

## LESSON 27

### 1 Kings 17-22

#### OVERVIEW:

Elijah the Prophet. What appears to be the mission of Elijah? To reclaim Israel and put them under covenant again. He holds the Apostolic keys.

Background information: Omri became king of Israel and established Samaria as the capital city. He made an alliance with Ethbaal, the king of Tyre (Phoenicia) and took princess Jezebel for his son Ahab to marry. The alliance was contrary to the Laws of Moses. Ahab was more evil than his father. He made groves for the worship of idols. Jezebel was the priestess of Baal in her country and she brought that practice to Israel.

#### SCRIPTURES:

THE FIRST BOOK OF THE  
KINGS  
COMMONLY CALLED  
THE THIRD BOOK OF THE KINGS  
CHAPTER 17

*Elijah seals the heavens, and is fed by the ravens—At his command the barrel of meal and the cruse of oil of the widow of Zarephath fail not—He raises her son from death.*

1 AND <sup>a</sup>Elijah (Heb Eliyahu or Elijah; Greek: Helias (Elias) (The word Elijah means: “my God is Yah [Jehovah].) the Tishbite, (may have reference to the town of Tishbeh, in upper Galilee) *who was* <sup>b</sup>of the inhabitants of Gilead (or from Tishbe in Gilead), said unto Ahab, *As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor* <sup>c</sup>rain these years, (the drought lasted about 3 ½ years. See Luke 4:25-26 <sup>25</sup> But I tell you of a truth, many <sup>a</sup>widows were in Israel in the days of <sup>b</sup>Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; <sup>26</sup> But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, *a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.*) but according to my <sup>d</sup>word. (The Prophet Joseph Smith said of Elijah: “Elijah was the last prophet that held the keys of the Priesthood to administer” in all its ordinances, including the sealing ordinances. Elder Bruce R. McConkie said: “The sealing power! The apostolic power possessed by Adam and all the ancients; the heavenly endowment enjoyed by Enoch and Abraham and Elijah; the power of the Great God without which man cannot ascend to heights beyond the stars! Such now is resident with all of the Twelve – not with Peter only, to whom it was promised; not with the Chosen Three, who received it by angelic and divine conferral on the mount of Transfiguration, but with all of the Twelve.” *The Mortal Messiah*, vol. 3:92 )

2 And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying,

3 Get thee hence, (He goes into hiding in an obscure place where he would not be found by the king, or passersby, soldiers, or shepherds. It was also a desolate place where no animals lived) and turn thee eastward, and <sup>a</sup>hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that *is* <sup>b</sup>before (or east of) (on the east side of Jordan) Jordan.

4 And it shall be, *that* thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there.

5 So he went and did according unto the word of the LORD: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that *is* before Jordan.

6 And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and

he drank of the brook.

7 And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land.

(Even the prophet was subject to the drought)

8 ¶ And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying,

9 Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which *belongeth* to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a <sup>a</sup>widow woman there to sustain thee. (This was in Phoenicia on the coast of what is now Lebanon. It was outside the boundaries of Israel. It was in Jezebel's home country.)

10 So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman *was* there gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.

11 And as she was going to fetch *it*, (She may have known from his mantle of black camel's hair that he was a prophet, which showed her faith in Jehovah.) he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of <sup>a</sup>bread in thine hand.

12 And she said, As the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I *am* gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die. (She did not say no to the Prophet. She explained her circumstances.)

13 And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go *and* do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring *it* unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son. (The call is issued and the promise is given.)

14 For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day *that* the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth. (Elijah was testing her faith. When we are called to serve, we may state our circumstances and after that, if still called, we should have the faith in the Lord to accept. Elder Holland said that the widow's response when Elijah asked her for food was an "expression of faith – as great, under these circumstances, as any I know in the scriptures...Perhaps uncertain what the cost of her faith would be...,she first took her small loaf to Elijah, obviously trusting that if there were not enough bread left over, at least she and her son would have died in an act of charity.")

15 And she <sup>a</sup>went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat *many* days. (There may have been many people in her house during this time. Elijah may have lived with her for two years.)

16 *And* the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Elijah.

17 ¶ And it came to pass after these things, *that* the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his <sup>a</sup>sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him.

18 And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come unto me to call my <sup>a</sup>sin to remembrance, and to slay my son? (She was not critical of the prophet but was asking his help.)

19 And he said unto her, Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into a loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed.

20 And he cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son?

21 And he <sup>a</sup>stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, I pray thee, let this child's <sup>b</sup>soul come into him again.

22 And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he <sup>a</sup>revived.

23 And Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother: and Elijah said, See, thy <sup>a</sup>son liveth.

24 ¶ And the woman said to Elijah, Now by this I know that thou *art* a man of God, *and* that the word of the LORD in thy mouth *is* truth. (Faith precedes the miracle. Miracles do not give faith, they confirm

it. Most if not all of us have seen miracles. It is to confirm our faith in Christ. President Howard W. Hunter said: "As a result of the many miracles in our lives, we should be more humble and more grateful, more kind and more believing. When we are personal witnesses to these wonders which God performs, it should increase our respect and love for him; it should improve the way we behave. We will live better and love more if we will remember that. We are miracles in our own right, every one of us, and the resurrected Son of God is the greatest miracle of all. He is, indeed, the miracle of miracles, and every day of his life he gave evidence of it. We should try to follow after him in that example." The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter, p. 115)

(WITH the enthronement of Ahab and Jezebel, the establishment of the worship of Baal as the state-religion, and the attempted extermination of the prophets and followers of the LORD, the apostasy of Israel had reached its high point. As if to mark alike the general disregard in Israel of the threatened judgments of God, and the coming vindication of Jehovah's Kingship, Holy Scripture here inserts a notice of the daring rebuilding of the walls of Jericho, and of the literal fulfillment of Joshua's curse upon its builder\* (1 Kings 16:34; comp. Joshua 6:26).

\* Jericho seems to have belonged to Ahab. On its rebuilding, see [Vol. 3](#) of this History, p. 66. The remarks of the Talmud on the subject (Sanh. 113 a) are, to say the least, very far-fetched.

Indeed, the land was now ripe for the sickle of judgment. Yet as the long-suffering of God had waited in the days of Noah, so in those of Ahab; and as then the preacher of righteousness had raised the voice of warning, while giving evidence of the coming destruction, so was Elijah now commissioned to present to the men of his age in symbolic deed the alternative of serving Jehovah or Baal, with all that the choice implied. The difference between Noah and Elijah was only that of times and circumstances, the one was before, the other after the giving of the Law; the one was sent into an apostate world, the other to an apostatizing covenant-people. But there is also another aspect of the matter. On the one side were arrayed Ahab, Jezebel, Baal, and Israel - on the other stood Jehovah. It was a question of reality and of power, and Elijah was to be, so to speak, the embodiment of the Divine Power, the Minister of the Living and True God. The contest between them could not be decided by words, but by deeds. The Divine would become manifest in its reality and irresistible greatness, and whoever or whatever came in contact with it would, for good or for evil, experience its Presence.

