

## THE FIRST BOOK OF

# THE KINGS

Commentary by **ROBERT JAMIESON**

## CHAPTER 1

### 1 KINGS 1:1-4.

#### **ABISHAG CHERISHES DAVID IN HIS EXTREME AGE.**

**1, 2.** *Now king David was old* — He was in the seventieth year of his age (<sup>2</sup>Samuel 5:4,5). But the wear and tear of a military life, bodily fatigue, and mental care, had prematurely, if we may say it, exhausted the energies of David's strong constitution (<sup>1</sup>Samuel 16:12). In modern Palestine and Egypt the people, owing to the heat of the climate, sleep each in a "separate" bed. They only depart from this practice for medical reasons (<sup>1</sup>Ecclesiastes 4:11). The expedient recommended by David's physicians is the regimen still prescribed in similar cases in the East, particularly among the Arab population, not simply to give heat, but "to cherish," as they are aware that the inhalation of young breath will give new life and vigor to the worn-out frame. The fact of the health of the young and healthier person being, as it were, stolen to support that of the more aged and sickly is well established among the medical faculty. And hence the prescription for the aged king was made in a hygienic point of view for the prolongation of his valuable life, and not merely for the comfort to be derived from the natural warmth imparted to his withered frame [PORTER, *Tent and Khan*]. The polygamy of the age and country may account for the introduction of this practice; and it is evident that Abishag was made a concubine or secondary wife to David (see on <sup>1</sup>1 Kings 2:22).

**3. *a Shunammite*** — Shunem, in the tribe of Issachar (<sup><1068></sup>Joshua 19:18), lay on an eminence in the plain of Esdraelon, five miles south of Tabor. It is now called Sulam.

## <sup><1005></sup>1 KINGS 1:5-31.

### ADONIJAH USURPS THE KINGDOM.

**5, 6. *Then Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself*** — Nothing is said as to the origin or rank of Haggith, so that it is probable she was not distinguished by family descent. Adonijah, though David's fourth son (<sup><1039></sup>2 Samuel 3:4 <sup><1330></sup>1 Chronicles 3:2), was now the oldest alive; and his personal attractions and manners (<sup><1002></sup>1 Samuel 9:2) not only recommended him to the leading men about court, but made him the favorite of his father, who, though seeing him assume an equipage becoming only the heir-presumptive to the throne (<sup><1012></sup>2 Samuel 15:1), said nothing; and his silence was considered by many, as well as by Adonijah, to be equivalent to an expression of consent. The sinking health of the king prompted him to take a decisive step in furtherance of his ambitious designs.

**7. *he conferred with Joab*** — The anxiety of Adonijah to secure the influence of a leader so bold, enterprising, and popular with the army was natural, and the accession of the hoary commander is easily accounted for from his recent grudge at the king (see on <sup><1003></sup>2 Samuel 19:13).

***and with Abiathar the priest*** — His influence was as great over the priests and Levites — a powerful body in the kingdom — as that of Joab over the troops. It might be that both of them thought the crown belonged to Adonijah by right of primogeniture, from his mature age and the general expectations of the people (<sup><1025></sup>1 Kings 2:15).

**8. *But Zadok the priest*** — He had been high priest in the tabernacle at Gibeon under Saul (<sup><1369></sup>1 Chronicles 16:39). David, on his accession, had conjoined him and Abiathar equal in the exercise of their high functions (<sup><1087></sup>2 Samuel 8:17 <sup><1053></sup>15:24,29,35). But it is extremely probable that some cause of jealousy or discord between them had arisen, and hence each lent his countenance and support to opposite parties.

**Benaiah** — Distinguished for his bravery (<sup><0231></sup>1 Samuel 23:20), he had been appointed captain of the king's bodyguard (<sup><1088></sup>2 Samuel 8:18 <sup><1019></sup>20:23 <sup><1387></sup>1 Chronicles 18:17), and was regarded by Joab as a rival.

**Nathan the prophet** — He was held in high estimation by David, and stood on the most intimate relations with the royal family (<sup><1025></sup>2 Samuel 12:25).

**Shimei** — probably the person of this name who was afterwards enrolled among Solomon's great officers (<sup><1048></sup>1 Kings 4:18).

**Rei** — supposed to be the same as Ira (<sup><1016></sup>2 Samuel 20:26).

**and the mighty men** — the select band of worthies.

**9, 10. En-rogel** — situated (<sup><0817></sup>Joshua 15:7-10) east of Jerusalem, in a level place, just below the junction of the valley of Hinnom with that of Jehoshaphat. It is a very deep well, measuring one hundred twenty-five feet in depth; the water is sweet, but not very cold, and it is at times quite full to overflowing. The Orientals are fond of enjoying festive repasts in the open air at places which command the advantage of shade, water, and verdure; and those *fetes champetres* are not cold collations, but magnificent entertainments, the animals being killed and dressed on the spot.

Adonijah's feast at En-rogel was one of this Oriental description, and it was on a large scale (<sup><1030></sup>2 Samuel 3:4,5 <sup><1054></sup>5:14-16 <sup><1341></sup>1 Chronicles 14:1-7). At the accession of a new king there were sacrifices offered (<sup><0915></sup>1 Samuel 11:15). But on such an occasion it was no less customary to entertain the grandees of the kingdom and even the populace in a public manner (<sup><1323></sup>1 Chronicles 12:23-40). There is the strongest probability that Adonijah's feast was purely political, to court popularity and secure a party to support his claim to the crown.

**11-27. Nathan spake unto Bath-sheba ... let me ... give thee counsel** — The revolt was defeated by this prophet, who, knowing the Lord's will (<sup><1072></sup>2 Samuel 7:12 <sup><1320></sup>1 Chronicles 22:9), felt himself bound, in accordance with his character and office, to take the lead in seeing it executed. Hitherto the succession of the Hebrew monarchy had not been settled. The Lord had reserved to Himself the right of nomination (<sup><0575></sup>Deuteronomy 17:15), which was acted upon in the appointments both of Saul and David; and in

the case of the latter the rule was so far modified that his posterity were guaranteed the perpetual possession of the sovereignty (<sup><1072></sup>2 Samuel 7:12). This divine purpose was known throughout the kingdom; but no intimation had been made as to whether the right of inheritance was to belong to the oldest son. Adonijah, in common with the people generally, expected that this natural arrangement should be followed in the Hebrew kingdom as in all others. Nathan, who was aware of the old king's solemn promise to Solomon, and, moreover, that this promise was sanctioned by the divine will, saw that no time was to be lost. Fearing the effects of too sudden excitement in the king's feeble state, he arranged that Bath-sheba should go first to inform him of what was being transacted without the walls, and that he himself should follow to confirm her statement. The narrative here not only exhibits the vivid picture of a scene within the interior of a palace, but gives the impression that a great deal of Oriental state ceremonial had been established in the Hebrew court.

**20. *the eyes of all Israel are upon thee, that thou shouldest tell them who shall sit on the throne*** — When the kings died without declaring their will, then their oldest son succeeded. But frequently they designated long before their death which of their sons should inherit the throne. The kings of Persia, as well as of other Eastern countries, have exercised the same right in modern and even recent times.

**21. *I and my son ... shall be counted offenders*** — that is, slain, according to the barbarous usage of the East towards all who are rivals to the throne.

**28-31. *Then king David answered and said, Call me Bath-sheba*** — He renews to her the solemn pledge he had given, in terms of solemnity and impressiveness which show that the aged monarch had roused himself to the duty the emergency called for.

## <sup><112></sup>1 KINGS 1:32-49.

### SOLOMON, BY DAVID'S APPOINTMENT, IS ANOINTED KING.

**33. *cause Solomon my son to ride upon mine own mule*** — Directions were forthwith given for the immediate coronation of Solomon. A

procession was to be formed by the “servants of their lord” — that is, the king’s bodyguard. Mules were then used by all the princes (<sup><103></sup>2 Samuel 13:29); but there was a state mule of which all subjects were forbidden, under pain of death, to make use, without special permission; so that its being granted to Solomon was a public declaration in his favor as the future king (see on <sup><108></sup>Esther 6:8,9).

***bring him down to Gihon*** — a pool or fountain on the west of Jerusalem (see on <sup><433></sup>2 Chronicles 32:30), chosen as equally public for the counter proclamation.

**34. *anoint him*** — done only in the case of a new dynasty or disputed succession (see on <sup><913></sup>1 Samuel 16:13 and <sup><100></sup>2 Samuel 2:1).

**35. *Then ye shall come up after him, that he may come and sit upon my throne*** — The public recognition of the successor to the throne, during the old king’s lifetime, is accordant with the customs of the East.

**39. *an horn of oil out of the tabernacle*** — It was the sacred oil (<sup><1015></sup>Exodus 30:25) with which the kings were anointed.

**40. *all the people came up after him*** — that is, from the valley to the citadel of Zion.

**41-49. *Adonijah and all the guests that were with him heard it as they had made an end of eating*** — The loud shouts raised by the populace at the joyous proclamation at Gihon, and echoed by assembled thousands, from Zion to En-rogel, were easily heard at that distance by Adonijah and his confederates. The arrival of a trusty messenger, who gave a full detail of the coronation ceremony (<sup><1043></sup>1 Kings 1:43-48), spread dismay in their camp. The wicked and ambitious plot they had assembled to execute was dissipated, and every one of the conspirators consulted his safety by flight.

## 1 KINGS 1:50-53.

### ADONIJAH, FLEEING TO THE HORNS OF THE ALTAR, IS DISMISSED BY SOLOMON.

**50-53. *Adonijah ... went, and caught hold on the horns of the altar*** — most probably the altar of burnt offering which had been erected on Mount Zion, where Abiathar, one of his partisans, presided as high priest. The horns or projections at the four corners of the altar, to which the sacrifices were bound, and which were tipped with the blood of the victim, were symbols of grace and salvation to the sinner. Hence the altar was regarded as a sanctuary (<sup>(1214)</sup>Exodus 21:14), but not to murderers, rebels, or deliberate perpetrators. Adonijah, having acted in opposition to the will of the reigning king, was guilty of rebellion, and stood self-condemned. Solomon spared his life on the express condition of his good behavior — living in strict privacy, leading a quiet, peaceable life, and meddling with the affairs of neither the court nor the kingdom.

**53. *they brought him down from the altar*** — from the ledge around the altar on which he was standing.

***he bowed himself*** — that is, did homage to Solomon as king.

## CHAPTER 2

### 1 KINGS 2:1-11.

#### DAVID DIES.

1. *David ... charged Solomon his son* — The charge recorded here was given to Solomon just before his death and is different from the farewell address delivered in public some time before (<sup><130P></sup>1 Chronicles 28:29). It is introduced with great solemnity.
2. *I go the way of all the earth* — a beautiful and impressive periphrasis for death.
- be thou strong, ... show thyself a man* — This counsel is similar to the apostolic direction (<sup><46G3></sup>1 Corinthians 16:13) and refers to the fortitude or strength of mind that was required to discharge the onerous functions of king.
3. *keep the charge of the Lord thy God* — that is, the divine law in all its ceremonial as well as moral requirements. But particular reference was intended to its political institutions, as it was only by strictly maintaining the conduct that became the Hebrew monarch (<sup><67D></sup>Deuteronomy 17:10-20), that he would secure the blessing of peace and prosperity to his reign (see on <sup><68L5></sup>Deuteronomy 4:5; <sup><152D></sup>Deuteronomy 29:10).
4. *there shall not fail thee ... a man on the throne of Israel* — a reference to the promise made to David of the sovereignty being vested perpetually in his lineage (<sup><40M></sup>2 Samuel 7:11-16), which was confirmed to Solomon afterwards (see <sup><1095></sup>1 Kings 9:5), and repeated with reference to its spiritual meaning long after (<sup><2437></sup>Jeremiah 33:17).
- 5, 6. *thou knowest also what Joab ... did* — The insolent and imperious conduct of that general had not only been deeply offensive to the feelings (<sup><10852></sup>2 Samuel 18:5-15 <sup><1095></sup>19:5-7), but calculated to bring reproach on the character, to injure the prospects, and endanger the throne of David.

Passing over the injuries committed directly against himself, David dwelt with strong feelings on the base assassination of Abner and Amasa.

*shed the blood of war in peace*, etc. — The obvious meaning is, that in peace he acted towards them as if they had been in a state of warfare; but perhaps these graphic expressions might be designed to impress Solomon's mind more strongly with a sense of the malice, treachery, and cruelty by which those murders were characterized.

**6. Do ... according to thy wisdom** — Joab's immense popularity with the army required that any proceedings instituted against him should be taken with great prudence and deliberation.

**8. thou hast with thee Shimei** — Though David promised him a pardon, which being enforced by the presence of a thousand followers, could not have been well refused, he warned his son against Shimei as a turbulent and dangerous character. It must not be supposed that in these dying instructions David was evincing a fierce, vindictive spirit. He is rather to be considered as acting in the character of a king and magistrate, in noticing crimes which he had not been in a condition to punish, and pointing out persons of whom Solomon would be under a necessity to rid himself as dangerous to the state. The grateful mention of Barzillai's kindness [<sup>118E</sup>1 Kings 2:7] was, however, a personal feeling that does honor to the warmth of his heart; and his silence as to Mephibosheth, the son of his beloved Jonathan, would imply the previous death of that prince.

**9. for thou art a wise man** — Solomon had given early indications of wisdom before his miraculous endowment with the heavenly gift (see <sup>118I</sup>1 Kings 3:11), and his own sagacity would dictate the course that should be followed in any new offense that Shimei might commit.

**10. So David slept with his fathers** — about six months after the coronation of Solomon (compare <sup>118F</sup>2 Samuel 5:5, with <sup>132D</sup>1 Chronicles 29:27). The interval was spent in developing his ideas and plans for the future glory of the kingdom and providing for the permanent worship of God (see on <sup>132I</sup>1 Chronicles 22:1, and following). Sepulchres were not allowed within the precincts of cities. Jerusalem, however, formed an exception; and yet, even there, the privilege was reserved chiefly for the royal family (<sup>412B</sup>Acts 2:29). Tradition says that the bones of David repose



on Mount Zion, and the minaret of a small mosque points out the spot which tradition has fixed. His was a noble, a wondrous, and a humbling history. He was a good man, yet his life was deformed by various crimes of a very gross character. But there were many bright and noble traits in his character; he was an earnest lover of the divine law; his reign was signalized by many important services that contributed to the glory of God and the exaltation of His kingdom; and his name, as the sweet Psalmist of Israel, will be held in honor to the latest age of the Church.

