinity. Jesus, on the other hand, didn't hesitate to say "I am" and it drove the Pharisees mad with anger (e.g. Jn 8:58-59).

temporarily, repent; they fall on their faces and confess that "the LORD he is the God⁴¹." As the final touch, Elijah has the Baal priests taken down to the Brook Kishon and there he kills them all.

NOTES:

a. For a better understanding of how Elijah could summarily slay all the Baal priests, see "NOTE" after Highlight 46, "Enter Ahab and Jezebel."

b. Although the passage does not make it clear whether or not the slain pagans included the prophets of the groves as well as those of Baal, Elijah probably killed them all, a total of 850. To do this alone, with a sword, was supernatural (even if there were only 450). The day was about over, and without a miracle of physical endurance he could not have killed so many in so short a time. Neither could he have controlled them as they waited to die, for they would have scattered like quail and run for their lives. He ordered the crowd of watching pagans to take the priests to the killing place, which means that the crowd was huge enough to control at least 450 pagan priests, and probably 850 of them.

55. Rain at Last: The Great Foot Race. (18:41-46)

Having dealt with the Baal priests (and, it is pretty safe to assume, the Ashtoreth/Astarte priests), Elijah reports to Ahab that rain is on the way and the drought is at an end. Although not a drop has yet fallen, Ahab celebrates, and Elijah climbs back up onto Mt. Carmel to pray for rain. Six times he sends his servant to see if clouds are forming over the Mediterranean, and six times the servant reports clear skies. When Elijah sends him the seventh time to look, the servant reports a very small cloud; at a distance it appears to be about the size of a man's hand⁴².

The plain of Megiddo, at the foot of Mt. Carmel, becomes soft and muddy when heavy rain falls, and the rising brook Kishon cannot then be forded. There is so much rain coming that Elijah sends the servant to warn Ahab to depart for his palace in Jezreel while his chariot can still get there⁴³. As Ahab flees toward Jezreel the sky blackens, the wind rises, and a very great rain falls, as drought and famine are broken. In what is apparently the final miracle on this amazing day,

⁴¹ Note that the people cried out, "The LORD he is **the** God, using the definite article. They were so accustomed to the worship of more than one pagan god that they are being specific, saying in effect, "...YHWH he is the one **real** God."

⁴² Here again is an example of biblical numerology; the 7th time (completion) brought the answer. I don't know why God enjoys so doing things in threes and sevens, but He obviously does. I look forward to learning why, in the Heavenly Bible study.

⁴³ Although the capitol and primary palace were at Samaria, the kings of Israel maintained a northern palace in Jezreel, about 25 miles away. It was to that palace that Ahab hastened.

old Elijah gathers up his skirt ("he girded up his loins") and runs to the entrance of Jezreel, arriving before Ahab gets there in his speeding chariot⁴⁴!

56. Fed by an Angel: Elijah Flees from Jezebel. (19:1-8)

Ahab tells Jezebel how Elijah has killed all of her priests; instead of being chastened or frightened, she is furious, and sends word to Elijah that she will kill him. In the course of her angry message, she unknowingly prophesies her own death. Elijah flees to Beersheba, on the extreme southern boundary of Judah, but even that isn't far enough away from her for him. Leaving his servant there he goes a day's journey farther into the desert, where the mighty prophet Elijah collapses under a Juniper tree, completely spent, asks the LORD to kill him, and falls asleep. While he is asleep "the angel of the LORD" prepares food, wakes him and bids him eat; Elijah eats and goes back to sleep. A second time the angel wakes him and bids him eat again. After eating the second time Elijah rises, refreshed, and the food lasts him for 40 days, during which Elijah travels to Mt. Horeb, 90-to-100 miles into the Sinai desert, and hides there in a cave⁴⁵.

NOTE: This famous collapse of Elijah's courage and faith are seen by some as his great failure, a shameful turning point in his life, after which the LORD declined to use him in mighty ways. To me this seems to be a foolish idea, considering his coming translation to Heaven without death, his appearance on the Mount of Transfiguration with Jesus and Moses, and his probable key role in the events of Revelation 11. Rather, it seems to me a reminder that even the mightiest of prophets are human, have their limitations, and occasionally must withdraw from the conflict, to be rested and restored.

57. Elijah Hears the Still, Small Voice. (19:9-14)

As Elijah hides in the cave the LORD asks him a rhetorical question to shame him: "What doest thou here, Elijah?" Elijah replies that he is the only believer left in Israel and that "they" are seeking to kill him. God tells him to go present himself on Mount Horeb and Elijah obeys. First there is a mighty wind, so violent that it shatters great rocks, but the LORD does not speak in the wind. There follows a mighty earthquake, but the LORD does not speak from the earthquake. After the earthquake subsides there is a great fire, but the LORD speaks not from the fire. Finally, from the silence the LORD speaks in a still, small voice and Elijah, recognizing the voice, covers his face in reverent fear. Again, the LORD asks him why he is hiding there in the far south of Judah, completely out of his own jurisdiction, and Elijah gives Him the same dumb answer.