We might almost say, that in his prophetic capacity Elijah was an impersonal being - the mere medium of the Divine. Throughout his history other prophets also were employed on various occasions, he only to do what none other had ever done or could do. His path was alone, such as none other had trodden nor could tread. He was the impersonation of the Old Testament in one of its aspects, that of grandeur and judgment - the living realization of the topmost height of the mount, which burned with fire, around which lightnings played and thunder rolled, and from out of whose terrible glory spake the Voice of Jehovah, the God of Israel. We have the highest authority for saying that he was the type of John the Baptist. But chiefly in this respect, that he lifted the ax to the root of the tree, yet, ere it fell, called for fruits meet for repentance. He was not the forerunner of the LORD, save in judgment; he was the forerunner of the King, not of the Kingdom; and the destruction of the state and people of Israel, not the salvation of the world, followed upon his announcement. A grander figure never stood out even against the Old Testament sky than that of Elijah. As Israel's apostasy had reached its highest point in the time of Ahab, so the Old Testament antagonism to it in the person and mission of Elijah. The analogy and parallelism between his history and that of Moses, even to minute details, is obvious on comparison of the two;\* and accordingly we find him, significantly, along with Moses on the Mount of Transfiguration.

\* Jewish tradition extols him almost to blasphemy, to show how absolutely God had delegated to Elijah His power - or, as the Rabbis express it: His three keys - those of rain, of children, and of raising to life. With special application of Hosea 12:13 to Moses and Elijah, Jewish tradition traces a very minute and instructive parallelism between the various incidents in the lives of Moses and Elijah (Yalkut vol. 2. p. 32. d).

Yet much as Scripture tells of him, we feel that we have only dim outlines of his prophetic greatness before us. By his side other men, even an Elisha, seem small. As we view him as Jehovah's representative, almost plenipotentiary, we recall his unswerving faithfulness to, and absolutely fearless discharge of his trust. And yet this strong man had his hours of felt weakness and loneliness, as when he fled before Ahab and Jezebel, and would fain have laid him down to die in the wilderness. As we recall his almost unlimited power, we remember that its spring was in constant prayer. As we think of his unbending sternness, of his sharp irony on Mount Carmel, of his impassioned zeal, and of his unfaltering severity, we also remember that deep in his heart soft and warm feelings glowed, as when he made himself the guest of the poor widow, and by agonizing prayer brought back her son to life. Such as this must have been intended by God, in His mercy, as an outlet and precious relief to his feelings, showing him that all his work and mission were not of sorrow and judgment, but that the joy of Divine comfort was his also. And truly human, full of intense pathos, are those days of wilderness-journey, and those hours on Mount Horeb, when in deepest sadness of soul the strong man, who but yesterday had defiantly met Ahab and achieved on Mount Carmel such triumph as none other, bent and was shaken, like the reed in the storm. A life this full of contrasts - of fierce light and deep shadows - not a happy, joyous, prosperous life; not one even streaked with peace or gladness, but wholly devoted to God, a bush on the wilderness-mount, burning yet not consumed. A life full of the miraculous it is and must be, from the character of his mission - and yet himself one of the greatest wonders in it, and the success of his mission the best attestation of, because the greatest of the miracles of his history. For, alone and unaided, save of God, he did conquer in the contest and he did break the power of Baal in Israel.

His first appearance, alike in the manner and suddenness of it was emblematic of all that was to follow. Of his birth and early circumstances, we know next to nothing. Josephus assumes (Ant. 8. 13, 2) that the Tishbah which gave him his name (1 Kings 17:1) lay on the eastern side of Jordan, in the land of Gilead; and some modern writers have found the name in the village of Tiseth, to the south of Busrah. But this view has been shown (by Keil) to be untenable. Even more fanciful is the suggestion, that the Hebrew expression means that he was "a stranger among the strangers of Gilead" - possibly a Gentile by birth. Most likelihood attaches to the generally received view, that his birthplace was the Tishbi in Upper Galilee (within the territory of Naphtali), known to us from apocryphal story (Tobit 1, 2, LXX) - and that, for some unascertained reason, he had migrated into Gilead, without, however, becoming one of its citizens. This the sacred text conveys by the expression, "Elijah the Tishbite from among the dwellers (strangers dwelling) in Gilead." Another inference as to his character may be drawn from his name Elijah: My God Jehovah! though it is scarcely necessary to say that he did not assume it himself.\*

\* Later Jewish tradition has represented him as of priestly descent, presumably on account of his sacrifice on Mount Carmel. But even so the illegality of a sacrifice outside Jerusalem would require special vindication. Even Jewish legalism, however, admits the plea of exceptional necessity in this instance. Tradition represents Elijah as a disciple of Ahijah, the Shilonite.

With the same, or perhaps with even more startling unexpectedness and strangeness than that which characterized the appearance of John the Baptist - and with precisely the same object in it - Elijah suddenly presented himself in Samaria and before Ahab. It was, and intended to be - to adapt the figure of the Son of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus 48:1) like a fire that kindled suddenly, like a torch that blazed up in

the still darkness of the night. There was, indeed, sufficient here to rouse the dullest mind. We can imagine the stern figure of the Tishbite, arrayed in an upper garment of black camel's hair\* - which henceforth seems to have become the distinctive garb of the prophets (Zechariah 13:4) - girt about his loins with a leathern girdle.

\* The rendering, 2 Kings 1:8, "a hairy man" is incorrect. The expression means a man arrayed in a hairy garment, as we gather, of black camel's hair.

The dress betokened poverty, renunciation of the world, mourning, almost stern judgment, while the girdle, which, as the badge of office, was always the richest part of the dress, was such as only the poorest of the land wore. It was an unwonted sight, and, as he made his way up through the terraced streets of rich luxurious Samaria, its inhabitants would whisper with awe that this was a new prophet come from the wilds of Gilead, and follow him. What a contrast between those Baal-debauched Samaritans and this man; what a greater contrast still between the effeminate decrepit priests of Baal, in their white linen garments and high-pointed bonnets,\* and this stern prophet of Jehovah!

\* This was the official dress of the priests of Baal.

And now he had reached the height where palace and castle stand, and met Ahab himself, perhaps at the magnificent entrance to that splendid colonnade which overlooked such a scene of beauty and fertility. His message to the king was abrupt and curt, as became the circumstances\* - after all, only a repetition of Jehovah's denunciation of judgment upon an apostate people (Leviticus 26:19, etc.; Deuteronomy, 11:16, etc.; 28:23, etc.; comp. 1 Kings 8:35; Amos 4:7); but with this addition, that the cessation of dew and rain should last these years - whether many or few - "except" by his word.

\* The Talmud (Sanh. 113. a) mars the whole subject by a discussion, at the close of which Elijah's words are introduced. Both he and King Ahab are supposed to have come on a visit of condolence to Hiel, after the death of his children (1 Kings 16:34). Elijah explains that this terrible calamity was the consequence of the neglect of Joshua's warning, to which Ahab objects that it was incredible the disciple's word should become true, if the master's were not. But since the threatening of Moses in regard to idolatry had not been fulfilled, he could not believe in the warning of Joshua. Upon this Elijah bursts into the words mentioned in the text.

This latter perhaps was intended to emphasize the impotence of Ahab's prophets and priests as against Jehovah. It was all most startling, the sudden, strange, wild apparition; the bold confronting of king and people there in Samaria; the announcement apparently so incredible in itself, and in such contrast to the scene of wealth and fruitfulness all around; the unexpected pronouncement of the name Jehovah in such a place; the authority which he pleaded and the power which he claimed - in general, even the terms of his message, "Lives Jehovah, the God of Israel, which I stand before His Face! If there be these years dew or rain, except by the mouth (the spoken means) of my word!"\*

\* So in strict literality.