## 1 KINGS 2:12-24.

### SOLOMON SUCCEEDS HIM.

**12.** *Then sat Solomon upon the throne of David his father* — His ascension to the royal dignity was made under the happiest auspices. Having been born after his father became monarch of the *whole* kingdom, his claim, according to the notions of Oriental people, was preferable to that of all, *even* his elder brothers. The Hebrew kingdom enjoyed internal prosperity; it was respected and renowned abroad, and Solomon well knew how to improve these advantages.

**13-18.** *Adonijah ... came to Bath-sheba* — Her question to him betrays an apprehension which his recent conduct might well warrant; but his pious acknowledgment of the divine will seemed apparently to indicate so entire an acquiescence in the settlement of the succession (<sup>1025</sup>1 Kings 2:15), that, in her womanly simplicity, she perceived not the deep cunning and evil design that was concealed under his request and readily undertook to promote his wishes.

**19, 20.** *Bath-sheba ... went unto King Solomon* — The filial reverence and the particular act of respect, which Solomon rendered, were quite in accordance with the sentiments and customs of the East. The right hand is the place of honor; and as it expressly said to have been assigned to “the king’s mother,” it is necessary to remark that, when a husband dies, his widow acquires a higher dignity and power, as a mother over her son, than she ever possessed before. Besides, the dignity of “king’s mother” is a state office, to which certain revenues are attached. The holder has a

separate palace or court, as well as possesses great influence in public affairs; and as the dignity is held for life, it sometimes happens, in consequence of deaths, that the person enjoying it may not be related to the reigning sovereign by natural maternity. Bath-sheba had evidently been invested with this honorable office.

**22. *why dost thou ask Abishag ... ask for him the kingdom also*** — (See on <sup><1065></sup>2 Samuel 16:5; also see on <sup><1028></sup>2 Samuel 12:8). Solomon's indignation was roused; he in a moment penetrated the artful scheme, and from his associating the names of Abiathar and Joab, he seems to have suspected or known that those deep schemers had been the prompters of Adonijah.

**23-25. *God do so to me, and more also*** — the common form of introducing a solemn oath.

***if Adonijah have not spoken this word against his own life*** — Whether there was a treasonable design to conceal under this request or not, the act, according to Eastern notions, was criminal, and of dangerous consequence to the state. There is no ground of censure upon Solomon for cruelty or precipitation in this instance. He had pardoned Adonijah's former conspiracy; but this new attempt was rebellion against the viceroy appointed by the divine King and called for condign punishment. The office of executioner was among the Hebrews, as in other ancient countries of the East, performed unceremoniously and privately — often without any previous warning — by the captain of the guard, or one of his officers (<sup><1141></sup>Matthew 14:10).

**26, 27. *unto Abiathar the priest said the king*** — This functionary, as the counsellor or accomplice of Adonijah, had deserved to share his fate. But partly from regard to his priestly dignity, and partly from his long associations with the late king, Solomon pronounced on him the mitigated sentence of banishment to his country estate at Anathoth, and thereby, as God's vicegerent, deprived him of his office and its emoluments. The sacred writer notices the remarkable fulfillment. Abiathar's degradation from the high priesthood (see on <sup><11004></sup>1 Kings 4:4), of the doom denounced against the house of Eli (<sup><10231></sup>1 Samuel 2:30).

## 1 KINGS 2:28-45.

### JOAB SLAIN.

**28. *Then tidings came to Joab*** — The execution of these sentences respectively on Adonijah and Abiathar prepared Joab for his fate. Death, due to his great crimes (<sup>(4153)</sup>Numbers 35:33), would long ago have been inflicted, had not his power and popularity with the army been too formidable for the old king. He now fled to the altar, which, though a recognized asylum, afforded no sanctuary to the rebel and murderer (<sup>(4214)</sup>Exodus 21:14). And, as he refused to leave it, he seems to have cherished some faint hope that a religious scruple would have been felt at the thought of violating the sanctity of the place by bloodshed. Benaiah, not liking to assume any responsibility, referred the matter to Solomon, who determined that the law should take its course (<sup>(4593)</sup>Deuteronomy 19:13).

**33. *Their blood shall ... return upon the head of Joab***, etc. — A reference is here made to the curse publicly and solemnly pronounced by King David (<sup>(4133)</sup>2 Samuel 3:28,29).

## 1 KINGS 2:34-46.

### SHIMEI PUT TO DEATH.

**34. *Benaiah ... went up, and fell upon him*** — According to the terms of the statute (<sup>(4214)</sup>Exodus 21:14), and the practice in similar cases (<sup>(4215)</sup>2 Kings 11:15), the criminal was to be dragged from the altar and slain elsewhere. But the truth is, that the sanctity of the altar was violated as much by the violence used in forcing the criminal from the place as in shedding his blood there; the express command of God authorized the former and therefore by implication permitted the latter.

***was buried in his own house*** — or family vault, at his property in the wilderness of Judah. His interment was included in the king's order, as enjoined in the divine law (<sup>(4622)</sup>Deuteronomy 21:23).

**36. *the king sent and called for Shimei*** — He was probably residing at Bahurim, his native place. But, as he was a suspicious character, Solomon condemned him henceforth to live in Jerusalem, on the penalty of death, for going without the gates. He submitted to this confinement for three years, when, violating his oath, he was arrested and put to death by Solomon for perjury, aggravated by his former crime of high treason against David [<sup><11B2></sup>1 Kings 2:42-44].

**46. *the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon*** — Now, by the death of Shimei, *all* the leaders of the rival factions had been cut off.

# CHAPTER 3

## 1 KINGS 3:1.

### SOLOMON MARRIES PHARAOH'S DAUGHTER.

**1. *Solomon made affinity with Pharaoh*** — This was a royal title, equivalent to “sultan,” and the personal name of this monarch is said to have been Vaphres. The formation, on equal terms, of this matrimonial alliance with the royal family of Egypt, shows the high consideration to which the Hebrew kingdom had now arisen. Rosellini has given, from the Egyptian monuments, what is supposed to be a portrait of this princess. She was received in the land of her adoption with great eclat; for the Song of Solomon and the forty-fifth Psalm are supposed to have been composed in honor of this occasion, although they may both have a higher typical reference to the introduction of the Gentiles into the church.

***and brought her into the city of David*** — that is, Jerusalem. She was not admissible into the stronghold of Zion, the building where the ark was (<sup><1923></sup>Deuteronomy 23:7,8). She seems to have been lodged at first in his mother's apartments (So <sup><1900></sup>3:4 <sup><1900></sup>8:2), as a suitable residence was not yet provided for her in the new palace (<sup><1100></sup>1 Kings 7:8 <sup><1026></sup>9:24 <sup><1081></sup>2 Chronicles 8:11).

***building ... the wall of Jerusalem round about*** — Although David had begun (<sup><1918></sup>Psalm 51:18), it was, according to JOSEPHUS, reserved for Solomon to extend and complete the fortifications of the city. It has been questioned whether this marriage was in conformity with the law (see <sup><1916></sup>Exodus 34:16 <sup><1900></sup>Deuteronomy 7:3 <sup><1900></sup>Ezra 10:1-10 <sup><1913></sup>Nehemiah 13:26). But it is nowhere censured in Scripture, as are the connections Solomon formed with other foreigners (<sup><1100></sup>1 Kings 11:1-3); whence it may be inferred that he had stipulated for her abandonment of idolatry, and conforming to the Jewish religion (<sup><1951></sup>Psalm 45:10,11).

## 1 KINGS 3:2-5.

### HIGH PLACES BEING IN USE HIS SACRIFICES AT GIBEON.

**3. *And Solomon loved the Lord*** — This declaration, illustrated by what follows, affords undoubted evidence of the young king's piety; nor is the word "only," which prefaces the statement, to be understood as introducing a qualifying circumstance that reflected any degree of censure upon him. The intention of the sacred historian is to describe the generally prevailing mode of worship before the temple was built. The

*high places* were altars erected on natural or artificial eminences, probably from the idea that men were brought nearer to the Deity. They had been used by the patriarchs, and had become so universal among the heathen that they were almost identified with idolatry. They were prohibited in the law (<sup><87B></sup>Leviticus 17:3,4 <sup><82B></sup>Deuteronomy 12:13,14 <sup><24B></sup>Jeremiah 7:31 <sup><36B></sup>Ezekiel 6:3,4 <sup><30B></sup>Hosea 10:8). But, so long as the tabernacle was migratory and the means for the national worship were merely provisional, the worship on those high places was tolerated. Hence, as accounting for their continuance, it is expressly stated (<sup><1B></sup>1 Kings 3:2) that God had not yet chosen a permanent and exclusive place for his worship.

**4. *the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there*** — The old tabernacle and the brazen altar which Moses had made in the wilderness were there (<sup><136B></sup>1 Chronicles 16:39 <sup><32B></sup>21:29 <sup><40B></sup>2 Chronicles 1:3-6). The royal progress was of public importance. It was a season of national devotion. The king was accompanied by his principal nobility (<sup><40B></sup>2 Chronicles 1:2); and, as the occasion was most probably one of the great annual festivals which lasted seven days, the rank of the offerer and the succession of daily oblations may help in part to account for the immense magnitude of the sacrifices.

**5. *In Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream*** — It was probably at the close of this season, when his mind had been elevated into a high state of religious fervor by the protracted services. Solomon felt an intense desire, and he had offered an earnest petition, for the gift of wisdom. In sleep his thoughts ran upon the subject of his prayer, and he dreamed that God appeared to him and gave him the option of every thing in the world — that he asked wisdom, and that God granted his request

(<sup><118B></sup>1 Kings 3:9-12). His dream was but an imaginary repetition of his former desire, but God's grant of it was real.

## <sup><118B></sup>1 KINGS 3:6-15.

### HE CHOOSES WISDOM.

6. *Solomon said* — that is, had dreamed that he said.

7. *I am but a little child* — not in age, for he had reached manhood (<sup><118B></sup>1 Kings 2:9) and must have been at least twenty years old; but he was raw and inexperienced in matters of government.

10. *the speech pleased the Lord* — It was Solomon's waking prayers that God heard and requited, but the acceptance was signified in this vision.

15. *behold, it was a dream* — The vivid impression, the indelible recollection he had of this dream, together with the new and increased energy communicated to his mind, and the flow of worldly prosperity that rushed upon him, gave him assurance that it came by divine inspiration and originated in the grace of God. The wisdom, however, that was asked and obtained was not so much of the heart as of the head — it was wisdom not for himself personally, but for his office, such as would qualify him for the administration of justice, the government of a kingdom, and for the attainment of general scientific knowledge.

## <sup><118B></sup>1 KINGS 3:16-28.

### HIS JUDGMENT BETWEEN TWO HARLOTS.

16. *Then came there two women* — Eastern monarchs, who generally administer justice in person, at least in all cases of difficulty, often appeal to the principles of human nature when they are at a loss otherwise to find a clue to the truth or see clearly their way through a mass of conflicting testimony. The modern history of the East abounds with anecdotes of judicial cases, in which the decision given was the result of an experiment

similar to this of Solomon upon the natural feelings of the contending parties.



# CHAPTER 4

## 1 KINGS 4:1-6.

### SOLOMON'S PRINCES.

1. *So King Solomon was king over all Israel* — This chapter contains a general description of the state and glory of the Hebrew kingdom during the more flourishing or later years of his reign.

2. *these were the princes* — or chief officers, as is evident from two of them marrying Solomon's daughters.

*Azariah the son of Zadok the priest* — rather, "the prince," as the Hebrew word frequently signifies (<sup><1445></sup>Genesis 41:45 <sup><1126></sup>Exodus 2:16 <sup><1088></sup>2 Samuel 8:18); so that from the precedency given to his person in the list, he seems to have been prime minister, the highest in office next the king.

3. *scribes* — that is, secretaries of state. Under David, there had been only one [<sup><1087></sup>2 Samuel 8:17 <sup><1125></sup>20:25]. The employment of three functionaries in this department indicates either improved regulations by the division of labor, or a great increase of business, occasioned by the growing prosperity of the kingdom, or a more extensive correspondence with foreign countries.

*recorder* — that is, historiographer, or annalist — an office of great importance in Oriental courts, and the duties of which consisted in chronicling the occurrences of every day.

4. *Benaiah ... was over the host* — formerly captain of the guard. He had succeeded Joab as commander of the forces.

*Zadok and Abiathar were the priests* — Only the first discharged the sacred functions; the latter had been banished to his country seat and retained nothing more than the name of high priest.

5. *over the officers* — that is, the provincial governors enumerated in <sup><1140></sup>1 Kings 4:17-19.

*principal officer, and the king's friend* — perhaps president of the privy council, and Solomon's confidential friend or favorite. This high functionary had probably been reared along with Solomon. That he should heap those honors on the sons of Nathan was most natural, considering the close intimacy of the father with the late king, and the deep obligations under which Solomon personally lay to the prophet.

6. *Ahishar was over the household* — steward or chamberlain of the palace.

*Adoniram* — or Adoram (<sup><1121></sup>2 Samuel 20:24 <sup><1128></sup>1 Kings 12:18), or Hadoram (<sup><1408></sup>2 Chronicles 10:18),

*was over the tribute* — not the collection of money or goods, but the levy of compulsory laborers (compare <sup><1153></sup>1 Kings 5:13,14).

## <sup><1107></sup>1 KINGS 4:7-21.

### HIS TWELVE OFFICERS.

7. *Solomon had twelve officers over all Israel* — The royal revenues were raised according to the ancient, and still, in many parts, existing usage of the East, not in money payments, but in the produce of the soil. There would be always a considerable difficulty in the collection and transmission of these tithes (<sup><1085></sup>1 Samuel 8:15). Therefore, to facilitate the work, Solomon appointed twelve officers, who had each the charge of a tribe or particular district of country, from which, in monthly rotation, the supplies for the maintenance of the king's household were drawn, having first been deposited in "the store cities" which were erected for their reception (<sup><1109></sup>1 Kings 9:19 <sup><1404></sup>2 Chronicles 8:4,6).

8. *The son of Hur* — or, as the *Margin* has it, *Benhur, Bendekar*. In the rural parts of Syria, and among the Arabs, it is still common to designate persons not by their own names, but as the sons of their fathers.