⁴⁴ It was miraculous indeed! Elijah was old--near the end of his life--and his run to Jezreel was the approximate distance of a marathon run. He outran Ahab's chariot horses, after giving them a head start.

⁴⁵ Here is another of God's favorite numbers. Forty is the number for waiting, probation, preparation, or trial.

58. Encouragement for Elijah and a New Assignment. (19:15-18)

The LORD graciously ignores Elijah's shameful whining and gives him a 3-fold commission. He directs Elijah to go to Damascus and anoint Hazael king of Syria, then to anoint Jehu king of Israel, and Elisha to be Elijah's successor as prophet in Israel. God will use these 3 men to chastise the wicked kingdom of Israel⁴⁶. He then lets Elijah in on an important and encouraging secret: he isn't alone--he is not the only faithful one in Israel. In fact, the LORD still has 7,000 faithful believers in Israel, those "who have not bowed unto Baal."

NOTE: throughout the ages, the LORD has always preserved to Himself a remnant of faithful believers, and they are often inconspicuous. Such was the case when Paul went to the very wicked city of Corinth, perhaps feeling alone (Acts 18:9-10).

59. The Calling of Elisha. (19:19-21)

Elijah finds Elisha plowing with oxen; he must have been a prosperous man, for he had 12 yokes of oxen plowing at the same time. As Elijah passes by, he throws his mantle upon Elisha, and Elisha knows what it means. Elijah keeps on walking (Old Testament prophets did such strange things!), but Elisha stops plowing and runs to catch up with him. Asking leave to say goodbye to his family, Elisha returns, kills two of the oxen and prepares a feast for his household. With this proper farewell accomplished, he follows Elijah and becomes his apprentice.

60. Naboth's Vineyard. (21:1-16)

Naboth, a native of Jezreel, owns a fine vineyard; unfortunately, it is very near to Ahab's northern palace there. Ahab likes the look of the place and offers to buy it, but Naboth declines, saying that it had been passed down through his family. Ahab sulks, Jezebel notices, and she asks him what is wrong. Ahab tells her about Naboth and his vineyard, she reminds Ahab that he is king, and tells him that she will take care of the matter. This sort of thing is no problem for Jezebel; she immediately has him arrested on false charges, has false witnesses testify against him, and has him stoned to death⁴⁷. No sweat. She tells Ahab that the vineyard is now his, and he goes there to take possession of it. It appears that he has a happy ending--but he shouldn't count on it.

61. Bad News for Ahab and Jezebel. (21:17-29)

The LORD speaks to Elijah about this evil episode and sends him to see Ahab. Elijah meets him at the vineyard and gives him very bad news: because of the murder of Naboth he and Jezebel will be killed, dogs will lick Ahab's blood where they had licked Naboth's blood, and Jezebel will be eaten by dogs by the wall of

⁴⁶ For reasons not explained, Elijah failed to carry out this mission to Hazael and Jehu; it remained for Elisha and one of his assistants to perform this later.

⁴⁷ Although it is not recorded here, in II Kings 9:26 we are told that Naboth's sons were also put to death (apparently so none of them could inherit the vineyard).

Jezreel⁴⁸. But that's not all; because of Ahab's idolatry, his descendants will be wiped out. Ahab is immediately sorrowful; he rends his garments, repents in sackcloth, and fasts. Because of his contrite response to the bad news, the LORD again speaks through Elijah, saying that the fulfillment of the prophecy about wiping out Ahab's posterity will not occur during Ahab's lifetime. That part of the prophecy will be postponed until his son's days⁴⁹.

NOTES:

a. Verse 18 can be a bit confusing because it seems to contradict itself, saying that Ahab is in Samaria, and then saying, plainly, that he is at Ramoth's vineyard, enjoying looking over his new possession. It should probably be read to mean that Ahab is the king who rules in Samaria (both the city and the region) but who, at that moment, is at Naboth's vineyard.

b. The Problem of v 19. Verse 19 is even more of a problem, for it says plainly that in the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, dogs would also lick Ahab's blood, and says it with Hebrew repetition for emphasis ("thy blood, even thine")! And yet, in Chapter 22, as the narrative continues, we read that Ahab was mortally wounded in battle with the Syrians at Ramoth Giliad, and his body was brought back to Samaria for burial. We are not told whether the reference is to the kingdom of Samaria, or to the capital city with the same name; but the latter is much more likely, for that is where kings of Israel were buried. His bloody chariot and armor are washed by servants in "the pool of Samaria" (a reference to the capital city), while dogs licked up his blood. This strengthens the position that the dogs licked Ahab's blood outside the wall of the city of Samaria--not just someplace in the kingdom, which could have been Jezreel. The evidence clearly points to Ahab's blood's being licked at the city of Samaria. And so, since Naboth was stoned, and his blood was licked by dogs outside the wall of Jezreel, how are we to understand v 19? Was Elijah's prophecy not fulfilled? This is clearly a problem.