What answer Ahab made, what impression it produced on him or his people, Holy Scripture, in its Divine self-consciousness and sublime indifference to what may be called "effect," does not condescend even to notice. Nay, here also silence is best - and the prophet himself must withdraw as suddenly as he had come, hide himself from human ken, not be within reach of question or answer, and let God work, alone and unseen. An absolute pause with that thunder-cloud overhead - unremoved and apparently

unremovable - in presence of which man and Baal shall be absolutely powerless, such was the fitting sequence to Elijah's announcement.

Elijah's first direction was to the Wady Cherith - probably: east of the Jordan\* - one of those many wide water-courses which drain into the river of Palestine. In this wild solitude, like Moses, nay, like our LORD Himself, he was to be alone with God - - to plead for Israel, and to prepare for his further work. So long as water was left in the brook - for there is nothing needlessly miraculous, even in the story of Elijah - and so long as Jehovah had such strange provisioners as "the ravens"\*\*\* to act as His messengers - for there is nothing that is merely natural in this history, and the miraculous always appears by the side of the natural - the prophet would not want needed support.

\* This appears probable from the Hebrew expression rendered in the Authorized Version "before Jordan" but meaning literally "in face of Jordan."

\*\*\* Surely, it is one of the strangest freaks of criticism (Jewish and Christian) to make of these "ravens" either "Arabs," or "merchants," or "Orebites," from a supposed town of Oreb. We can understand the difficulty of the Rabbis, arising from the circumstance that Elijah should be fed by ravens, which were unclean animals. Those of them who take the literal translation comfort themselves with the fact, that the ravens at least brought him levitically clean food, either from one of the 7,000 in Israel who had not bent the knee to Baal, or from the table of Ahab, or from that of Jehoshaphat. But these Rabbinical comments are so far evidential of the truth of this narrative, that we see how differently a later writer would have constructed this history, had he invented a Jewish legend. Hess adduces parallel instances of the support of people by wild beasts; but they are of little interest, since the provision for Elijah was manifestly miraculous.

In this also there were lessons of deepest significance to Elijah (compare as to God's strange messengers, Job 37:10; Psalm 78:23; Isaiah 5:6; Amos 9:3). When in the course of time the waters of Cherith failed, owing to the long drought, Elijah was directed to go to Zarephath (Sarepta, Luke 4:26\* ), where God had "commanded" for him even a more strange provisioner than the ravens, a poor, almost famishing widow, and she a Gentile!\*\*\*

\* Corresponding to the modern village of Surafend, though the latter seems farther from the sea than the ancient Sarepta.

\*\*\* The Rabbis represent her as a Jewess, and make her the mother of Jonah.

Here again everything is significant. Sarepta was not only a heathen city, outside the bounds of Israel, midway between Sidon and Tyre, but actually within the domains of Jezebel's father. The prophet, who was not safe from Jezebel in Israel, would be safe within Jezebel's own country; he for whom Ahab had so earnestly but vainly searched, not only throughout his own land, but in all neighboring countries (1 Kings 18:10), would be securely concealed in the land most hostile to Elijah's mission, and most friendly to Ahab's purposes. But there are even deeper lessons. It is only one of these, that, cast out of his own country and by his own people, God can find a safe refuge for His servant in most unlikely circumstances; and that, when faith seems to fail, where most we might have expected it, God will show that He has His own where least we would look for them. Again, the reference of our LORD to this history (Luke 4:25), shows these three things. That the entertainment of Elijah was a distinguishing honor conferred on the widow of Sarepta; that it proved of real spiritual benefit to her (as will be shown in the course of this history); and that it implied, that God had purposes of grace beyond the narrow bounds of Israel, unbelieving as it was - in the language of St. Paul, that He was not the God of the Jews

only, but also of the Gentiles (Romans 3:29). May we not go a step farther, and see in this mission of Elijah to, and entertainment by a heathen widow, an anticipation at least of the announcement of that "Kingdom of God" in its world-wide bearing, which formed part of the message of his antitype, John the Baptist?

Once more the support of Elijah, though miraculous, was to be secured in the course of natural and easily intelligible events. Yet withal, as it had been Jehovah Who "commanded"\* the ravens, so it was He also Who "commanded" the widow of Sarepta, all unconscious as she was of it, to sustain Elijah.

\* The Rabbis note, that, when God is said to have "commanded" the ravens, He put it in their heart - a gloss, this of manifold application.

But how should the prophet recognize her? He must go, trusting to God's direction, and, watching such natural indications as would appear, be guided to whither he was supernaturally sent. Arrived at the gate of Sarepta, he saw a widow, whose poverty was evidenced by her searching for a little brushwood. Was she the woman who would sustain him? There was a preliminary test ready to hand. She must have recognized the stranger by his dress as a prophet of Jehovah. Would she, the heathen, be willing to hold friendly communication with him? So he handed her the drinking-vessel which he had brought, with the request to interrupt her weary work in order to fetch him some water. Even this first test proved that God had, as of old (Genesis 24:12-21), and as afterwards (Luke 19:30-34; 22:9-12), by anticipation provided for His servant. And, assuredly, as ever, "the cup of cold water" given in the name of the LORD was soon to receive rich reward.

But there was yet another and a sharper test by which to ascertain whether she were the widow to whom Elijah was Divinely sent. If she would hold communion with a servant of Jehovah - did she truly believe in Jehovah Himself; and if so, was her faith such that she would venture her last means of support upon her trust in Him and in His word? To put it in another manner, heathen as she was, though thus far prepared, was there, if not activeness, yet receptiveness of faith in her, of sufficient capacity for such spiritual provision as that which was afterwards miraculously supplied for her temporal wants? This would be the last and decisive test. As she was going to fetch the water, without hesitating or murmuring at the interruption of the old, or at the imposition of the new task, Elijah arrested her with a request yet stranger and far harder than the first. She was evidently a poor widow, and we know from profane history\* that the famine, consequent on the want of rain in Israel, had also extended to Tyre. But when Elijah addressed to her what, even in these circumstances, would have seemed the modest request for "a morsel of the bread" in her hand - that is, in her possession\*\* - he could not have been aware of the terrible straits to which his future hostess was reduced.

\* Menander in Josephus' Ant. 8. 13, 2. According to Menander the actual famine in Tyre lasted one whole year. We may here remark, that if any one wishes to be impressed with the sublimeness of the Scriptural account of this event he can do no better than compare it with the wretched rationalistic prose of Josephus' version of it.

\*\* The words "in thine hand" do not refer to the verb "bring," but to "bread," and mean that Elijah spoke as if she had some bread at home. So the LXX render it.

It was not unwillingness to give even to a complete stranger part of her scanty provision, but that she had absolutely none left. Despair breaks down the barriers of reserve - at least to fellow-sufferers, and, as in this case, to fellow-believers. With the adjuration, "Lives Jehovah, thy God," which attested alike her knowledge of Elijah's profession and her own faith, she told how nothing but a handful of meal was

left in the small Cad\* that held her provisions, and a little oil in her cruse. She had now come to gather by the highway a few sticks, with which to cook a last meal for herself and her child. After that they must lie down and die.

\* The Cad was a small - probably the smallest - barrel. The word has passed into the Latin, the Greek, and the Sanscrit. Curiously enough, our English representative of it is the word "Caddy."