**21. *Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the river*** — All the petty kingdoms between the Euphrates and the Mediterranean were tributary to him. Similar is the statement in <sup><102></sup>1 Kings 4:24.

**22, 23. *Solomon's provision for one day*** — not for the king's table only, but for all connected with the court, including, besides the royal establishment, those of his royal consorts, his principal officers, his bodyguards, his foreign visitors, etc. The quantity of fine flour used is estimated at two hundred forty bushels; that of meal or common flour at four hundred eighty. The number of cattle required for consumption, besides poultry and several kinds of game (which were abundant on the mountains) did not exceed in proportion what is needed in other courts of the East.

**24. *from Tiphseh*** — that is, Thapsacus, a large and flourishing town on the west bank of the Euphrates, the name of which was derived from a celebrated ford near it, the lowest on that river.

***even to Azzah*** — that is, Gaza, on the southwestern extremity, not far from the Mediterranean.

**25. *every man under his vine and ... fig tree*** — This is a common and beautiful metaphor for peace and security (<sup><300></sup>Micah 4:4 <sup><380></sup>Zechariah 3:10), founded on the practice, still common in modern Syria, of training these fruit trees up the walls and stairs of houses, so as to make a shady arbor, beneath which the people sit and relax.

**26. *forty thousand stalls*** — for the royal mews (see on <sup><402></sup>2 Chronicles 9:25).

**28. *Barley ... and straw*** — Straw is not used for litter, but barley mixed with chopped straw is the usual fodder of horses.

***dromedaries*** — one-humped camels, distinguished for their great fleetness.

## 1 KINGS 4:29-34.

### HIS WISDOM.

**29. *God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart*** — that is, high powers of mind, great capacity for receiving, as well as aptitude for communicating, knowledge.

**30. *Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country*** — that is, the Arabians, Chaldeans, and Persians (<sup>(~~1020~~)</sup>Genesis 25:6).

***all the wisdom of Egypt*** — Egypt was renowned as the seat of learning and sciences, and the existing monuments, which so clearly describe the ancient state of society and the arts, show the high culture of the Egyptian people.

**31. *wiser than all men*** — that is, all his contemporaries, either at home or abroad.

***than Ethan*** — or Jeduthun, of the family of Merari (<sup>(~~3164~~)</sup>1 Chronicles 6:44).

***Heman*** — (<sup>(~~3157~~)</sup>1 Chronicles 15:17-19) — the chief of the temple musicians and the king's seers (<sup>(~~3215~~)</sup>1 Chronicles 25:5); the other two are not known.

***the sons of Mahol*** — either another name for Zerah (<sup>(~~3106~~)</sup>1 Chronicles 2:6); or taking it as a common noun, signifying a dance, a chorus, “the sons of Mahol” signify persons eminently skilled in poetry and music.

**32. *he spake three thousand proverbs*** — embodying his moral sentiments and sage observations on human life and character.

***songs ... a thousand and five*** — Psalm 72, 127, 132, and the Song of Songs are his.

**33. *he spake of trees, from the cedar ... to the hyssop*** — all plants, from the greatest to the least. The Spirit of God has seen fit to preserve comparatively few memorials of the fruits of his gigantic mind. The greater part of those here ascribed to him have long since fallen a prey to the ravages of time, or perished in the Babylonish captivity, probably because they were not inspired.

## CHAPTER 5

### 1 KINGS 5:1-6.

#### HIRAM SENDS TO CONGRATULATE SOLOMON.

1. *Hiram ... sent his servants unto Solomon* — the grandson of David's contemporary [KITTO]; or the same Hiram [WINER and others]. The friendly relations which the king of Tyre had cultivated with David are here seen renewed with his son and successor, by a message of condolence as well as of congratulation on his accession to the throne of Israel. The alliance between the two nations had been mutually beneficial by the encouragement of useful traffic. Israel, being agricultural, furnished corn and oil, while the Tyrians, who were a commercial people, gave in exchange their Phoenician manufactures, as well as the produce of foreign lands. A special treaty was now entered into in furtherance of that undertaking which was the great work of Solomon's splendid and peaceful reign.

6. *command thou that they hew me cedar trees out of Lebanon* — Nowhere else could Solomon have procured materials for the woodwork of his contemplated building. The forests of Lebanon, adjoining the seas in Solomon's time, belonged to the Phoenicians, and the timber being a lucrative branch of their exports, immense numbers of workmen were constantly employed in the felling of trees as well as the transportation and preparation of the wood. Hiram stipulated to furnish Solomon with as large a quantity of cedars and cypresses as he might require and it was a great additional obligation that he engaged to render the important service of having it brought down, probably by the Dog river, to the seaside, and conveyed along the coast in floats; that is, the logs being bound together, to the harbor of Joppa (<sup>426</sup>2 Chronicles 2:16), whence they could easily find the means of transport to Jerusalem.

*my servants shall be with thy servants* — The operations were to be on so extensive a scale that the Tyrians alone would be insufficient. A division

of labor was necessary, and while the former would do the work that required skillful artisans, Solomon engaged to supply the laborers.

## <sup><1181></sup>1 KINGS 5:7-12.

### FURNISHES TIMBER TO BUILD THE TEMPLE.

7. *Blessed be the Lord* — This language is no decisive evidence that Hiram was a worshipper of the true God, as he might use it only on the polytheistic principle of acknowledging Jehovah as the God of the Hebrews (see on <sup><4421></sup>2 Chronicles 2:11).

8. *Hiram sent to Solomon, saying, I have considered the things ... and I will do* — The contract was drawn out formally in a written document (<sup><4421></sup>2 Chronicles 2:11), which, according to JOSEPHUS, was preserved both in the Jewish and Tyrian records.

10. *fir trees* — rather, the cypress.

11. *food to his household* — This was an annual supply for the palace, different from that mentioned in <sup><4421></sup>2 Chronicles 2:10, which was for the workmen in the forests.

## <sup><1183></sup>1 KINGS 5:13-18.

### SOLOMON'S WORKMEN AND LABORERS.

13. *Solomon raised a levy out of all Israel* — The renewed notice of Solomon's divine gift of wisdom (<sup><1182></sup>1 Kings 5:12) is evidently introduced to prepare for this record of the strong but prudent measures he took towards the accomplishment of his work. So great a stretch of arbitrary power as is implied in this compulsory levy would have raised great discontent, if not opposition, had not his wise arrangement of letting the laborers remain at home two months out of three, added to the sacredness of the work, reconciled the people to this forced labor. The carrying of burdens and the irksome work of excavating the quarries was assigned to the remnant of the Canaanites (<sup><1181></sup>1 Kings 9:20 <sup><4481></sup>2 Chronicles 8:7-9) and

war prisoners made by David — amounting to 153,600. The employment of persons of that condition in Eastern countries for carrying on any public work, would make this part of the arrangements the less thought of.

**17. *brought great stones*** — The stone of Lebanon is “hard, calcareous, whitish and sonorous, like free stone” [SHAW]. The same white and beautiful stone can be obtained in every part of Syria and Palestine.

***hewed stones*** — or neatly polished, as the *Hebrew* word signifies (<sup>(412B)</sup>Exodus 20:25). Both Jewish and Tyrian builders were employed in hewing these great stones.

**18. *and the stone squarers*** — The *Margin*, which renders it “the Giblites” (<sup>(413B)</sup>Joshua 13:5), has long been considered a preferable translation. This marginal translation also must yield to another which has lately been proposed, by a slight change in the *Hebrew* text, and which would be rendered thus: “Solomon’s builders, and Hiram’s builders, did hew them and bevel them” [THENIUS]. These great bevelled or grooved stones, measuring some twenty, others thirty feet in length, and from five to six feet in breadth, are still seen in the substructures about the ancient site of the temple; and, in the judgment of the most competent observers, were those originally employed “to lay the foundation of the house.”

# CHAPTER 6

## 1 KINGS 6:1-4.

### THE BUILDING OF SOLOMON'S TEMPLE.

2. *the house which king Solomon built for the Lord* — The dimensions are given in cubits, which are to be reckoned according to the early standard (<sup><400></sup>2 Chronicles 3:3), or holy cubit (<sup><340></sup>Ezekiel 40:5 <sup><360></sup>43:13), a handbreadth longer than the common or later one. It is probable that the internal elevation only is here stated.

3. *the porch* — or portico, extended across the whole front (see on <sup><400></sup>2 Chronicles 3:4).

4. *windows of narrow lights* — that is, windows with lattices, capable of being shut and opened at pleasure, partly to let out the vapor of the lamps, the smoke of the frankincense, and partly to give light [KEIL].

## 1 KINGS 6:5-10.

### THE CHAMBERS THEREOF.

5. *against the wall of the house he built chambers* — On three sides, there were chambers in three stories, each story wider than the one beneath it, as the walls were narrowed or made thinner as they ascended, by a rebate being made, on which the beams of the side floor rested, without penetrating the wall. These chambers were approached from the right-hand side, in the interior of the under story, by a winding staircase of stone, which led to the middle and upper stories.

7. *there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house while it was in building* — A subterranean quarry has been very recently discovered near Jerusalem, where the temple stones are supposed to have been hewn. There is unequivocal evidence in this quarry that the



stones were dressed there; for there are blocks very similar in size, as well as of the same kind of stone, as those found in the ancient remains. Thence, probably, they would be moved on rollers down the Tyropean valley to the very side of the temple [PORTER, *Tent and Kahn*].

**9, 10. *built the house*** — The temple is here distinguished from the wings or chambers attached to it — and its roofing was of cedar-wood.

**10. *chambers ... five cubits high*** — The height of the whole three stories was therefore about fifteen cubits.

***they rested on the house with timber of cedar*** — that is, because the beams of the side stones rested on the ledges of the temple wall. The wing was attached to the house; it was connected with the temple, without, however, interfering injuriously with the sanctuary [KEIL].

### 1 KINGS 6:11-14.

#### GOD'S PROMISES UNTO IT.

**11-13. *the word of the Lord came to Solomon*** — probably by a prophet. It was very seasonable, being designed: first, to encourage him to go on with the building, by confirming anew the promise made to his father David (<sup>102</sup>2 Samuel 7:12-16); and secondly, to warn him against the pride and presumption of supposing that after the erection of so magnificent a temple, he and his people would always be sure of the presence and favor of God. The condition on which that blessing could alone be expected was expressly stated. The dwelling of God among the children of Israel refers to those symbols of His presence in the temple, which were the visible tokens of His spiritual relation to that people.

### 1 KINGS 6:15-22.

#### THE CEILING AND ADORNING OF IT.

**15-21. *he built the walls of the house within*** — The walls were wainscotted with cedar-wood; the floor, paved with cypress planks; the

interior was divided (by a partition consisting of folding doors, which were opened and shut with golden chains) into two apartments — the back or inner room, that is, the most holy place, was twenty cubits long and broad; the front, or outer room, that is, the holy place, was forty cubits. The cedar-wood was beautifully embellished with figures in relievo, representing clusters of foliage, open flowers, cherubims, and palm trees. The whole interior was overlaid with gold, so that neither wood nor stone was seen; nothing met the eye but pure gold, either plain or richly chased.

**31-35. *for the entering of the oracle*** — The door of the most holy place was made of solid olive tree and adorned with figures. The door of the holy place was made of cypress wood, the sides being of olive wood.

**36. *the inner court*** — was for the priests. Its wall, which had a coping of cedar, is said to have been so low that the people could see over it.

### ~~<1067>~~ 1 KINGS 6:37,38.

#### THE TIME TAKEN TO BUILD IT

**37. *In the fourth year was the foundation laid*** — The building was begun in the second month of the fourth year and completed in the eighth month of the eleventh year of Solomon's reign, comprising a period of seven and a half years, which is reckoned here in round numbers. It was not a very large, but a very splendid building, requiring great care, and ingenuity, and division of labor. The immense number of workmen employed, together with the previous preparation of the materials, serves to account for the short time occupied in the process of building.

# CHAPTER 7

## <111>1 KINGS 7:1.

### BUILDING OF SOLOMON'S HOUSE.

1. *Solomon was building his own house thirteen years* — The time occupied in building his palace was nearly double that spent in the erection of the temple (<1168>1 Kings 6:38), because neither had there been the same previous preparations for it, nor was there the same urgency as in providing a place of worship, on which the national well-being so much depended.

## <111>1 KINGS 7:2-7.

### OF THE HOUSE OF LEBANON.

2. *He built also the house of the forest of Lebanon* — It is scarcely possible to determine whether this was a different edifice from the former, or whether his house, the house of the forest of Lebanon, and the one for Pharaoh's daughter, were not parts of one grand palace. As difficult is it to decide what was the origin of the name; some supposing it was so called because built on Lebanon; others, that it was in or near Jerusalem, but contained such a profuse supply of cedar columns as to have occasioned this peculiar designation. We have a similar peculiarity of name in the building called the East India house, though situated in London. The description is conformable to the arrangement of Eastern palaces. The building stood in the middle of a great oblong square, which was surrounded by an enclosing wall, against which the houses and offices of those attached to the court were built. The building itself was oblong, consisting of two square courts, flanking a large oblong hall which formed the center, and was one hundred cubits long, by fifty broad. This was properly the house of the forest of Lebanon, being the part where were the

cedar pillars of this hall. In front was the porch of judgment, which was appropriated to the transaction of public business. On the one side of this great hall was the king's house; and on the other the harem or royal apartments for Pharaoh's daughter (<sup><107></sup>Esther 2:3,9). This arrangement of the palace accords with the Oriental style of building, according to which a great mansion always consists of three divisions, or separate houses — all connected by doors and passages — the men dwelling at one extremity, the women of the family at the other, while public rooms occupy the central part of the building.

**10. *the foundation was of costly stones, even great stones*** — Enormous stones, corresponding exactly with the dimensions given, are found in Jerusalem at this day. Not only the walls from the foundation to the roof beams were built of large hewn stones, but the spacious court around the palace was also paved with great square stones.

**12. *for the inner court of the house of the Lord*** — should be, *as in* the inner court of the house of the Lord; the meaning is, that in this palace, as in the temple, rows of hewed stones and the cedar beams formed the enclosing wall.

## <sup><107></sup>1 KINGS 7:13-51.

### HIRAM'S WORKS.

**13. *Solomon sent and fetched Hiram out of Tyre*** — The Tyrians and other inhabitants on the Phoenician coast were the most renowned artists and workers in metal in the ancient world.