To my amazement, all of the major commentators ignore this apparent contradiction, as if it were not there⁵⁰!

Dr Henry Morris, in his study Bible, does note that "the place" should be understood as "the kind of place"; but he makes no attempt to support his

⁴⁸ Naboth was not killed at his vineyard; he was placed on trial in Jezreel, condemned by a rigged court, and stoned to death outside the walls.

⁴⁹ Amazingly, in fulfillment of Elijah's prophecy, Ahab's son and successor as king will be shot dead with an arrow on the very spot that was Naboth's vineyard, after which Jezebel and all Ahab's surviving family and friends will be slaughtered (II Kings 9).

⁵⁰ Josephus confirms Elijah's prophecy, adds that dogs ate the body of Naboth (and, presumably, his sons), and says that because of Ahab's repentance "...he would fulfill the threatening under Ahab's son." But he makes no mention of the apparent contradiction facing us here. (Josephus, Antiquities, 8.13.8.)

statement. And I have not found a single version of the Bible, traditional or modern, that renders the phrase that way, or one that even footnotes it as a possible rendering.

One possible explanation is that, because of Ahab's repentance, and the LORD's postponing complete fulfillment of the punishment until the time of Ahab's sons, the prophecy was fulfilled when Ahab's son, Jehoram, was killed and his bloody body thrown onto the vineyard of Naboth (II Kings 9). According to this theory, Jehoram's blood was his father's blood, thus fulfilling Elijah's prophecy. The wording of vv 22-26 seems to support this theory, implying that Naboth and his sons were indeed stoned in Naboth's vineyard (nowhere else are we told where, outside the Jezreel wall, they were murdered). This is especially true of 9: 26, which is rich in revelation concerning all of this, and deserves careful reading.

Conclusion. *Assuming the validity of the concept that Ahab's blood was flowing in the veins of his son, Jehoram, this would appear to be the explanation, sealed by the precise wording of II Kings 9:26. It is indeed a tangled web, and some of the pieces of the puzzle are far apart; but this explanation makes sense to me*

62. Ahab's Death: the Prophecy Partially Fulfilled. (22:1-40)

Jehoshaphat, pious but gullible King of Judah, makes a pact to join Ahab in a war against Syria. He asks Ahab to consult the LORD as to whether or not they should engage the Syrians. Ahab assembles 400 prophets, who tell him that he will succeed; but they are all pagans, and Jehoshaphat asks if Ahab hasn't even one prophet of the LORD? Yes, Ahab says, there is one, Micaiah, but he hates him because he never tells him what he wants to hear. Micaiah is sent for, and he does a strange thing: he first parrots what the pagan priests had said, but then informs Ahab that the truth is that Syria will prevail, and that the Israelites will be scattered in Gilead like sheep without a shepherd. Furious, Ahab has Micaiah put in prison and afflicted, and he and Jehoshaphat go off to war. Ahab asks Jehoshaphat to wear his distinctive robes so the Syrians will think he is Ahab and, unbelievably, Jehoshaphat complies. This decision represents either an act of amazing courage and selflessness, unbelievable gullibility, or staggering stupidity! In some way not clearly explained, but probably Jehoshaphat's voice--something he said to them--the Syrians realize that Jehoshaphat is not Ahab, so he survives the consequences of his terrible decision.

The Syrians fail to find Ahab, but his cowardly plan doesn't work, for the LORD causes a nameless Syrian to fire a chance arrow ("at a venture") and it hits Ahab, mortally wounding him. The Syrians defeat and scatter the Israelites, fulfilling Micaiah's prophecy, and Ahab's body is returned to Samaria for burial. As his bloody chariot and armor are being washed out, outside the walls of Jezreel, dogs

lick up his blood. Elijah's prophecy is partially fulfilled; the prophecy concerning Jezebel will soon be perfectly fulfilled in her ignominious death; and Ahab is succeeded by his son Ahaziah.

63. The Reign of Jehoshaphat. (22:41-50)

Well-meaning Jehoshaphat, who is pious but gullible, walks in the ways of righteous Asa, his father. He allows some of the high place worship to continue; but he cleans out all the remaining sodomites. He has one besetting weak suit (other than his gullibility): his willingness to cooperate with pagan kings, such as Ahab. He builds a fleet of ships to import gold, but they are destroyed at Solomon's seaport (Ezion-geber). He dies at the age of 60 after reigning for 25 years, and is buried in Jerusalem. His son Jehoram succeeds him as king.

* * * * *

And so ends the book of I Kings.