It is difficult to know which most to wonder at, Elijah's calmness, consistency, and readiness of faith, or the widow's almost incredible simplicity of trustfulness. Elijah was not taken aback; he did not hesitate to go on with the trial of his hostess to the end; least of all, was he afraid of the possible consequences. As in every real trial of our trust, there was first a general promise, and, on the ground of it, a specific demand, followed by an assurance to conquering faith ("the cad of meal shall not come to an end, nor the cruse of oil fail"). But, if it was as he told her, why this demand in its sharply trying severity: first, to use for Elijah part of the very little she had, and to bring it to him, and only after that to go back\* and prepare for herself and her son?

\* This is clearly implied in the original, and must have been a much greater trial of her faith than if Elijah had at once returned with her, and the miracle begun then and there.

Needless, indeed, the trial would seem, except as a test of her faith; yet not a mere test, since if she stood it and inherited the promise, it would be such confirmation of it, such help and blessing to her - alike spiritually and temporally - as to constitute the beginning of a new life. And so it ever is; and therefore does every specific demand upon our faith stand between a general promise and a special assurance, that, resting upon the one, we may climb the other; and thus every specific trial - and every trial is also one of our faith - may become a fresh starting-point in the spiritual life.

And the widow of Sarepta obeyed. It requires no exercise of imagination to realize what her difficulties in so doing must have been. Did Elijah go back with her after she had brought him the cake, almost the last provision for herself and her child, - to watch as, with wonderment and awe, she prepared the first meal from her new store; or did he allow her to return home alone, perhaps wondering as she went whether it would be as the prophet had said, or whether perhaps she would never again see the Israelite stranger? One thing at least is clear, that this heathen woman, whose knowledge of Jehovah could only have been rudimentary and incipient, and who yet, at the word of a stranger, could give up her own and her son's last meal, because a prophet had bidden it, and promised her miraculous supply for the future, must have had the most simple childlike trustfulness in the God of Israel. What a lesson this, and how full of comfort, to Elijah! There was faith not only in Israel, but wherever He had planted its seed. Elijah had spread the wings of the God of Israel's promise (1 Kings 17:14), and this poor heathen had sought shelter under them.

There, almost hourly these many "days,"\* the promise proved true, and, day by day, as when Israel gathered the manna in the wilderness, did an unseen Hand provide - and that not only for herself and her son, but for all "her household."

\* The word "many" in 1 Kings 17:15 is not in the original (as indicated by the italics). The expression marks an indefinite period of time - yet, as it seems to me, with the peculiar Old Testament idea of time, as "day by day."

It was a constant miracle; but then we need, and we have a God Who doeth wonders - not one of the idols of the heathen, nor yet a mere abstraction, but the Living and the True God. And we need in our



Bible such a history as this, to give us the pledge of personal assurance, when our hearts well-nigh sink within us in the bitter trials of life - something which to all time may serve as evidence that Jehovah reigneth, and that we can venture our all upon it. And yet as great as this miracle of daily providing seems that other of the faith of the widow of Sarepta!

It was soon to be put to even greater trial - and, as before, not only she, but Elijah also, would learn precious lessons by it. "Days" (time) had passed in happy quiet since God had daily spread the table in the widow's home, when her son became ill. The sickness increased, until, in the language of the sacred text, "there was not left in him breath."\*

\* Since the same or at least a very similar expression in Daniel 10:17 does not imply actual death, it would be rash to assert that the child was really dead. This is well pointed out by Kimchi. Similarly, Josephus has it that the child only seemed dead (was "as one dead," in New Testament language). The circumstance that his mother still carried him in her bosom seems to imply the same.

There is something in the immediate contact with the Divine, which, from its contrast, brings sin to our remembrance, and in consequence makes us feel as if it were impossible to stand unpunished before Him - until our thoughts of the Divine Holiness, which in this view seems as consuming fire, pass into the higher realization of the infinite love of God, which seeks and saves that which is lost (comp. Luke 5:8; also Isaiah 6:5). It was certainly not the wish that the prophet should be gone from her home, nor yet regret that he had ever come to it, which wrung from the agonized woman, as she carried to him her dead child in her bosom, these wild words, in which despair mingled with the consciousness of sin and the searching after the higher and better: "What have I to do with thee (what to [between] me and thee\* ), man of the Elohim? Come art thou to me to bring to remembrance my sin, and (thus) to cause the death of my son?" The Divine, as represented by Elijah, having no commonality with her; its fierce light bringing out her sin, and her sin bringing down condign punishment - such were the only clearly conscious thoughts of this incipient believer - though with much of the higher and better, as yet unconsciously, in the background.

\* Comp. Judges 11:12; 2 Samuel 16:10; 2 Kings 3:13; Matthew 8:29; John 2:4.

Elijah made no other answer than to ask for her son. He took him from her bosom, carried him to the Alijah (upper chamber) where he dwelt, and there laid him on his own bed. In truth, it was not a time for teaching by words, but by deeds. And Elijah himself was deeply moved. These "many days" had been a happy, quiet, resting time to him - perhaps the only quiet happy season in all his life. And as day by day he had been the dispenser of God's goodness to the widow and her household, and had watched the unfolding of her faith, it must have been a time of strengthening and of joy to his heart. As St. Chrysostom has it: Elijah had to learn compassion in the house of the widow of Sarepta, before he was sent to preach to his own people. He learned more than this in that heathen home. Already he had learned that experience of faith, which, as St. Paul tells us, worketh a hope that maketh not ashamed (Romans 5:4, 5). But now it seemed as if it were all otherwise; as if he were only a messenger of judgment; as if his appearance had not only boded misery to his own people Israel, but brought it even upon the poor widow who had given him shelter. But it could not be so - and in the agony of prayer he cast this burden upon his God. Three times - as when the Name of Jehovah is laid in blessing on His people (Numbers 6:24, etc.), and as when the Seraphim raise their voice of praise (Isaiah 6:3), he stretched himself in symbolic action upon the child, calling upon Jehovah as his God, laying the living upon the dead, pouring his life, as it were, into the child, with the agony of believing prayer. But it was Jehovah Who restored the child to life, hearkening to the voice of His servant.

They are truly human traits, full of intense pathos, which follow - though also fraught with deep spiritual lessons. We can almost see Elijah as he takes down the child to his mother in that darkened room, and says to her only these words of deep emotion, not unmingled with loving reproof, "See, thy son liveth!" Words these, which our blessed LORD has said to many a weeping mother when holding her child, whether in life or in death. And thus we can understand the words of the mother of Sarepta, and those of many a mother in like circumstances: "Now - thus - I know that a Man of Elohim thou, and that the Word of Jehovah in thy mouth is truth." She had learned it when first she received him; she had seen it day by day at her table; she had known it when God had answered her unspoken thought, her unuttered prayer, by showing that mercy and not judgment, love and forgiveness, not punishment and vengeance, were the highest meaning of His dealings.

The Rabbis see in this story an anticipation of the resurrection of the dead. We perceive this and more in it - an emblem also of the resurrection from spiritual death, a manifestation to Elijah and to us all, that "He quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were" (Romans 4:17). Edersheim, 5:15)

## CHAPTER 18

*Elijah is sent to meet Ahab—Obadiah saves a hundred prophets, and meets Elijah—Elijah challenges the prophets of Baal to call down fire from heaven—They fail—He calls down fire, slays the prophets of Baal, and opens the heavens for rain.*

1 AND it came to pass *after* many days, that the word of the LORD came to Elijah **in the third year**, saying, Go, shew thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth.