**14. *He was a widow's son of the tribe of Naphtali*** — In <sup><108></sup>2 Chronicles 2:14 his mother is said to have been of the daughters of Dan. The apparent discrepancy may be reconciled thus: Hiram's mother, though belonging to the tribe of Dan, had been married to a Naphtalite, so that when married afterwards to a Tyrian, she might be described as a widow of the tribe of Naphtali. Or, if she was a native of the city Daniel (Laish), she might be said to be of the daughters of Dan, as born in that place; and of the tribe of Naphtali, as really belonging to it.

***a worker in brass*** — This refers particularly to the works described in this chapter. But in <sup><42></sup>2 Chronicles 2:13 his artistic skill is represented as extending to a great variety of departments. In fact, he was appointed, from his great natural talents and acquired skill, to superintend the execution of all the works of art in the temple.

**15-22. *two pillars of brass of eighteen cubits high*** — They were made of the brass (bronze) which was taken from the king of Zobah (<sup><38></sup>1 Chronicles 18:8). In <sup><45></sup>2 Chronicles 3:15 they are said to have been thirty-five cubits high. There, however, their joint lengths are given; whereas here the length of the pillars is given separately. Each pillar was seventeen and a half cubits long, which is stated, in round numbers, as eighteen. Their dimensions in American measure are as follows: The pillars without the capitals measured thirty-two and a half feet long, and seven feet diameter; and if hollow, as WHISTON, in his translation of JOSEPHUS, thinks (<sup><52></sup>Jeremiah 52:21), the metal would be about three and a half inches thick; so that the whole casting of one pillar must have been from sixteen to twenty tons. The height of the capitals was eight and three-fourths feet; and, at the same thickness of metal, would not weigh less than seven or eight tons each. The nature of the workmanship in the finishing of these capitals is described (<sup><17></sup>1 Kings 7:17-22). The pillars, when set up, would stand forty feet in height [NAPIER, *Metal*].

**17, 18. *nets of checker work*** — that is, branch-work, resembling the branches of palm trees, and

***wreaths of chain-work*** — that is, plaited in the form of a chain, composing a sort of crown or garland. Seven of these were wound in festoons on one capital, and over and underneath them were fringes, one hundred in a row. Two rows of pomegranates strung on chains (<sup><48></sup>2 Chronicles 3:16) ran round the capital (<sup><17></sup>1 Kings 7:42; compare <sup><12></sup>2 Chronicles 4:12,13 <sup><52></sup>Jeremiah 52:23), which, itself, was of a bowl-like or globular form (<sup><17></sup>1 Kings 7:41). These rows were designed to form a binding to the ornamental work — to keep it from falling asunder; and they were so placed as to be above the chain work, and below the place where the branch-work was.

**19. *lily work*** — beautiful ornaments, resembling the stalks, leaves, and blossoms of lilies — of large dimensions, as suited to the height of their position.

**21. *Jachin and ... Boaz*** — These names were symbolical, and indicated the strength and stability — not so much of the material temple, for they were destroyed along with it (<sup><3517></sup>Jeremiah 52:17), as of the spiritual kingdom of God, which was embodied in the temple.

**23-26. *he made a molten sea*** — In the tabernacle was no such vessel; the laver served the double purpose of washing the hands and feet of the priests as well as the parts of the sacrifices. But in the temple there were separate vessels provided for these offices. (See on <sup><4002></sup>2 Chronicles 4:6). The molten sea was an immense semicircular vase, measuring seventeen and a half feet in diameter, and being eight and three-fourths feet in depth. This, at three and a half inches in thickness, could not weigh less than from twenty-five to thirty tons in one solid casting — and held from sixteen thousand to twenty thousand gallons of water. [See on <sup><4002></sup>2 Chronicles 4:3.] The brim was all carved with lily work or flowers; and oxen were carved or cut on the outside all round, to the number of three hundred; and it stood on a pedestal of twelve oxen. These oxen must have been of considerable size, like the Assyrian bulls, so that their corresponding legs would give thickness or strength to support so great a weight for, when the vessel was filled with water, the whole weight would be about one hundred tons [NAPIER]. (See on <sup><4002></sup>2 Chronicles 4:3).

**27-39. *he made ten bases of brass*** — These were trucks or four-wheeled carriages, for the support and conveyance of the lavers. The description of their structure shows that they were elegantly fitted up and skilfully adapted to their purpose. They stood, not on the axles, but on four rests attached to the axles, so that the figured sides were considerably raised above the wheels. They were all exactly alike in form and size. The lavers which were borne upon them were vessels capable each of holding three hundred gallons of water, upwards of a ton weight. The whole, when full of water, would be no less than two tons [NAPIER].

**40-45. *And Hiram made the lavers, and the shovels, and the basins*** — These verses contain a general enumeration of Hiram's works, as well as those already mentioned as other minor things. The Tyrian artists are

frequently mentioned by ancient authors as skillful artificers in fashioning and embossing metal cups and bowls; and we need not wonder, therefore, to find them employed by Solomon in making the golden and brazen utensils for his temple and palaces.

**46. *In the plain of Jordan did the king cast them*** — Zarthan, or Zaretan (<sup><4016></sup>Joshua 3:16), or Zartanah (<sup><1012></sup>1 Kings 4:12), or Zeredathah (<sup><4017></sup>2 Chronicles 4:17), was on the bank of the Jordan in the territories of western Manasseh. Succoth was situated on the eastern side of Jordan, at the ford of the river near the mouth of the Jabbok. One reason assigned by commentators for the castings being made there is, that at such a distance from Jerusalem that city would not be annoyed by the smoke and noxious vapors necessarily occasioned by the process. [Note in *Bagster's Bible*.] But the true reason is to be found in the nature of the soil; *Margin*, “the thickness of the ground.” That part of the Jordan valley abounds with marl. Clay and sand are the moulding material still used for bronze. Such large quantities of metal as one of these castings would contain could not be fused in one furnace, but would require a series of furnaces, especially for such a casting as the brazen sea — the whole series of furnaces being filled with metal, and fused at one time, and all tapped together, and the metal let run into the mould. Thus a national foundry was erected in the plain of Jordan [NAPIER].

**48. *the altar of gold*** — that is, the altar of incense.

**49. *candlesticks of pure gold*** — made, probably, according to the model of that in the tabernacle, which, along with the other articles of furniture, were deposited with due honor, as sacred relics, in the temple. But these seem not to have been used in the temple service; for Solomon made new lavers tables, and candlesticks, ten of each. (See further regarding the dimensions and furniture of the temple, in <sup><4012></sup>2 Chronicles 3:1-5:14).

# CHAPTER 8

## 1 KINGS 8:1-12.

### THE DEDICATION OF THE TEMPLE.

**2-6. *at the feast in the month Ethanim*** — The public and formal inauguration of this national place of worship did not take place till eleven months after the completion of the edifice. The delay, most probably, originated in Solomon's wish to choose the most fitting opportunity when there should be a general rendezvous of the people in Jerusalem; and that was not till the next year. That was a jubilee year, and he resolved on commencing the solemn ceremonial a few days before the feast of tabernacles, which was the most appropriate of all seasons. That annual festival had been instituted in commemoration of the Israelites dwelling in booths during their stay in the wilderness, as well as of the tabernacle, which was then erected, in which God promised to meet and dwell with His people, sanctifying it with His glory. As the tabernacle was to be superseded by the temple, there was admirable propriety in choosing the feast of tabernacles as the period for dedicating the new place of worship, and praying that the same distinguished privileges might be continued to it in the manifestation of the divine presence and glory. At the time appointed for the inauguration, the king issued orders for all the heads and representatives of the nation to repair to Jerusalem and take part in the august procession [<sup>1</sup>1 Kings 8:1]. The lead was taken by the king and elders of the people, whose march must have been slow, as priests were stationed to offer an immense number of sacrifices at various points in the line of road through which the procession was to go. Then came the priests bearing the ark and the tabernacle — the old Mosaic tabernacle which was brought from Gibeon. Lastly, the Levites followed, carrying the vessels and ornaments belonging to the old, for lodgment in the new, house of the Lord. There was a slight deviation in this procedure from the order of march established in the wilderness (<sup>31</sup>Numbers 3:31 <sup>15</sup>4:15); but the spirit of the arrangement was duly observed. The ark was deposited in the



oracle; that is, the most holy place, under the wings of the cherubim — not the Mosaic cherubim, which were firmly attached to the ark (<sup><02300></sup>Exodus 37:7,8), but those made by Solomon, which were far larger and more expanded.

**8. *they drew out the staves*** — a little way, so as to project (see on <sup><02515></sup>Exodus 25:15 and <sup><04015></sup>Numbers 4:6); and they were left in that position. The object was, that these projecting staves might serve as a guide to the high priest, in conducting him to that place where, once a year, he went to officiate before the ark; otherwise he might miss his way in the dark, the ark being wholly overshadowed by the wings of the cherubim.

**9. *There was nothing in the ark save the two tables of stone*** — Nothing else was ever in the ark, the articles mentioned (<sup><03004></sup>Hebrews 9:4) being not *in*, but *by* it, being laid in the most holy place before the testimony (<sup><01633></sup>Exodus 16:33 <sup><04170></sup>Numbers 17:10).

**10, 11. *the cloud filled the house of the Lord*** — The cloud was the visible symbol of the divine presence, and its occupation of the sanctuary was a testimony of God's gracious acceptance of the temple as of the tabernacle (<sup><01034></sup>Exodus 40:34). The dazzling brightness, or rather, perhaps, the dense portentous darkness of the cloud, struck the minds of the priests, as it formerly had done Moses, which such astonishment and terror (<sup><01612></sup>Leviticus 16:2-13 <sup><04104></sup>Deuteronomy 4:24 <sup><01035></sup>Exodus 40:35) that they could not remain. Thus the temple became the place where the divine glory was revealed, and the king of Israel established his royal residence.

## <sup><1182></sup>1 KINGS 8:12-21.

### SOLOMON'S BLESSING.

**12. *Then spake Solomon*** — For the reassurance of the priests and people, the king reminded them that the cloud, instead of being a sign ominous of evil, was a token of approval.

***The Lord said*** — not in express terms, but by a continuous course of action (<sup><01131></sup>Exodus 13:21 <sup><02416></sup>24:16 <sup><04015></sup>Numbers 9:15).

**13. *I have surely built thee an house*** — This is an apostrophe to God, as perceiving His approach by the cloud, and welcoming Him to enter as guest or inhabitant of the fixed and permanent dwelling-place, which, at His command, had been prepared for His reception.

**14. *the king turned his face about*** — From the temple, where he had been watching the movement of the mystic cloud, and while the people were standing, partly as the attitude of devotion, partly out of respect to royalty, the king gave a fervent expression of praise to God for the fulfillment of His promise (<sup><1009></sup>2 Samuel 7:6-16).

## <sup><1082></sup>1 KINGS 8:22-61.

### HIS PRAYER.

**22. *Solomon stood before the altar*** — This position was in the court of the people, on a brazen scaffold erected for the occasion (<sup><1083></sup>2 Chronicles 6:13), fronting the altar of burnt offering, and surrounded by a mighty concourse of people. Assuming the attitude of a suppliant, kneeling (<sup><1084></sup>1 Kings 8:54; compare <sup><1085></sup>2 Chronicles 6:24) and with uplifted hands, he performed the solemn act of consecration — an act remarkable, among other circumstances, for this, that it was done, not by the high priest or any member of the Aaronic family, but by the king in person, who might minister *about*, though not in, holy things. This sublime prayer [<sup><1082></sup>1 Kings 8:22-35], which breathes sentiments of the loftiest piety blended with the deepest humility, naturally bore a reference to the national blessing and curse contained in the law — and the burden of it — after an ascription of praise to the Lord for the bestowment of the former, was an earnest supplication for deliverance from the latter. He specifies seven cases in which the merciful interposition of God would be required; and he earnestly bespeaks it on the condition of people praying towards that holy place. The blessing addressed to the people at the close is substantially a brief recapitulation of the preceding prayer [<sup><1086></sup>1 Kings 8:56-61].

**1 KINGS 8:62-64.****HIS SACRIFICE OF PEACE OFFERING.**

**62. *the king, and all Israel ... offered sacrifice before the Lord*** — This was a burnt offering with its accompaniments, and being the first laid on the altar of the temple, was, as in the analogous case of the tabernacle, consumed by miraculous fire from heaven (see <sup>4002</sup>2 Chronicles 7:1). On remarkable occasions, the heathens sacrificed hecatombs (a hundred animals), and even chiliombs (a thousand animals), but the public sacrifices offered by Solomon on this occasion surpassed all the other oblations on record, without taking into account those presented by private individuals, which, doubtless, amounted to a large additional number. The large proportion of the sacrifices were peace offerings, which afforded the people an opportunity of festive enjoyment.

**63. *So the king and all the children of Israel dedicated the house of the Lord*** — The dedication was not a ceremony ordained by the law, but it was done in accordance with the sentiments of reverence naturally associated with edifices appropriated to divine worship. [See on <sup>4002</sup>2 Chronicles 7:5.]

**64. *The same day did the king hallow the middle of the court*** — that is, the whole extent of the priests' court — the altar of burnt offerings, though large (<sup>4002</sup>2 Chronicles 4:1), being totally inadequate for the vast number of sacrifices that distinguished this occasion. It was only a temporary erection to meet the demands of an extraordinary season, in aid of the established altar, and removed at the conclusion of the sacred festival. [See on <sup>4002</sup>2 Chronicles 7:7.]

**1 KINGS 8:65.****THE PEOPLE JOYFUL.**

**65. *from the entering in of Hamath unto the river of Egypt*** — that is, from one extremity of the kingdom to the other. The people flocked from all quarters.

*seven days and seven days, even fourteen days* — The first seven were occupied with the dedication, and the other seven devoted to the feast of tabernacles (<sup><4100></sup>2 Chronicles 7:9). The particular form of expression indicates that the fourteen days were not continuous. Some interval occurred in consequence of the great day of atonement falling on the tenth of the seventh month (<sup><4100></sup>1 Kings 8:2), and the last day of the feast of tabernacles was on the twenty-third (<sup><4100></sup>2 Chronicles 7:10), when the people returned to their homes with feelings of the greatest joy and gratitude “for all the goodness that the Lord had done for David his servant, and for Israel his people.”