2 And Elijah went to shew himself unto Ahab. And *there was* a sore famine in Samaria.

3 And Ahab called Obadiah, which *was* the governor of *his* house. (Now Obadiah <sup>a</sup>feared the LORD greatly:

4 For it was *so*, when <sup>a</sup>Jezebel <sup>b</sup>cut off the prophets of the LORD **(She killed many of the prophets of Israel)**, that **Obadiah took an hundred prophets, and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water.**)

5 And Ahab said unto Obadiah, Go into the land, unto all fountains of water, and unto all brooks: peradventure we may find grass to save the horses and mules alive, that we lose not all the beasts.

6 So they divided the land between them to pass throughout it: Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself.

7 ¶ And as Obadiah was in the way, behold, Elijah met him: and he knew him, and fell on his face, and said, *Art* thou that my lord Elijah? **(How did he recognize Elijah? From his mantle.)**

8 And he answered him, I *am*: go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah *is here*.

9 And he said, What have I sinned, that thou wouldest deliver thy servant into the hand of Ahab, to slay me? **(Others who sent word to Ahab that Elijah had been found when he had not been were killed.)**

10 As the LORD thy God liveth, **there is no nation or kingdom, whither my lord hath not sent to seek thee: and when they said, He is not there; he took an oath of the kingdom and nation, that they found thee not. (Elijah was hunted even in the countries around the area.)**

11 And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah *is here*.

12 And it shall come to pass, *as soon as* I am gone from thee, that the Spirit of the LORD shall <sup>a</sup>carry thee whither I know not; and *so* when I come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he shall slay me: but I thy servant fear the LORD from my youth.

13 Was it not told my lord what I did when Jezebel <sup>a</sup>slew the prophets of the LORD, how I hid an hundred men of the LORD's prophets by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water?

14 And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah *is here*: and he shall slay me.

15 And Elijah said, As the LORD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, I will surely shew myself unto him to day.

16 So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him: and Ahab went to meet Elijah. (Obadiah was the king's chamberlain, or governor of his house. As such it was his responsibility to arrange the king's appointments. That is why Elijah told Obadiah to set up an interview between the prophet and King Ahab. The fact that a king and his chief steward had to look for water and grass by themselves shows that the famine had become acute (see vv. 5–6). Ahab knew that Elijah had brought this distress, so he searched for him. Apparently Ahab had considerable power and authority among surrounding nations, for he was able to exact promises for them that they were not concealing Elijah or that they knew of his whereabouts (see v. 10). Sometimes, however, someone would see the prophet. But when he reported seeing Elijah, the prophet had disappeared by the time Ahab got there. Ahab then killed the person who said he had seen Elijah. Obadiah's fear that Elijah would disappear again was caused by his awareness that Ahab would not hesitate to have him executed if he failed to deliver Elijah (see vv. 12–16). Elijah promised Obadiah that he would appear before Ahab (see v. 15). Whether this Obadiah, who "feared the Lord greatly" (v. 3), is the author of the Old Testament book of the same name is not known, but it is doubtful. Institute Manual, 60)

17 ¶ And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that <sup>a</sup>Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel? (The wicked often blame others for the Lord's anger, not their own wickedness.)

18 And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have <sup>a</sup>forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim.

19 Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the <sup>a</sup>prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table.

20 So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the <sup>a</sup>prophets together unto mount Carmel.

21 And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt (How long hop ye between two boughs. The people were worshipping both Jehovah and Baal. Do we do the same? Worship God and the worldly distractions? President Kimball said that modern idols can take such forms as clothes, homes, businesses, machines, cars, pleasure boats, degrees and letters, and titles, power and prestige.) ye between <sup>a</sup>two opinions? if the LORD *be* God, <sup>b</sup>follow him: but if Baal, *then* follow him. And the people answered him not a word. (They were waiting for a good opportunity to present itself for them to choose. God in His mercy gave the opportunity.)

22 Then said Elijah unto the people, I, *even* I only, remain a prophet of the LORD; but Baal's prophets *are* four hundred and fifty men. (The 400 of Jezebel were not there.)

23 Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay *it* on wood, and put no fire *under*: (The prophets of Baal used trickery to start their fires by having small embers under the sacrifices and seemingly miraculously starting their fires.) and I will dress the other bullock, and lay *it* on wood, and put no fire *under*:

24 And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. (Baal was the god of fire, surely he could do this miracle.) And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken.

25 And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress *it* first; for ye *are* many; and call on the name of your <sup>a</sup>gods, but put no fire *under*.

26 And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed *it*, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But *there was* no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made.

27 And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he *is* a god; either he is talking, or he is <sup>a</sup>pursuing, (or gone aside, or withdrawn) or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.

28 And they cried aloud, and <sup>a</sup>cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them. (They were abasing themselves hoping to get their god's attention.)

29 And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the *time* of the offering of the *evening sacrifice*, that *there was* neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.

30 And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD *that was* broken down.

31 And Elijah took <sup>a</sup>twelve stones, (*a true altar of God*) according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the LORD came, saying, <sup>b</sup>Israel shall be thy name:

32 And with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD: and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed.

33 And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid *him* on the wood, and said, Fill four <sup>a</sup>barrels (*Heb jars*) with water, and pour *it* on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood.

34 And he said, Do *it* the second time. And they did *it* the second time. And he said, Do *it* the third time. And they did *it* the third time. (*This resulted in 12 barrels of water*)

35 And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water. (*The pouring of the water was to show the people as well as the heathen priests that there would be no trickery in the miracle they were about to see.*)

36 And it came to pass at *the time of* the offering of the <sup>a</sup>*evening sacrifice*, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou *art* God in Israel, and *that I am* thy servant, and *that I have done* all these things at thy word.

37 Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know <sup>a</sup>that thou *art* the LORD God (*or that thou, Jehovah, art the God*), and *that thou hast turned* (*mayest turn*) their <sup>b</sup>heart back again.

38 Then the <sup>a</sup>fire of the LORD fell, (*the fire came from heaven. Fire came down from heaven at the sacrifice of Solomon. See 2 Chronicles 7:1-1 NOW when Solomon had made an end of <sup>a</sup>praying, the <sup>b</sup>fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the house.*) and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that *was* in the trench.

39 And when all the people saw *it*, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he *is* the God; the LORD, he *is* the God.

40 And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there. (*They may have cast over precipices 1400 feet high down to the river Kishon.*)

41 ¶ And Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee up, eat and drink; for *there is* a sound of abundance of rain.

42 So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees,

43 And said to *his servant*, Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said, *There is* nothing. And he said, Go again seven times.

44 And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare *thy chariot*, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not.

45 And it came to pass in the mean while, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel.

46 And the <sup>a</sup>hand of the LORD was on Elijah; and he <sup>b</sup>girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel. (*He outruns Ahab in his chariot. One of the myths of Baal was that he was the fastest of the gods. Elijah is showing that Jehovah has made him faster than Baal. This was about a 20 mile run.*)

## CHAPTER 19

*Jezebel seeks the life of Elijah—An angel sends him to Horeb—The Lord speaks to Elijah, not in the wind, nor the earthquake, nor the fire, but in a still small voice—Elisha joins Elijah.*

1 AND Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword.

2 Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the <sup>a</sup>gods do *to me*, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to morrow about this time. (If Jezebel had really wanted to kill Elijah, she would not have warned him.)

3 And when he saw *that*, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which *belongeth* to Judah, and left his servant there.

4 ¶ But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a <sup>a</sup>juniper (Heb broom-bush (a desert shrub)) tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I *am* not better than my fathers.

5 And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an <sup>a</sup>angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise *and eat*.

6 And he looked, and, behold, *there was* a cake baked on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again.

7 And the angel of the LORD came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise *and eat*; because the journey *is* too great for thee.

8 And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that <sup>a</sup>meat (Heb food) <sup>b</sup>forty days and forty nights unto <sup>c</sup>Horeb the <sup>d</sup>mount of God. (Where Moses received the tablets of stone.)

9 ¶ And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the LORD *came* to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah?

10 And he said, I have been very jealous (diligent) for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, *even* I only, am left; and they <sup>a</sup>seek my life, to take it away.

11 And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; *but* the LORD *was* not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; *but* the LORD *was* not in the earthquake:

12 And after the earthquake a fire; *but* the LORD *was* not in the fire: and after the fire a <sup>a</sup>still small <sup>b</sup>voice. (Elder Boyd K. Packer said: "Inspiration comes more easily in peaceful settings. Such words as quiet, still, peaceable, Comforter abound in the scriptures: Be still, and know that I am God. And the promise, 'You shall receive my Spirit, the Holy Ghost, even the Comforter, which shall teach you the peaceable things of the kingdom.'" Ensign, Nov. 1991, p. 21)

13 And it was *so*, when Elijah heard *it*, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, *there came* a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah?

14 And he said, I have been very <sup>a</sup>jealous (or zealous) (diligent) for the LORD God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, *even* I only, am <sup>b</sup>left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

15 And the LORD said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, anoint Hazael *to be* <sup>a</sup>king over Syria: (Jehovah is the God of the whole earth, not just Israel.)

16 And Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou <sup>a</sup>anoint *to be* king over Israel: and <sup>b</sup>Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah shalt thou <sup>c</sup>anoint *to be* prophet in thy room. (Place.)

17 And it shall come to pass, *that* him that escapeth the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay: and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay. (There is no record that Elisha killed anyone)

18 Yet I have left *me* seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.

19 ¶ So he departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, (Elisha means "the God of Salvation.") who *was* plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: (the other



11 oxen were led by his servants. This shows that Elisha was very wealthy.) and Elijah passed by him, and cast his <sup>a</sup>mantle upon him. (This was evidence that Elisha had been called to be the next prophet of God.)

20 And he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and *then* I will <sup>a</sup>follow thee. And he said unto him, Go back again: for what have I done to thee?

21 And he returned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen, and slew them, and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen, and gave unto the people, and they did eat. (This was a final feast for Elisha before embarking upon his errand as the prophet of God.) Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him. (Elisha was one of the choice 7,000 who had not worshipped Baal. He was among the school of the prophets, led by Elijah.)

(Joseph Smith said: “The spirit, power, and calling of Elijah is, that ye have power to hold the key of the revelations, ordinances, oracles, powers and endowments of the fullness of the Melchizedek Priesthood and of the kingdom of God on the earth; and to receive, obtain, and perform all the ordinances belonging to the kingdom of God, even unto the turning of the hearts of the fathers unto the children, and the hearts of the children unto the fathers, even those who are in heaven. I wish you to understand this subject, for it is important; and if you receive it, this is the spirit of Elijah, that we redeem our dead, and connect ourselves with our fathers which are in heaven, and seal up our dead to come forth in the first resurrection; and here we want the power of Elijah to seal those who dwell on earth to those who dwell in heaven. This is the power of Elijah and the keys of the kingdom of Jehovah.” Teachings, p. 337-38)

## CHAPTER 20

*Ben-hadad of Syria makes war with Israel—The Syrians are twice defeated—Ahab lets Ben-hadad go free, contrary to the will of the Lord.*

1 AND Ben-hadad the king of Syria gathered all his host together: and *there were* thirty and two kings with him, and horses, and chariots: and he went up and besieged Samaria, and warred against it.

2 And he sent messengers to Ahab king of Israel into the city, and said unto him, Thus saith <sup>a</sup>Ben-hadad,

3 Thy <sup>a</sup>silver and thy gold *is* mine; thy wives also and thy children, *even* the goodliest, *are* mine.

4 And the king of Israel answered and said, My lord, O king, according to thy saying, I *am* thine, and all that I have.

5 And the messengers came again, and said, Thus speaketh Ben-hadad, saying, Although I have sent unto thee, saying, Thou shalt deliver me thy silver, and thy gold, and thy wives, and thy children;

6 Yet I will send my servants unto thee to morrow about this time, and they shall search thine house, and the houses of thy servants; and it shall be, *that* whatsoever is pleasant in <sup>a</sup>thine (Greek, Vulgate and Syriac: *their*) eyes, they shall put *it* in their hand, and take *it* away.

7 Then the king of Israel called all the elders of the land, and said, Mark, I pray you, and see how this *man* <sup>a</sup>seeketh mischief: for he sent unto me for my wives, and for my children, and for my silver, and for my gold; and I denied him not.

8 And all the elders and all the people said unto him, Hearken not *unto him*, nor consent.

9 Wherefore he said unto the messengers of Ben-hadad, Tell my lord the king, All that thou didst send for to thy servant at the first I will do: but this thing I may not do. And the messengers departed, and brought him word again.

10 And Ben-hadad sent unto him, and said, The <sup>a</sup>gods do so unto me, and more also, if the dust of Samaria shall suffice for handfuls for all the people that follow me.

11 And the king of Israel answered and said, Tell *him*, Let not him that girdeth on *his* <sup>a</sup>harness (or armor) <sup>b</sup>boast himself as he that putteth it off. (Don't boast of the deed before it is done.)

12 And it came to pass, when *Ben-hadad* heard this message, as he *was* drinking, he and the kings in the <sup>a</sup>pavilions, (Heb booths, shelters) that he said unto his servants, Set *yourselves in array*. And they set *themselves in array* against the city.

13 ¶ And, behold, there came a prophet unto Ahab king of Israel, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou seen all this great multitude? behold, I will deliver it into thine hand this day; and thou shalt know that I *am* the LORD.

14 And Ahab said, By whom? And he said, Thus saith the LORD, *Even* by the <sup>a</sup>young men of the princes of the <sup>b</sup>provinces. Then he said, Who shall order the battle? And he answered, Thou.

15 Then he <sup>a</sup>numbered (or mustered) the young men of the princes of the provinces, and they were two hundred and thirty two: and after them he numbered all the people, *even* all the children of Israel, *being* seven thousand.

16 And they went out at noon. But Ben-hadad *was* drinking himself drunk in the <sup>a</sup>pavilions, (Heb booths, tents) he and the kings, the thirty and two kings that helped him.

17 And the young men of the princes of the provinces went out first; and Ben-hadad sent out, and they told him, saying, There are men come out of Samaria.

18 And he said, Whether they be come out for peace, take them alive; or whether they be come out for war, take them alive.

19 So these young men of the princes of the provinces came out of the city, and the army which followed them.

20 And they slew every one his man: and the Syrians fled; and Israel pursued them: and Ben-hadad the king of Syria escaped on an horse with the horsemen.

21 And the king of Israel went out, and smote the horses and chariots, and slew the Syrians with a great slaughter.

22 ¶ And the prophet came to the king of Israel, and said unto him, Go, strengthen thyself, and mark, and see what <sup>a</sup>thou doest (or thou shouldest do): for at the return of the year the king of Syria will come up against thee.

23 And the servants of the king of Syria said unto him, Their gods *are* gods of the hills; therefore they were stronger than we; but let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they.