## CHAPTER 9

### <100>1 KINGS 9:1-9.

#### GOD'S COVENANT IN A SECOND VISION WITH SOLOMON.

1. *And it came to pass, when Solomon had finished the building of the house* — This first verse is connected with <100>1 Kings 9:11, all that is contained between <100>1 Kings 9:2-10 being parenthetical.

2. *That* — rather, “For.”

*the Lord appeared* — This appearance was, like the former one at Gibeon, most probably made in a supernatural vision, and on the night immediately following the dedication of the temple (<147>2 Chronicles 7:12). The strain of it corresponds to this view, for it consists of direct answers to his solemn inaugural prayer (<100>1 Kings 9:3 is in answer to <100>1 Kings 8:29 <100>9:4,5 is in answer to <100>1 Kings 8:25,26 <100>9:6-9 to <100>1 Kings 8:33-46; see also <60>Deuteronomy 29:22-24).

8, 9. *this house, which is high* — “high,” either in point of situation, for it was built on a hill, and therefore conspicuous to every beholder; or “high” in respect to privilege, honor, and renown; or this “house of the Most High,” notwithstanding all its beauty and magnificence, shall be destroyed, and remain in such a state of ruin and degradation as to be a striking monument of the just judgment of God. The record of this second vision, in which were rehearsed the conditions of God’s covenant with Solomon and the consequences of breaking them, is inserted here as a proper introduction to the narrative about to be given of this king’s commercial enterprises and ambitious desire for worldly glory; for this king, by encouraging an influx of foreign people and a taste for foreign luxuries, rapidly corrupted his own mind and that of his subjects, so that they turned from following God, they and their children (<100>1 Kings 9:6).

## 1 KINGS 9:10-23.

### THE MUTUAL PRESENTS OF SOLOMON AND HIRAM.

**10. *at the end of twenty years*** — Seven and a half years were spent in building the temple, and twelve and a half or thirteen in the erection of his palace (<sup><1000></sup>1 Kings 7:1 <sup><1400></sup>2 Chronicles 8:1). This verse is only a recapitulation of <sup><1000></sup>1 Kings 9:1, necessary to recover the thread of connection in the narrative.

**11. *Solomon gave Hiram twenty cities in the land of Galilee*** — According to JOSEPHUS, they were situated on the northwest of it, adjacent to Tyre. Though lying within the boundaries of the promised land (<sup><1058></sup>Genesis 15:18 <sup><1000></sup>Joshua 1:4), they had never been conquered till then, and were inhabited by Canaanite heathens (<sup><1000></sup>Judges 4:2-13 <sup><1059></sup>2 Kings 15:29). They were probably given to Hiram, whose dominions were small, as a remuneration for his important services in furnishing workmen, materials, and an immense quantity of *wrought* gold (<sup><1094></sup>1 Kings 9:14) for the temple and other buildings [MICHAELIS]. The gold, however, as others think, may have been the amount of forfeits paid to Solomon by Hiram for not being able to answer the riddles and apothegms, with which, according to JOSEPHUS, in their private correspondence, the two sovereigns amused themselves. Hiram having refused these cities, probably on account of their inland situation making them unsuitable to his maritime and commercial people, Solomon satisfied his ally in some other way; and, taking these cities into his own hands, he first repaired their shattered walls, then filled them with a colony of Hebrews (<sup><1400></sup>2 Chronicles 8:2).

**15-24. *this is the reason of the levy*** — A levy refers both to men and money, and the necessity for Solomon making it arose from the many gigantic works he undertook to erect.

***Millo*** — part of the fort of Jerusalem on Mount Zion (<sup><1000></sup>2 Samuel 5:9 <sup><1000></sup>1 Chronicles 11:8), or a row of stone bastions around Mount Zion, Millo being the great corner tower of that fortified wall (<sup><1107></sup>1 Kings 11:27 <sup><1400></sup>2 Chronicles 32:5).

***the wall of Jerusalem*** — either repairing some breaches in it (<sup><4112></sup>1 Kings 11:27), or extending it so as to enclose Mount Zion.

***Hazor*** — fortified on account of its importance as a town in the northern boundary of the country.

***Megiddo*** — (now Leijun) — Lying in the great caravan road between Egypt and Damascus, it was the key to the north of Palestine by the western lowlands, and therefore fortified.

***Gezer*** — on the western confines of Ephraim, and, though a Levitical city, occupied by the Canaanites. Having fallen by right of conquest to the king of Egypt, who for some cause attacked it, it was given by him as a dowry to his daughter, and fortified by Solomon.

**17. *Beth-horon the nether*** — situated on the way from Joppa to Jerusalem and Gibeon; it required, from so public a road, to be strongly garrisoned.

**18. *Baalath*** — Baal-bek.

***Tadmor*** — Palmyra, between Damascus and the Euphrates, was rebuilt and fortified as a security against invasion from northern Asia. In accomplishing these and various other works which were carried on throughout the kingdom, especially in the north, where Rezon of Damascus, his enemy, might prove dangerous, he employed vast numbers of the Canaanites as galley slaves (<sup><4428></sup>2 Chronicles 2:18), treating them as prisoners of war, who were compelled to do the drudgery and hard labor, while the Israelites were only engaged in honorable employment.

**23. *These were the chief of the officers*** — (See on <sup><4480></sup>2 Chronicles 8:10).

## <sup><4194></sup>1 KINGS 9:24-28.

### SOLOMON'S YEARLY SACRIFICES.

**24, 25. *three times in a year*** — namely, at the passover, pentecost, and feast of tabernacles (<sup><4483></sup>2 Chronicles 8:13 31:3). The circumstances mentioned in these two verses form a proper conclusion to the record of

his buildings and show that his design in erecting those at Jerusalem was to remedy defects existing at the commencement of his reign (see <sup><1001></sup>1 Kings 3:1-4).

**26. *Ezion-geber, which is beside Eloth*** — These were neighboring ports at the head of the eastern or Elanitic branch of the Red Sea. Tyrian ship carpenters and sailors were sent there for Solomon's vessels (see on <sup><1002></sup>2 Chronicles 8:17,18).

***Ezion-geber*** — that is, "the giant's backbone"; so called from a reef of rocks at the entrance of the harbor.

***Eloth*** — Elim or Elath; that is, "the trees"; a grove of terebinths still exists at the head of the gulf.

**28. *Ophir*** — a general name, like the East or West Indies with us, for all the southern regions lying on the African, Arabian, or Indian seas, in so far as at that time known [HEEREN].

***gold, four hundred and twenty talents*** — (See on <sup><1003></sup>2 Chronicles 8:18). At one hundred twenty-five pounds Troy, or fifteen hundred ounces to the talent, and about 4 to the ounce, this would make 2,604,000, or about \$12,350,000.



# CHAPTER 10

## 1 KINGS 10:1-13.

### THE QUEEN OF SHEBA ADMIRES THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON.

1. *the queen of Sheba* — Some think her country was the Sabean kingdom of Yemen, of which the capital was Saba, in Arabia-Felix; others, that it was in African Ethiopia, that is, Abyssinia, towards the south of the Red Sea. The opinions preponderate in favor of the former. This view harmonizes with the language of our Lord, as Yemen means “South”; and this country, extending to the shores of the Indian ocean, might in ancient times be considered “the uttermost parts of the earth.”

*heard of the fame of Solomon* — doubtless by the Ophir fleet.

*concerning the name of the Lord* — meaning either his great knowledge of God, or the extraordinary things which God had done for him.

*hard questions* — enigmas or riddles. The Orientals delight in this species of intellectual exercise and test wisdom by the power and readiness to solve them.

2. *she came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels* — A long train of those beasts of burden forms the common way of travelling in Arabia; and the presents specified consist of the native produce of that country. Of course, a royal equipage would be larger and more imposing than an ordinary caravan.

6. *It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom* — The proofs she obtained of Solomon’s wisdom — not from his conversation only, but also from his works; the splendor of his palace; the economy of his kitchen and table; the order of his court; the gradations and gorgeous costume of his servants; above all, the arched viaduct that led from his palace to the temple (<sup>(1268)</sup>2 Kings 16:18), and the remains of which

have been recently discovered [ROBINSON] — overwhelmed her with astonishment. [See on <sup><400></sup>2 Chronicles 9:4.]

**9. *Blessed be the Lord thy God*** — (See on <sup><1000></sup>1 Kings 5:7). It is quite possible, as Jewish writers say, that this queen was converted, through Solomon's influence, to the worship of the true God. But there is no record of her making any gift or offering in the temple.

**10. *she gave the king an hundred and twenty talents of gold*** — about \$3,500,000.

**11. *almug trees*** — Parenthetically, along with the valuable presents of the queen of Sheba, is mentioned a foreign wood, which was brought in the Ophir ships. It is thought by some to be the sandalwood; by others, to be the deodar — a species of fragrant fir, much used in India for sacred and important works. Solomon used it for stairs in his temple and palace (<sup><4000></sup>2 Chronicles 9:11), but chiefly for musical instruments.

**13. *King Solomon gave unto the queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, beside*** — that is, Solomon not only gave his illustrious guest all the insight and information she wanted; but, according to the Oriental fashion, he gave her ample remuneration for the presents she had brought.

## <sup><1004></sup>1 KINGS 10:14-29.

### HIS RICHES.

**14, 15. *Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year*** — six hundred sixty-six talents, equal to about \$20,000,000. The sources whence this was derived are not mentioned; nor was it the full amount of his revenue; for this was “Beside that he had of the merchantmen, and of the traffic of the spice merchants, and of all the kings of Arabia, and of the governors of the country.” The great encouragement he gave to commerce was the means of enriching his royal treasury. By the fortifications which he erected in various parts of his kingdom, (particularly at such places as Thapsacus, one of the passages of Euphrates, and at Tadmot, in the Syrian desert), he gave complete security to the caravan trade from the

depredations of the Arab marauders; and it was reasonable that, in return for this protection, he should exact a certain toll or duty for the importation of foreign goods. A considerable revenue, too, would arise from the use of the store cities and khans he built; and it is not improbable that those cities were emporia, where the caravan merchants unloaded their bales of spices and other commodities and sold them to the king's factors, who, according to the modern practice in the East, retailed them in the Western markets at a profit. "The revenue derived from the tributary kings and from the governors of the country" must have consisted in the tribute which all inferior magistrates periodically bring to their sovereigns in the East, in the shape of presents of the produce of their respective provinces.

**16, 17. *two hundred targets, six hundred shekels*** — These defensive arms were anciently made of wood and covered with leather; those were covered with fine gold. \$6,000 worth of gold was used in the gilding of each target — \$1800 for each shield. They were intended for the state armory of the palace (see <sup><1146></sup>1 Kings 14:26).

**18-26. *a great throne of ivory*** — It seems to have been made not of solid ivory, but veneered. It was in the form of an armchair, with a carved back. The ascent to it was by six steps, on each of which stood lions, in place of a railing — while a lion, probably of gilt metal, stood at each side, which, we may suppose from the analogy of other Oriental thrones, supported a canopy. A golden footstool is mentioned (<sup><498></sup>2 Chronicles 9:18) as attached to this throne, whose magnificence is described as unrivalled.

**22. *a navy of Tharshish*** — Tartessus in Spain. There gold, and especially silver, was obtained, anciently, in so great abundance that it was nothing accounted of in the days of Solomon. But "Tarshish" came to be a general term for the West (<sup><306></sup>Jonah 1:3).

***at sea*** — on the Mediterranean.

***once in three years*** — that is, every third year. Without the mariner's compass they had to coast along the shore. The ivory, apes, and peacocks might have been purchased, on the outward or homeward voyage, on the north coast of Africa, where the animals were to be found. They were particularized, probably as being the rarest articles on board.

**26-29.** — (See on ~~4414~~ 2 Chronicles 1:14 [and ~~4425~~ 2 Chronicles 9:25].)

# CHAPTER 11

## 1 KINGS 11:1-8.

### SOLOMON'S WIVES AND CONCUBINES IN HIS OLD AGE.

1, 2. *But King Solomon loved many strange women* — Solomon's extraordinary gift of wisdom was not sufficient to preserve him from falling into grievous and fatal errors. A fairer promise of true greatness, a more beautiful picture of juvenile piety, never was seen than that which he exhibited at the commencement of his reign. No sadder, more humiliating, or awful spectacle can be imagined than the besotted apostasy of his old age; and to him may be applied the words of Paul (<sup>4088</sup>Galatians 3:3), of John (<sup>4187</sup>Revelation 3:17), and of Isaiah (<sup>2940</sup>Isaiah 14:21). A love of the world, a ceaseless round of pleasure, had insensibly corrupted his heart, and produced, for a while at least, a state of mental darkness. The grace of God deserted him; and the son of the pious David — the religiously trained child of Bath-sheba (<sup>2101</sup>Proverbs 31:1-3), and pupil of Nathan, instead of showing the stability of sound principle and mature experience became at last an old and foolish king (<sup>2043</sup>Ecclesiastes 4:13). His fall is traced to his "love of many strange women." Polygamy was tolerated among the ancient Hebrews; and, although in most countries of the East, the generality of men, from convenience and economy, confine themselves to one woman, yet a number of wives is reckoned as an indication of wealth and importance, just as a numerous stud of horses and a grand equipage are among us. The sovereign, of course, wishes to have a more numerous harem than any of his subjects; and the female establishments of many Oriental princes have, both in ancient and modern times, equalled or exceeded that of Solomon's. It is probable, therefore, that, in conformity with Oriental notions, he resorted to it as a piece of state magnificence. But in him it was unpardonable, as it was a direct and outrageous violation of the divine law (<sup>4577</sup>Deuteronomy 17:17), and the very result which that statute was ordained to prevent was realized in him. His marriage with the daughter of Pharaoh is not censured either here or elsewhere (see on <sup>4181</sup>1

Kings 3:1). It was only his love for many strange women; for women, though in the East considered inferiors, exert often a silent but powerful seductive influence over their husbands in the harem, as elsewhere, and so it was exemplified in Solomon.

**3. *he had seven hundred wives, princesses*** — They were, probably, according to an existing custom, the daughters of tributary chiefs, given as hostages for good conduct of their fathers.

***concubines*** — were legitimate, but lower or secondary wives. These the chief or first wife regards without the smallest jealousy or regret, as they look up to her with feelings of respectful submission. Solomon's wives became numerous, not all at once, but gradually. Even at an early period his taste for Oriental show seems to have led to the establishment of a considerable harem (<sup>2108</sup>Song of Solomon 6:8).