24 And do this thing, Take the kings away, every man out of his place, and put captains in their rooms:

25 And number thee an army, like the army that thou hast lost, horse for horse, and chariot for chariot: and we will fight against them in the plain, *and* surely we shall be stronger than they. And he hearkened unto their voice, and did so.

26 And it came to pass at the return of the year, that Ben-hadad numbered the Syrians, and went up to Aphek, to fight against Israel.

27 And the children of Israel were numbered, and <sup>a</sup>were all present, (Heb were supplied with food) and went against them: and the children of Israel pitched before them like two little flocks of kids; but the Syrians filled the country.

28 ¶ And there came a man of God, and spake unto the king of Israel, and said, Thus saith the LORD, Because the Syrians have said, The LORD *is* God of the hills, but he *is* not God of the valleys, therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD. (The Syrians thought that God only was in the mountains, not in the valley. They didn't understand that He is everywhere.)

29 And they pitched one over against the other seven days. And *so* it was, that in the seventh day the battle was joined: and the children of Israel slew of the Syrians an hundred thousand footmen in one day.

30 But the rest fled to Aphek, into the city; and *there* a wall fell upon twenty and seven thousand of the men *that were* left. And Ben-hadad fled, and came into the city, into an inner chamber.

31 ¶ And his servants said unto him, Behold now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel *are* merciful kings: let us, I pray thee, put sackcloth on our loins, and ropes upon our heads, and go out to the king of Israel: peradventure he will save thy life.

32 So they girded sackcloth on their loins, and *put* ropes on their heads, and came to the king of Israel, and said, Thy servant Ben-hadad saith, I pray thee, let me live. And he said, *Is* he yet alive? he *is* my brother.

33 Now the men did diligently observe whether *any thing would come* from him, and did hastily catch *it*: and they said, Thy brother Ben-hadad. Then he said, Go ye, bring him. Then Ben-hadad came forth to him; and he caused him to come up into the chariot.

34 And *Ben-hadad* said unto him, The cities, which my father took from thy father, I will restore; and thou shalt make <sup>a</sup>streets (*ie bazaars, trading centers*) for thee in Damascus, as my father made in Samaria. Then *said Ahab*, I will send thee away with this covenant. So he made a covenant with him, and sent him away.

35 ¶ And a certain man of the <sup>a</sup>sons of the prophets said unto his neighbour in the word of the LORD, Smite me, I pray thee. And the man refused to smite him.

36 Then said he unto him, Because thou hast not obeyed the voice of the LORD, behold, as soon as thou art departed from me, a lion shall slay thee. And as soon as he was departed from him, a lion found him, and slew him.

37 Then he found another man, and said, Smite me, I pray thee. And the man smote him, so that in smiting he wounded *him*.

38 So the prophet departed, and waited for the king by the way, and disguised himself with <sup>a</sup>ashes upon his face. (*Heb headband over his eyes*)

39 And as the king passed by, he cried unto the king: and he said, Thy servant went out into the midst of the battle; and, behold, a man turned aside, and brought a man unto me, and said, Keep this man: if by any means he be missing, then shall thy life be for his life, or else thou shalt pay a talent of silver.

40 And as thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone. And the king of Israel said unto him, So *shall* thy judgment *be*; thyself hast decided *it*.

41 And he hastened, and took the ashes away from his face; and the king of Israel discerned him that he *was* of the prophets.

42 And he said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Because thou hast let go out of *thy* hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore thy <sup>a</sup>life shall go for his life, and thy people for his people.

43 And the king of Israel went to his house heavy and displeased, and came to Samaria.

## CHAPTER 21

*Ahab desires the vineyard of Naboth—Jezebel arranges for false witnesses, and Naboth is stoned for blasphemy—Elijah prophesies that Ahab and Jezebel and their house shall be destroyed.*

1 AND it came to pass after these things, *that* Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard, which *was* in Jezreel, hard by the palace of Ahab king of Samaria.

2 And Ahab spake unto Naboth, saying, Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it *is* near unto my house: and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it; *or*, if it seem good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money.

3 And Naboth said to Ahab, The LORD forbid it me, that I should give the <sup>a</sup>inheritance of my fathers unto thee. (*Ahab's offer to buy Naboth's vineyard may seem fair at first glance, but Naboth could not sell. His land had been inherited from his forefathers, and the law of Moses did not permit the sale of one's inheritance, except in cases of extreme destitution, and then it could be sold or mortgaged only until the time of jubilee, when it would be reclaimed. Ahab wished to acquire the land permanently. Hence Naboth's reply: "The Lord forbid it me" (v. 3). Ahab's tantrum over being refused (see v. 4)*)



gives an insight into the character of Ahab. The king owned ten-twelfths of the land of Israel already, but he was miserable because he could not get everything he wanted. These verses also show how Ahab's wife, Jezebel, arranged her husband's affairs without hindrance of any sort (see v. 16). The phrase "sons of Belial," was a catch-all term that applied to almost any evil persons—liars, thieves, murderers. Notice how the punishment pronounced on Ahab and Jezebel matched their character (see vv. 19, 23). Institute Manual, 62-63)

4 And Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him: for he had said, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers. And he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread.

5 ¶ But Jezebel his wife came to him, and said unto him, Why is thy spirit so sad, that thou eatest no bread?

6 And he said unto her, Because I spake unto Naboth the Jezreelite, and said unto him, Give me thy vineyard for money; or else, if it please thee, I will give thee *another* vineyard for it: and he answered, I will not give thee my vineyard.

7 And Jezebel his wife said unto him, Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel? arise, *and* eat bread, and let thine heart be merry: I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.

8 So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, and sealed *them* with his <sup>a</sup>seal, and sent the letters unto the elders and to the nobles that *were* in his city, dwelling with Naboth.

9 And she wrote in the letters, saying, Proclaim a <sup>a</sup>fast, and set Naboth on high among the people:

10 And set two men, sons of Belial, before him, to bear witness <sup>a</sup>against him, saying, Thou didst <sup>b</sup>blaspheme God and the king. And *then* carry him out, and stone him, that he may die.

11 And the men of his city, *even* the elders and the nobles who were the inhabitants in his city, did as Jezebel had sent unto them, *and* as it *was* written in the letters which she had sent unto them.

12 They proclaimed a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people.

13 And there came in two men, children of Belial, and sat before him: and the men of Belial witnessed against him, *even* against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, Naboth did blaspheme God and the king. Then they carried him forth out of the city, and stoned him with stones, that he died.

14 Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, Naboth is stoned, and is dead.

15 ¶ And it came to pass, when Jezebel heard that Naboth was stoned, and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, Arise, take <sup>a</sup>possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give thee for money: for Naboth is not alive, but dead.

16 And it came to pass, when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab rose up to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it.

17 ¶ And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying,

18 Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, which *is* in Samaria: behold, *he is* in the vineyard of Naboth, whither he is gone down to possess it.

19 And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, *even* thine.

20 And Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? And he answered, I have found *thee*: because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the LORD.

21 Behold, I will bring evil upon thee, and will take away thy <sup>a</sup>posterity, and will cut off from Ahab him that pisseth against the wall, and him that is shut up and left in Israel,

22 And will make thine house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, for the provocation wherewith thou hast provoked *me* to anger, and made Israel to sin.

23 And of Jezebel also spake the LORD, saying, The <sup>a</sup>dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.

24 Him that dieth of Ahab in the city the dogs shall eat; and him that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air eat.

25 ¶ But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up.  
26 And he did very <sup>a</sup>abominably in following idols, according to all *things* as did the Amorites, whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel.  
27 And it came to pass, when Ahab heard those words, that he <sup>a</sup>rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went <sup>b</sup>softly. (or dejectedly)  
28 And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying,  
29 Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days: *but* in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house.

## CHAPTER 22

*Jehoshaphat of Judah and Ahab of Israel join forces against Syria—Ahab's prophets foretell success—Micaiah foretells the defeat and death of Ahab—Ahab slain and dogs lick up his blood—Jehoshaphat reigns in righteousness in Judah—Ahaziah reigns in Israel and serves Baal.*

1 AND they continued three years without war between Syria and Israel.  
2 And it came to pass in the third year, that Jehoshaphat the king of Judah came down to the king of Israel.  
3 And the king of Israel said unto his servants, Know ye that Ramoth in Gilead *is* ours, and we *be* still, *and* take it not out of the hand of the king of Syria?  
4 And he said unto Jehoshaphat, Wilt thou go with me to battle to Ramoth-gilead? And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, <sup>a</sup>I *am* as thou *art*, my people as thy people, my horses as thy horses.  
5 And Jehoshaphat said unto the king of Israel, Enquire, I pray thee, at the word of the LORD to day.  
6 Then the king of Israel gathered the <sup>a</sup>prophets together, about four hundred men, and said unto them, Shall I go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And they said, Go up; for the Lord shall deliver *it* into the hand of the king.  
7 And Jehoshaphat said, *Is there* not here a prophet of the LORD besides, that we might enquire of him?  
8 And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, *There is* yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may enquire of the LORD: but I <sup>a</sup>hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil. And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so.  
9 Then the king of Israel called an officer, and said, Hasten *hither* Micaiah the son of Imlah.  
10 And the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah sat each on his throne, having put on their robes, in a <sup>a</sup>void (Heb threshing floor) place in the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets prophesied before them.  
11 And Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah made him horns of iron: and he said, Thus saith the LORD, With these shalt thou push the Syrians, until thou have consumed them.  
12 And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, Go up to Ramoth-gilead, and prosper: for the LORD shall deliver *it* into the king's hand.  
13 And the messenger that was gone to call Micaiah spake unto him, saying, Behold now, the words of the prophets *declare* good unto the king with one mouth: let thy word, I pray thee, be like the word of one of them, and speak *that which is* good.  
14 And Micaiah said, As the LORD liveth, what the LORD saith unto me, that will I speak.  
15 ¶ So he came to the king. And the king said unto him, Micaiah, shall we go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall we forbear? And he answered him, Go, and prosper: for the LORD shall deliver *it* into the hand of the king.  
16 And the king said unto him, How many times shall I adjure thee that thou tell me nothing but *that which is* true in the name of the LORD?

17 And he said, I saw all Israel <sup>a</sup>scattered upon the hills, as <sup>b</sup>sheep that have not a shepherd: and the LORD said, These have no master: let them return every man to his house in peace.

18 And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, Did I not tell thee that he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil?

19 And he said, Hear thou therefore the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left.

20 And the LORD said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner.

21 And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will persuade him.

22 And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a <sup>a</sup>lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade *him*, and prevail also: go forth, and do so. (The friendship between Ahab, king of Israel, and Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, may have developed because Jehoram, Jehoshaphat's son, had married Ahab's daughter Athaliah. This friendship did not please the Lord, and Jehoshaphat was severely rebuked for encouraging it (see 2 Chronicles 19:1–3).

Ahab and Jehoshaphat were considering whether they should combine to fight against the Syrians. Ahab's false prophets, or counselors, said yes, but Micaiah, a prophet of God, said no. The words of Micaiah in verse 15, "Go and prosper," were said with great sarcasm. It is as though Micaiah said: "All your false prophets have predicted success. You want me to do the same, so I will: 'Go and prosper.'" This was said scornfully to let King Ahab know that it was contrary to Micaiah's true advice. Hence the King's response in verse 16. Institute Manual, 63)

23 Now therefore, behold, the LORD hath put a <sup>a</sup>lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the LORD hath spoken evil concerning thee. (The Lord does not put a lying spirit in people. He permits us our agency to do as we want.)

24 But Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah went near, and smote Micaiah on the cheek, and said, Which way went the Spirit of the LORD from me to speak unto thee?

25 And Micaiah said, Behold, thou shalt see in that day, when thou shalt go into an inner chamber to hide thyself.

26 And the king of Israel said, Take Micaiah, and carry him back unto Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son;

27 And say, Thus saith the king, Put this *fellow* in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and with water of affliction, until I come in peace.

28 And Micaiah said, If thou return at all in peace, the LORD hath not spoken by me. And he said, Harken, O people, every one of you.

29 So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramoth-gilead.

30 And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, I will disguise myself, and enter into the battle; but put thou on thy robes. And the king of Israel disguised himself, and went into the battle.

31 But the king of Syria commanded his thirty and two captains that had rule over his chariots, saying, Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king of Israel.

32 And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, Surely it *is* the king of Israel. And they turned aside to fight against him: and Jehoshaphat cried out.

33 And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots perceived that it *was* not the king of Israel, that they turned back from pursuing him.

34 And a *certain* man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel <sup>a</sup>between the joints of the harness (Heb between the armor and the breastplate): wherefore he said unto the driver of his chariot, Turn thine hand, and carry me out of the host; for I am wounded.

35 And the battle increased that day: and the king was <sup>a</sup>stayed up (ie propped up) in his chariot against the Syrians, and died at even: and the blood ran out of the wound into the midst of the chariot.

36 And there went a proclamation throughout the host about the going down of the sun, saying, Every man to his city, and every man to his own country.

37 ¶ So the king <sup>a</sup>died, and was brought to Samaria; and they buried the king in Samaria.  
38 And *one* washed the chariot in the pool of Samaria; and the dogs licked up his blood; and they washed his armour; according unto the word of the LORD which he spake.  
39 Now the rest of the acts of Ahab, and all that he did, and the <sup>a</sup>ivory house which he made, and all the cities that he built, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?  
40 So Ahab slept with his fathers; and Ahaziah his son reigned in his stead.  
41 ¶ And Jehoshaphat the son of Asa began to reign over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel.  
42 Jehoshaphat *was* thirty and five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty and five years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name *was* Azubah the daughter of Shilhi.  
43 And he walked in all the ways of Asa his father; he turned not aside from it, doing *that which was* right in the eyes of the LORD: nevertheless the high places were not taken away; *for* the people offered and burnt incense yet in the high places.  
44 And Jehoshaphat made peace with the king of Israel.  
45 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, and his might that he shewed, and how he warred, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?  
46 And the remnant of the <sup>a</sup>sodomites, (*ie cultic male prostitutes*) which remained in the days of his father Asa, he took out of the land.  
47 *There was* then no <sup>a</sup>king in Edom: a deputy *was* king.  
48 Jehoshaphat made ships of Tharshish to go to Ophir for gold: but they went not; for the ships were broken at <sup>a</sup>Ezion-geber.  
49 Then said Ahaziah the son of Ahab unto Jehoshaphat, Let my servants go with thy servants in the ships. But Jehoshaphat would not.  
50 ¶ And Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father: and Jehoram his son reigned in his stead.  
51 ¶ Ahaziah the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned two years over Israel.  
52 And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of his father, and in the way of his mother, and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin:  
53 For he served Baal, and worshipped him, and provoked to anger the LORD God of Israel, according to all that his father had done.