**4. *when Solomon was old*** — He could not have been more than fifty.

***his wives turned away his heart after other gods*** — Some, considering the lapse of Solomon into idolatry as a thing incredible, regard him as merely humoring his wives in the practice of their superstition; and, in countenancing their respective rites by his presence, as giving only an outward homage — a sensible worship, in which neither his understanding nor his heart was engaged. The apology only makes matters worse, as it implies an adding of hypocrisy and contempt of God to an open breach of His law. There seems no possibility of explaining the language of the sacred historian, but as intimating that Solomon became an actual and open idolater, worshipping images of wood or stone in sight of the very temple which, in early life, he had erected to the true God. Hence that part of Olivet was called the high place of Tophet (<sup>2413</sup>Jeremiah 7:30-34), and the hill is still known as the Mount of Offense, of the Mount of Corruption (<sup>1223</sup>2 Kings 23:13).

**5-7. *Ashtoreth*** — Astarte,

***Milcom*** — Molech,

***and Chemosh*** — He built altars for these three; but, although he is described (<sup>1118</sup>1 Kings 11:8) as doing the same for “all his strange wives,”

there is no evidence that they had idols distinct from these; and there is no trace whatever of Egyptian idolatry.

**8. *burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods*** — The first was considered a higher act of homage, and is often used as synonymous with worship (<sup><1227></sup>2 Kings 22:17 <sup><1235></sup>23:5).

## ~~<1119>~~ I KINGS 11:9-13.

### GOD THREATENS HIM.

**9-12. *the Lord was angry with Solomon*** — The divine appearance, first at Gibeon [<sup><1085></sup>1 Kings 3:5], and then at Jerusalem [<sup><1092></sup>1 Kings 9:2], after the dedication of the temple, with the warnings given him on both occasions [<sup><1081></sup>1 Kings 3:11-14 <sup><1090></sup>9:3-9], had left Solomon inexcusable; and it was proper and necessary that on one who had been so signally favored with the gifts of Heaven, but who had grossly abused them, a terrible judgment should fall. The divine sentence was announced to him probably by Ahijah; but there was mercy mingled with judgment, in the circumstance, that it should not be inflicted on Solomon personally. and that a remnant of the kingdom should be spared — “for David’s sake, and for Jerusalem’s sake, which had been chosen” to put God’s name there; not from a partial bias in favor of either, but that the divine promise might stand (<sup><1072></sup>2 Samuel 7:12-16).

**13. *I will give one tribe to thy son*** — There were left to Rehoboam the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi (<sup><1412></sup>2 Chronicles 11:12,13); and multitudes of Israelites, who, after the schism of the kingdom, established their residence within the territory of Judah to enjoy the privileges of the true religion (<sup><1127></sup>1 Kings 12:17). These are all reckoned as one tribe.

## ~~1~~1 KINGS 11:14-40.

### SOLOMON'S ADVERSARIES.

**14-25. *the Lord stirred up an adversary*** — that is, permitted him, through the impulse of his own ambition, or revenge, to attack Israel. During the war of extermination, which Joab carried on in Edom (<sup>183</sup>2 Samuel 8:13), this Hadad, of the royal family, a mere boy when rescued from the sword of the ruthless conqueror, was carried into Egypt, hospitably entertained, and became allied with the house of the Egyptian king. In after years, the thought of his native land and his lost kingdom taking possession of his mind, he, on learning the death of David and Joab, renounced the ease, possessions, and glory of his Egyptian residence, to return to Edom and attempt the recovery of his ancestral throne. The movements of this prince seem to have given much annoyance to the Hebrew government; but as he was defeated by the numerous and strong garrisons planted throughout the Edomite territory, Hadad seems to have offered his services to Rezon, another of Solomon's adversaries (<sup>123</sup>1 Kings 11:23-25). This man, who had been general of Hadadezer and, on the defeat of that great king, had successfully withdrawn a large force, went into the wilderness, led a predatory life, like Jephthah, David, and others, on the borders of the Syrian and Arabian deserts. Then, having acquired great power, he at length became king in Damascus, threw off the yoke, and was "the adversary of Israel all the days of Solomon." He was succeeded by Hadad, whose successors took the official title of Ben-hadad from him, the illustrious founder of the powerful kingdom of Damascus-Syria. These hostile neighbors, who had been long kept in check by the traditional fame of David's victories, took courage; and breaking out towards the latter end of Solomon's reign, they must have not only disturbed his kingdom by their inroads, but greatly crippled his revenue by stopping his lucrative traffic with Tadmor and the Euphrates.

**26-40. *Jeroboam*** — This was an internal enemy of a still more formidable character. He was a young man of talent and energy, who, having been appointed by Solomon superintendent of the engineering works projected around Jerusalem, had risen into public notice, and on being informed by a



very significant act of the prophet Ahijah of the royal destiny which, by divine appointment, awaited him, his mind took a new turn.

**29. *clad*** — rather, “wrapped up.” The meaning is, “Ahijah, the Shilonite, the prophet, went and took a fit station *in the way*; and, in order that he might not be known, *he wrapped himself up*, so as closely to conceal himself, in *a new garment, a surtout*, which he afterwards tore in twelve pieces.” Notwithstanding this privacy, the story, and the prediction connected with it [<sup><1113></sup>1 Kings 11:30-39], probably reached the king’s ears; and Jeroboam became a marked man [<sup><1114></sup>1 Kings 11:40]. His aspiring ambition, impatient for the death of Solomon, led him to form plots and conspiracies, in consequence of which he was compelled to flee to Egypt. Though chosen of God, he would not wait the course of God’s providence, and therefore incurred the penalty of death by his criminal rebellion. The heavy exactions and compulsory labor (<sup><1113></sup>1 Kings 11:28) which Solomon latterly imposed upon his subjects, when his foreign resources began to fail, had prepared the greater part of the kingdom for a revolt under so popular a demagogue as Jeroboam.

**40. *Shishak*** — He harbored and encouraged the rebellious refugee, and was of a different dynasty from the father-in-law of Solomon.

# CHAPTER 12

## 1 KINGS 12:1-5.

### REFUSING THE OLD MEN'S COUNSEL.

1. *Rehoboam went to Shechem* — He was the oldest, and perhaps the only son of Solomon, and had been, doubtless, designated by his father heir to the throne, as Solomon had been by David. The incident here related took place after the funeral obsequies of the late king and the period for public mourning had past. When all Israel came to make him king, it was not to exercise their old right of election (<sup>900E</sup>1 Samuel 10:19-21), for, after God's promise of the perpetual sovereignty to David's posterity, their duty was submission to the authority of the rightful heir; but their object was, when making him king, to renew the conditions and stipulations to which their constitutional kings were subject (<sup>900E</sup>1 Samuel 10:25). To the omission of such rehearsing which, under the peculiar circumstances in which Solomon was made king, they were disposed to ascribe the absolutism of his government.

*Shechem* — This ancient, venerable, and central town was the place of convocation; and it is evident, if not from the appointment of that place, at least from the tenor of their language, and the concerted presence of Jeroboam [<sup>111E</sup>1 Kings 12:3], that the people were determined on revolt.

4. *Thy father made our yoke grievous* — The splendor of Solomon's court and the magnitude of his undertakings being such, that neither the tribute of dependent states, nor the presents of foreign princes, nor the profits of his commercial enterprises, were adequate to carry them on, he had been obliged, for obtaining the necessary revenue, to begin a system of heavy taxation. The people looked only to the burdens, not to the benefits they derived from Solomon's peaceful and prosperous reign — and the evils from which they demanded deliverance were civil oppressions, not idolatry, to which they appear to have been indifferent or approving.

**5-8. *he said ... Depart yet for three days*** — It was prudent to take the people's demand into calm and deliberate consideration. Whether, had the advice of the sage and experienced counsellors been followed, any good result would have followed, it is impossible to say. It would at least have removed all pretext for the separation. [See on <sup><4112></sup>2 Chronicles 10:7.] But he preferred the counsel of his young companions (not in age, for they were all about forty-one, but inexperienced), who recommended prompt and decisive measures to quell the malcontents.

**11. *whips ... scorpions*** — The latter [instruments], as contrasted with the former, are supposed to mean thongs thickly set with sharp iron points, used in the castigation of slaves.

**15-18. *the king hearkened not unto the people, for the cause was from the Lord*** — That was the overruling cause. Rehoboam's weakness (<sup><2008></sup>Ecclesiastes 2:18,19) and inexperience in public affairs has given rise to the probable conjecture, that, like many other princes in the East, he had been kept secluded in the harem till the period of his accession (<sup><2014></sup>Ecclesiastes 4:14), his father being either afraid of his aspiring to the sovereignty, like the two sons of David, or, which is more probable, afraid of prematurely exposing his imbecility. The king's haughty and violent answer to a people already filled with a spirit of discontent and exasperation, indicated so great an incapacity to appreciate the gravity of the crisis, so utter a want of common sense, as to create a belief that he was struck with judicial blindness. It was received with mingled scorn and derision. The revolt was accomplished, and yet so quietly, that Rehoboam remained in Shechem, fancying himself the sovereign of a united kingdom, until his chief tax gatherer, who had been most imprudently sent to treat with the people, had been stoned to death. This opened his eyes, and he fled for security to Jerusalem.

## <sup><1122></sup>1 KINGS 12:20-33.

### JEROBOAM MADE KING OVER THEM.

**20-24. *when all Israel heard that Jeroboam was come again*** — This verse closes the parenthetical narrative begun at <sup><1122></sup>1 Kings 12:2, and <sup><1122></sup>1

Kings 12:21-24 resume the history from <sup><1121></sup>1 Kings 12:1. Rehoboam determined to assert his authority by leading a large force into the disaffected provinces. But the revolt of the ten tribes was completed when the prophet Shemaiah ordered, in the Lord's name, an abandonment of any hostile measures against the revolutionists. The army, overawed by the divine prohibition, dispersed, and the king was obliged to submit.

**25. *Jeroboam built Shechem*** — destroyed by Abimelech (<sup><0700></sup>Judges 9:1-49). It was rebuilt, and perhaps fortified, by Jeroboam, as a royal residence.

***built Penuel*** — a ruined city with a tower (<sup><0700></sup>Judges 8:9), east of Jordan, on the north bank of the Jabbok. It was an object of importance to restore this fortress (as it lay on the caravan road from Gilead to Damascus and Palmyra) and to secure his frontier on that quarter.

**26-32. *Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David*** — Having received the kingdom from God, he should have relied on the divine protection. But he did not. With a view to withdraw the people from the temple and destroy the sacred associations connected with Jerusalem, he made serious and unwarranted innovations on the religious observances of the country, on pretext of saving the people the trouble and expense of a distant journey. First, he erected two golden calves — the young bulls, Apis and Mnevis, as symbols (in the Egyptian fashion) of the true God, and the nearest, according to his fancy, to the figures of the cherubim. The one was placed at Dan, in the northern part of his kingdom; the other at Beth-el, the southern extremity, in sight of Jerusalem, and in which place he probably thought God was as likely to manifest Himself as at Jerusalem (<sup><0331></sup>Genesis 32:1-32 <sup><1100></sup>2 Kings 2:2). The latter place was the most frequented — for the words (<sup><1120></sup>1 Kings 12:30) should be rendered, “the people even to Daniel went to worship before the one” (<sup><2483></sup>Jeremiah 48:13 <sup><3006></sup>Amos 4:4,5 <sup><1075></sup>5:5 <sup><3053></sup>Hosea 5:8 <sup><3015></sup>10:8). The innovation was a sin because it was setting up the worship of God by symbols and images and departing from the place where He had chosen to put His name. Secondly, he changed the feast of tabernacles from the fifteenth of the seventh to the fifteenth of the eighth month. The ostensible reason might be, that the ingathering or harvest was later in the

northern parts of the kingdom; but the real reason was to eradicate the old association with this, the most welcome and joyous festival of the year.

**31. *made priests of the lowest of the people*** — literally, “out of all the people,” the Levites refusing to act. He himself assumed to himself the functions of the high priest, at least, at the great festival, probably from seeing the king of Egypt conjoin the royal and sacred offices, and deeming the office of the high priest too great to be vested in a subject.

# CHAPTER 13

## <HB>1 KINGS 13:1-22.

### JEROBOAM'S HAND WITHERS.

**1. *there came a man of God out of Judah*** — Who this prophet was cannot be ascertained, He came by divine authority. It could not be either Iddo or Ahijah, for both were alive after the events here related.

***Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense*** — It was at one of the annual festivals. The king, to give interest to the new ritual, was himself the officiating priest. The altar and its accompaniments would, of course, exhibit all the splendor of a new and gorgeously decorated temple. But the prophet foretold its utter destruction [<sup><HB></sup>1 Kings 13:3].

**2-9. *he cried against the altar*** — which is put for the whole system of worship organized in Israel.

***Behold, a child shall be born ... Josiah by name*** — This is one of the most remarkable prophecies recorded in the Scriptures; and, in its clearness, circumstantial minuteness, and exact prediction of an event that took place three hundred sixty years later, it stands in striking contrast to the obscure and ambiguous oracles of the heathen. Being publicly uttered, it must have been well known to the people; and every Jew who lived at the accomplishment of the event must have been convinced of the truth of a religion connected with such a prophecy as this. A present sign was given of the remote event predicted, in a visible fissure being miraculously made on the altar. Incensed at the man's license of speech, Jeroboam stretched out his hand and ordered his attendants to seize the bold intruder. That moment the king's arm became stiff and motionless, and the altar split asunder, so that the fire and ashes fell on the floor. Overawed by the effects of his impiety, Jeroboam besought the prophet's prayer. His request was acceded to, and the hand was restored to its healthy state. Jeroboam was artful, and invited the prophet to the royal table, not to do him honor or show his gratitude for the restoration of his hand, but to win,

by his courtesy and liberal hospitality, a person whom he could not crush by his power. But the prophet informed him of a divine injunction expressly prohibiting him from all social intercourse with any in the place, as well as from returning the same way. The prohibition not to eat or drink in Beth-el was because all the people had become apostates from the true religion, and the reason he was not allowed to return the same way was lest he should be recognized by any whom he had seen in going.

**11. *Now there dwelt an old prophet in Beth-el*** — If this were a true prophet, he was a bad man.

**18. *an angel spake unto me by the word of the Lord*** — This circuitous mode of speaking, instead of simply saying, “the LORD spake to me,” was adopted to hide an equivocation, to conceal a double meaning — an inferior sense given to the word “angel” — to offer a *seemingly superior* authority to persuade the prophet, while really the authority was secretly known to the speaker to be *inferior*. The “angel,” that is, “messenger,” was his own sons, who were worshippers, perhaps priests, at Beth-el. As this man was governed by self-interest, and wished to curry favor with the king (whose purpose to adhere to his religious polity, he feared, might be shaken by the portents that had occurred), his hastening after the prophet of Judah, the deception he practiced, and the urgent invitation by which, on the ground of a falsehood, he prevailed on the too facile man of God to accompany him back to his house in Beth-el, were to create an impression in the king’s mind that he was an impostor, who acted in opposition to his own statement.

**21. *he cried unto the man of God that came from Judah*** — rather, “it cried,” that is, the word of the Lord.

## ~~11:23~~ 1 KINGS 13:23-32.

### THE DISOBEDIENT PROPHET SLAIN BY A LION.

**24. *a lion met him by the way, and slew him*** — There was a wood near Beth-el infested with lions (~~11:24~~ 2 Kings 2:24). This sad catastrophe was a severe but necessary judgment of God, to attest the truth of the message

with which the prophet had been charged. All the circumstances of this tragic occurrence (the undevoured carcass, the untouched ass, the passengers unmolested by the lion, though standing there) were calculated to produce an irresistible impression that the hand of God was in it.

**31. *bury me in the sepulcher wherein the man of God is buried*** — His motive in making this request was either that his remains might not be disturbed when the predicted events took place (see <sup>1238</sup>2 Kings 23:18), or he had some superstitious hope of being benefited at the resurrection by being in the same cave with a man of God.



# CHAPTER 14

## <H4>1 KINGS 14:1-20.

### AHIJAH DENOUNCES GOD'S JUDGMENTS AGAINST JEROBOAM.

1. *At that time* — a phrase used often loosely and indefinitely in sacred history. This domestic incident in the family of Jeroboam probably occurred towards the end of his reign; his son Abijah was of age and considered by the people the heir to the throne.

2. *Jeroboam said to his wife, Arise, I pray thee, and disguise thyself* — His natural and intense anxiety as a parent is here seen, blended with the deep and artful policy of an apostate king. The reason of this extreme caution was an unwillingness to acknowledge that he looked for information as to the future, not to his idols, but to the true God; and a fear that this step, if publicly known, might endanger the stability of his whole political system; and a strong impression that Ahijah, who was greatly offended with him, would, if consulted openly by his queen, either insult or refuse to receive her. For these reasons he selected his wife, as, in every view, the most proper for such a secret and confidential errand, but recommended her to assume the garb and manner of a peasant woman. Strange infatuation, to suppose that the God who could reveal futurity could not penetrate a flimsy disguise!

3-11. *And take with thee ten loaves, and cracknels, and a cruse of honey, and go to him* — This was a present in unison with the peasant character she assumed. Cracknels are a kind of sweet seed-cake. The prophet was blind, but having received divine premonition of the pretended countrywoman's coming, he addressed her as the queen the moment she appeared, apprised her of the calamities which, in consequence of the ingratitude of Jeroboam, his apostasy, and outrageous misgovernment of Israel, impended over their house, as well as over the nation which too readily followed his idolatrous innovations.

**8. *thou hast not been as my servant David*** — David, though he fell into grievous sins, repented and always maintained the pure worship of God as enjoined by the law.

**10, 11. *I will bring evil upon the house of Jeroboam*** — Strong expressions are here used to indicate the utter extirpation of his house;

***him that is shut up and left in Israel*** — means those who were concealed with the greatest privacy, as the heirs of royalty often are where polygamy prevails; the other phrase, from the loose garments of the East having led to a different practice from what prevails in the West, cannot refer to men; it must signify either a very young boy, or rather, perhaps, a dog, so entire would be the destruction of Jeroboam's house that none, not even a dog, belonging to it should escape. This peculiar phrase occurs only in regard to the threatened extermination of a family (<sup><11652></sup>1 Samuel 25:22-34). See the manner of extermination (<sup><11604></sup>1 Kings 16:4 21:24).

**12. *the child shall die*** — The death and general lamentation felt through the country at the loss of the prince were also predicted. The reason for the profound regret shown at his death arose, according to Jewish writers, from his being decidedly opposed to the erection of the golden calves, and using his influence with his father to allow his subjects the free privilege of going to worship in Jerusalem.

**13. *all Israel shall mourn for him, and bury him*** — the only one of Jeroboam's family who should receive the rites of sepulture.

**14. *the Lord shall raise him up a king ... but what? even now*** — namely, Baasha (<sup><11657></sup>1 Kings 15:27); he was already raised — he was in being, though not in power.

**17. *Tirzah*** — a place of pre-eminent beauty (So 6:4), three hours' travelling east of Samaria, chosen when Israel became a separate kingdom, by the first monarch, and used during three short reigns as a residence of the royal house. The fertile plains and wooded hills in that part of the territory of Ephraim gave an opening to the formation of parks and pleasure-grounds similar to those which were the "paradises" of Assyrian and Persian monarchs [STANLEY]. Its site is occupied by the large village of Taltise [ROBINSON]. As soon as the queen reached the gate of the

palace, she received the intelligence that her son was dying, according to the prophet's prediction [<sup><1142></sup>1 Kings 14:12].

**19. *the rest of the acts of Jeroboam*** — None of the threatenings denounced against this family produced any change in his policy or government.

## <sup><1142></sup>1 KINGS 14:21-24.

### REHOBOAM'S WICKED REIGN.

**21. *he reigned ... in Jerusalem*** — Its particular designation as “the city which the Lord did choose out of all the tribes of Israel, to put his name there,” seems given here, both as a reflection on the apostasy of the ten tribes, and as a proof of the aggravated wickedness of introducing idolatry and its attendant vices there.

***his mother's name was Naamah an Ammonitess*** — Her heathen extraction and her influence as queen mother are stated to account for Rehoboam's tendency to depart from the true religion. Led by the warning of the prophet (<sup><1123></sup>1 Kings 12:23), as well as by the large immigration of Israelites into his kingdom (<sup><1127></sup>1 Kings 12:17 <sup><4116></sup>2 Chronicles 11:16), he continued for the first three years of his reign a faithful patron of true religion (<sup><4117></sup>2 Chronicles 11:17). But afterwards he began and encouraged a general apostasy; idolatry became the prevailing form of worship, and the religious state of the kingdom in his reign is described by the high places, the idolatrous statues, the groves and impure rites that with unchecked license were observed in them. The description is suited to the character of the Canaanitish worship.

## <sup><1125></sup>1 KINGS 14:25-31.

### SHISHAK SPOILS JERUSALEM.

**25, 26. *Shishak king of Egypt came up*** — He was the instrument in the hand of Providence for punishing the national defection. Even though this king had been Solomon's father-in-law, he was no relation of Rehoboam's;

but there is a strong probability that he belonged to another dynasty (see on <sup><4411></sup>2 Chronicles 12:2). He was the Sheshonk of the Egyptian monuments, who is depicted on a bas-relief at Karnak, as dragging captives, who, from their peculiar physiognomy, are universally admitted to be Jews.

**29. *Now the rest of the acts of Rehoboam ..., are they not written in the book of the chronicles?*** — not the book so called and comprehended in the sacred canon, but the national archives of Judah.

**30. *there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam*** — The former was prohibited from entering on an aggressive war; but as the two kingdoms kept up a jealous rivalry, he might be forced into vigilant measures of defense, and frequent skirmishes would take place on the borders.

# CHAPTER 15

## 1 KINGS 15:1-8.

### ABIJAM'S WICKED REIGN OVER JUDAH.

1. *Abijam* — His name was at first Abijah (<sup><4426></sup>2 Chronicles 12:16); “Jah,” the name of God, according to an ancient fashion, being conjoined with it. But afterwards, when he was found “walking in all the sins of his father” [<sup><1153></sup>1 Kings 15:3], that honorable addition was withdrawn, and his name in sacred history changed into Abijam [LIGHTFOOT].

2. *Three years reigned he* — (compare <sup><1151></sup>1 Kings 15:1 with <sup><1159></sup>1 Kings 15:9). Parts of years are often counted in Scripture as whole years. The reign began in Jeroboam’s eighteenth year, continued till the nineteenth, and ended in the course of the twentieth.

*his mother’s name was Maachah* — or Michaiah (<sup><4433></sup>2 Chronicles 13:2), probably altered from the one to the other on her becoming queen, as was very common under a change of circumstances. She is called the daughter of Abishalom, or Absalom (<sup><4421></sup>2 Chronicles 11:21), of Uriel (<sup><4432></sup>2 Chronicles 13:2). Hence, it has been thought probable that Tamar, the daughter of Absalom (<sup><1047></sup>2 Samuel 14:27 <sup><1085></sup>18:18), had been married to Uriel, and that Maachah was their daughter.

3. *his heart was not perfect with the Lord ... , as the heart of David his father* — (Compare <sup><1104></sup>1 Kings 11:4 <sup><1142></sup>14:22). He was not positively bad at first, for it appears that he had done something to restore the pillaged treasures of the temple (<sup><1155></sup>1 Kings 15:15). This phrase contains a comparative reference to David’s heart. His doing that which was right in the eyes of the Lord (<sup><1155></sup>1 Kings 15:5) is frequently used in speaking of the kings of Judah, and means only that they did or did not do that which, in the general course and tendency of their government, was acceptable to God. It furnishes no evidence as to the lawfulness or piety of one specific act.

**4. *for David's sake did the Lord his God give him a lamp*** — “A lamp” in one’s house is an Oriental phrase for continuance of family name and prosperity. Abijam was not rejected only in consequence of the divine promise to David (see on <sup><1113></sup>1 Kings 11:13-36).

## <sup><1150></sup>1 KINGS 15:9-22.

### ASA’S GOOD REIGN.

**10-13. *his mother's name was Maachah*** — She was properly his grandmother, and she is here called “the king’s mother,” from the post of dignity which at the beginning of his reign she possessed. Asa, as a constitutional monarch, acted like the pious David, laboring to abolish the traces and polluting practices of idolatry, and in pursuance of his impartial conduct, he did not spare delinquents even of the highest rank.

**13. *also Maachah his mother, even her he removed from being queen*** — The sultana, or queen dowager, was not necessarily the king’s natural mother (see <sup><1129></sup>1 Kings 2:19), nor was Maachah. Her title, and the privileges connected with that honor and dignity which gave her precedency among the ladies of the royal family, and great influence in the kingdom, were taken away. She was degraded for her idolatry.

***because she had made an idol in a grove*** — A very obscene figure, and the grove was devoted to the grossest licentiousness. His plans of religious reformation, however, were not completely carried through, “the high places were not removed” (see <sup><1122></sup>1 Kings 3:2). The suppression of this private worship on natural or artificial hills, though a forbidden service after the temple had been declared the exclusive place of worship, the most pious king’s laws were not able to accomplish.

**15. *he brought in the things which his father had dedicated*** — Probably the spoils which Abijam had taken from the vanquished army of Jeroboam (see <sup><1436></sup>2 Chronicles 13:16).

***and the things which himself had dedicated*** — after his own victory over the Cushites (<sup><1442></sup>2 Chronicles 14:12).

**16, 17. *there was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days*** — Asa enjoyed a ten years' peace after Jeroboam's defeat by Abijam, and this interval was wisely and energetically spent in making internal reforms, as well as increasing the means of national defense (<sup><3440></sup>2 Chronicles 14:1-7). In the fifteenth year of his reign, however, the king of Israel commenced hostilities against him, and, invading his kingdom, erected a strong fortress at Ramah, which was near Gibeah, and only six Roman miles from Jerusalem. Afraid lest his subjects might quit his kingdom and return to the worship of their fathers, he wished to cut off all intercourse between the two nations. Ramah stood on an eminence overhanging a narrow ravine which separated Israel from Judah, and therefore he took up a hostile position in that place.

**18-20. *Then Asa took all the silver and the gold that were left in the ... house of the Lord*** — Asa's religious character is now seen to decline. He trusted not in the Lord (<sup><3440></sup>2 Chronicles 16:7). In this emergency Asa solicited the powerful aid of the king of Damascene-Syria; and to bribe him to break off his alliance with Baasha, he transmitted to him the treasure lying in the temple and palace. The Syrian mercenaries were gained. Instances are to be found, both in the ancient and modern history of the East, of the violation of treaties equally sudden and unscrupulous, through the presentation of some tempting bribe. Ben-hadad poured an army into the northern provinces of Israel, and having captured some cities in Galilee, on the borders of Syria, compelled Baasha to withdraw from Ramah back within his own territories.

***Ben-hadad*** — (See on <sup><3444></sup>1 Kings 11:14).

**22. *Then king Asa made a proclamation*** — The fortifications which Baasha had erected at Ramah were demolished, and with the materials were built other defenses, where Asa thought they were needed — at Geba (now Jeba) and Mizpeh (now Neby Samuil), about two hours' travelling north of Jerusalem.

**23. *in the time of his old age he was diseased in his feet*** — (See on <sup><3442></sup>2 Chronicles 16:12, where an additional proof is given of his religious degeneracy.)

~~<1152>~~ **1 KINGS 15:25-34.**

**NADAB'S WICKED REIGN.**

**25. *Nadab the son of Jeroboam began to reign*** — No record is given of him, except his close adherence to the bad policy of his father.

**27. *Baasha smote him at Gibbethon*** — This town, within the tribe of Dan, was given to the Levites (~~<1154>~~ Joshua 19:44). It lay on the Philistine borders, and having been seized by that people, Nadab laid siege to recover it.

**29. *when he reigned, he smote all the house of Jeroboam*** — It was according to a barbarous practice too common in the East, for a usurper to extirpate all rival candidates for the throne; but it was an accomplishment of Ahijah's prophecy concerning Jeroboam (~~<1140>~~ 1 Kings 14:10,11).



# CHAPTER 16

## 1 KINGS 16:1-8.

### JEHU'S PROPHECY AGAINST BAASHA.

1. *Then the word of the Lord came to Jehu* — This is the only incident recorded in the life of this prophet. His father was also a prophet (<sup><1146></sup>2 Chronicles 16:7).

2. *Forasmuch as I exalted thee* — The doom he pronounced on Baasha was exactly the same as denounced against Jeroboam and his posterity. Though he had waded through slaughter to his throne, he owed his elevation to the appointment or permission of Him “by whom kings reign.”

*over my people Israel* — With all their errors and lapses into idolatry, they were not wholly abandoned by God. He still showed His interest in them by sending prophets and working miracles in their favor, and possessed a multitude of faithful worshippers in the kingdom of Israel.

7. *also by the hand of the prophet Jehu* — This is not another prophecy, but merely an addition by the sacred historian, explanatory of the death of Baasha and the extinction of his family. The doom pronounced against Jeroboam (<sup><1149></sup>1 Kings 14:9), did not entitle him to take the execution of the sentence into his own hands; but from his following the same calf-worship, he had evidently plotted the conspiracy and murder of that king in furtherance of his own ambitious designs; and hence, in his own assassination, he met the just reward of his deeds. The similitude to Jeroboam extends to their deaths as well as their lives — the reign of their sons, and the ruin of their families.

8. *began Elah the son of Baasha to reign* — (compare <sup><1153></sup>1 Kings 15:33). From this it will appear that Baasha died in the twenty-third year of his reign (see on <sup><1152></sup>1 Kings 15:2), and Elah, who was a prince of dissolute habits, reigned not fully two years.

**1 KINGS 16:9-22.****ZIMRI'S CONSPIRACY.**

**9-12. *Zimri ... conspired against him*** — “Arza which was over his house.” During a carousal in the house of his chamberlain, Zimri slew him, and having seized the sovereignty, endeavored to consolidate his throne by the massacre of all the royal race.

**15-18. *did Zimri reign seven days*** — The news of his conspiracy soon spread, and the army having proclaimed their general, Omri, king, that officer immediately raised the siege at Gibbethon and marched directly against the capital in which the usurper had established himself. Zimri soon saw that he was not in circumstances to hold out against all the forces of the kingdom; so, shutting himself up in the palace, he set it on fire, and, like Sardanapalus, chose to perish himself and reduce all to ruin, rather than that the palace and royal treasures should fall into the hands of his successful rival. The seven days' reign may refer either to the brief duration of his royal authority, or the period in which he enjoyed unmolested tranquillity in the palace.

**19. *For his sins which he sinned*** — This violent end was a just retribution for his crimes. “His walking in the ways of Jeroboam” might have been manifested either by the previous course of his life, or by his decrees published on his ascension, when he made a strong effort to gain popularity by announcing his continued support of the calf worship.

**21, 22. *Then were the people of Israel divided into two parts*** — The factions that ensued occasioned a four years' duration (compare <sup><1165></sup>1 Kings 16:15 with <sup><1163></sup>1 Kings 16:23), of anarchy or civil war. Whatever might be the public opinion of Omri's merits a large body of the people disapproved of the mode of his election, and declared for Tibni. The army, however, as usual in such circumstances (and they had the will of Providence favoring them), prevailed over all opposition, and Omri became undisputed possessor of the throne.

**22. *Tibni died*** — The *Hebrew* does not enable us to determine whether his death was violent or natural.

~~1162~~ **1 KINGS 16:23-28.**

**OMRI BUILDS SAMARIA.**

**23. *In the thirty and first year of Asa ... began Omri to reign*** — The twelve years of his reign are computed from the beginning of his reign, which was in the twenty-seventh year of Asa's reign. He held a contested reign for four years with Tibni; and then, at the date stated in this verse, entered on a sole and peaceful reign of eight years.

**24. *he bought the hill Samaria of Shemer*** — The palace of Tirzah being in ruins, Omri, in selecting the site of his royal residence, was naturally influenced by considerations both of pleasure and advantage. In the center of a wide amphitheatre of mountains, about six miles from Shechem, rises an oblong hill with steep, yet accessible sides, and a long flat top extending east and west, and rising five hundred or six hundred feet above the valley. What Omri in all probability built as a mere palatial residence, became the capital of the kingdom instead of Shechem. It was as though Versailles had taken the place of Paris, or Windsor of London. The choice of Omri was admirable, in selecting a position which combined in a union not elsewhere found in Palestine: strength, beauty, and fertility [STANLEY].

***two talents of silver*** — about \$4,250. Shemer had probably made it a condition of the sale, that the name should be retained. But as city and palace were built there by Omri, it was in accordance with Eastern custom to call it after the founder. The Assyrians did so, and on a tablet dug out of the ruins of Nineveh, an inscription was found relating to Samaria, which is called Beth-khumri — the house of Omri [LAYARD]. (See ~~1276~~ 2 Kings 17:5).

**25-27. *But Omri wrought evil*** — The character of Omri's reign and his death are described in the stereotyped form used towards all the successors of Jeroboam in respect both to policy as well as time.

**29-33. *Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him*** — The worship of God by symbols had hitherto been the offensive form of apostasy in Israel, but now gross idolatry is openly patronized by the court. This was done through the influence of

Jezebel, Ahab's queen. She was "the daughter of Eth-baal, king of the Zidonians." He was priest of Ashtaroth or Astarte, who, having murdered Philetes, king of Tyre, ascended the throne of that kingdom, being the eighth king since Hiram. Jezebel was the wicked daughter of this regicide and idol priest — and, on her marriage with Ahab, never rested till she had got all the forms of her native Tyrian worship introduced into her adopted country.

**32. reared up an altar for Baal** — that is, the sun, worshipped under various images. Ahab set up one (<sup><OR></sup>2 Kings 3:2), probably as the Tyrian Hercules, in the temple in Samaria. No human sacrifices were offered — the fire was kept constantly burning — the priests officiated barefoot. Dancing and kissing the image (<sup><OR></sup>1 Kings 19:18) were among the principal rites.

### <sup><OR></sup>1 KINGS 16:34.

#### JOSHUA'S CURSE FULFILLED UPON HIEL THE BUILDER OF JERICHO.

**34. In his days did Hiel the Beth-elite build Jericho** — (see on <sup><OR></sup>Joshua 6:26). The curse took effect on the family of this reckless man but whether his oldest son died at the time of laying the foundation, and the youngest at the completion of the work, or whether he lost all his sons in rapid succession, till, at the end of the undertaking, he found himself childless, the poetical form of the ban does not enable us to determine. Some modern commentators think there is no reference either to the natural or violent deaths of Hiel's sons; but that he began in presence of his oldest son, but some unexpected difficulties, losses, or obstacles, delayed the completion till his old age, when the gates were set up in the presence of his youngest son. But the curse *was* fulfilled more than five hundred years after it was uttered; and from Jericho being inhabited after Joshua's time (<sup><OR></sup>Judges 3:13 <sup><OR></sup>2 Samuel 10:5), it has been supposed that the act against which the curse was directed, was an attempt at the restoration of the walls — the very walls which had been miraculously cast down. It seems to have been within the territory of Israel; and the unresisted act of Hiel affords a

painful evidence how far the people of Israel had lost all knowledge of, or respect for, the word of God.

# CHAPTER 17

## 1 KINGS 17:1-7.

### ELIJAH, PROPHECYING AGAINST AHAB, IS SENT TO CHERITH.

**1. *Elijah the Tishbite*** — This prophet is introduced as abruptly as Melchisedek — his birth, parents, and call to the prophetic office being alike unrecorded. He is supposed to be called the Tishbite from Tisbeh, a place east of Jordan.

***who was of the inhabitants of Gilead*** — or residents of Gilead, implying that he was not an Israelite, but an Ishmaelite, as MICHAELIS conjectures, for there were many of that race on the confines of Gilead. The employment of a Gentile as an extraordinary minister might be to rebuke and shame the apostate people of Israel.

***said unto Ahab*** — The prophet appears to have been warning this apostate king how fatal both to himself and people would be the reckless course he was pursuing. The failure of Elijah's efforts to make an impression on the obstinate heart of Ahab is shown by the penal prediction uttered at parting.

***before whom I stand*** — that is, whom I serve (<sup>688B</sup>Deuteronomy 18:5).

***there shall not be dew nor rain these years*** — not absolutely; but the dew and the rain would not fall in the usual and necessary quantities. Such a suspension of moisture was sufficient to answer the corrective purposes of God, while an absolute drought would have converted the whole country into an uninhabitable waste.

***but according to my word*** — not uttered in spite, vengeance, or caprice, but as the minister of God. The impending calamity was in answer to his earnest prayer, and a chastisement intended for the spiritual revival of

Israel. Drought was the threatened punishment of national idolatry (<sup><6116></sup>Deuteronomy 11:16,17 <sup><6329></sup>28:23).

**2, 3. *the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward,*** etc. — At first the king may have spurned the prediction as the utterance of a vain enthusiast; but when he found the drought did last and increase in severity, he sought Elijah, who, as it was necessary that he should be far removed from either the violence or the importunities of the king, was divinely directed to repair to a place of retreat, perhaps a cave on “the brook Cherith, that is, before [east of] Jordan.” Tradition points it out in a small winter torrent, a little below the ford at Beth-shan.

**6. *the ravens brought him bread*** — The idea of such unclean and voracious birds being employed to feed the prophet has appeared to many so strange that they have labored to make out the *Orebim*, which in our version has been rendered “ravens,” to be as the word is used (in <sup><3272></sup>Ezekiel 27:27) “merchants”; or Arabians (<sup><1216></sup>2 Chronicles 21:16 <sup><3607></sup>Nehemiah 4:7); or, the citizens of Arabah, near Beth-shan (<sup><6316></sup>Joshua 15:6 <sup><6383></sup>18:18). But the common rendering is, in our opinion, preferable to these conjectures. And, if Elijah was miraculously fed by ravens, it is idle to inquire where they found the bread and the flesh, for God would direct them. After the lapse of a year, the brook dried up, and this was a new trial to Elijah’s faith.

## <sup><1178></sup>1 KINGS 17:8-16.

### HE IS SENT TO A WIDOW OF ZAREPHATH.

**8-16. *the word of the Lord came to him*** — Zarephath, Sarepta, now Surafend, whither he was directed to go, was far away on the western coast of Palestine, about nine miles south of Sidon, and within the dominions of Jezebel’s impious father, where the famine also prevailed. Meeting, at his entrance into the town, the very woman who was appointed by divine providence to support him, his faith was severely tested by learning from her that her supplies were exhausted and that she was preparing her last meal for herself and son. The Spirit of God having

prompted him to ask, and her to grant, some necessary succor, she received a prophet's reward (<sup><4041></sup>Matthew 10:41,42), and for the one meal afforded to him, God, by a miraculous increase of the little stock, afforded many to her.

## <sup><1177></sup>1 KINGS 17:17-24.

### HE RAISES HER SON TO LIFE.

**17-24.** *the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick* — A severe domestic calamity seems to have led her to think that, as God had shut up heaven upon a sinful land in consequence of the prophet, she was suffering on a similar account. Without answering her bitter upbraiding, the prophet takes the child, lays it on his bed, and after a very earnest prayer, had the happiness of seeing its restoration, and along with it, gladness to the widow's heart and home. The prophet was sent to this widow, not merely for his own security, but on account of her faith, to strengthen and promote which he was directed to go to her rather than to many widows in Israel, who would have eagerly received him on the same privileged terms of exception from the grinding famine. The relief of her bodily necessities became the preparatory means of supplying her spiritual wants, and bringing her and her son, through the teachings of the prophet, to a clear knowledge of God, and a firm faith in His word (<sup><4025></sup>Luke 4:25).



# CHAPTER 18

## <H18>1 KINGS 18:1-16.

### ELIJAH MEETS OBADIAH.

**1. *the third year*** — In the New Testament, it is said there was no rain “for the space of three years and six months” [<sup><S187></sup>James 5:17]. The early rain fell in our March, the latter rain in our October. Though Ahab might have at first ridiculed Elijah’s announcement, yet when neither of these rains fell in their season, he was incensed against the prophet as the cause of the national judgment, and compelled him, with God’s direction, to consult his safety in flight. This was six months after the king was told there would be neither dew nor rain, and from this period the three years in this passage are computed.

***Go, show thyself unto Ahab*** — The king had remained obdurate and impenitent. Another opportunity was to be given him of repentance, and Elijah was sent in order to declare to him the cause of the national judgment, and to promise him, on condition of his removing it, the immediate blessing of rain.

**2. *Elijah went*** — a marvellous proof of the natural intrepidity of this prophet, of his moral courage, and his unflinching confidence in the protecting care of God, that he ventured to approach the presence of the raging lion.

***there was a sore famine in Samaria*** — Elijah found that the famine was pressing with intense severity in the capital. Corn must have been obtained for the people from Egypt or the adjoining countries, else life could not have been sustained for three years; but Ahab, with the chamberlain of his royal household, is represented as giving a personal search for pasture to his cattle. On the banks of the rivulets, grass, tender shoots of grass, might naturally be expected; but the water being dried up, the verdure would disappear. In the pastoral districts of the East it would be reckoned a most suitable occupation still for a king or chief to go at the

head of such an expedition. Ranging over a large tract of country, Ahab had gone through one district, Obadiah through another.

**3. *Obadiah feared the Lord greatly*** — Although he did not follow the course taken by the Levites and the majority of pious Israelites at that time of emigration into Judah (<sup>4113</sup>2 Chronicles 11:13-16), he was a secret and sincere worshipper. He probably considered the violent character of the government, and his power of doing some good to the persecuted people of God as a sufficient excuse for his not going to worship in Jerusalem.

**4. *an hundred prophets*** — not men endowed with the extraordinary gifts of the prophetic office, but who were devoted to the service of God, preaching, praying, praising, etc. (<sup>9001</sup>1 Samuel 10:10-12).

***fed them with bread and water*** — These articles are often used to include sustenance of any kind. As this succor must have been given them at the hazard, not only of his place, but his life, it was a strong proof of his attachment to the true religion.

**7-16. *Obadiah was in the way ... Elijah met him*** — Deeming it imprudent to rush without previous intimation into Ahab's presence, the prophet solicited Obadiah to announce his return to Ahab. The commission, with a delicate allusion to the perils he had already encountered in securing others of God's servants, was, in very touching terms, declined, as unkind and peculiarly hazardous. But Elijah having dispelled all the apprehensions entertained about the Spirit's carrying him away, Obadiah undertook to convey the prophet's message to Ahab and solicit an interview. But Ahab, bent on revenge, or impatient for the appearance of rain, went himself to meet Elijah.

**17, 18. *Art thou he that troubleth Israel*** — A violent altercation took place. Ahab thought to awe him into submission, but the prophet boldly and undisguisedly told the king that the national calamity was traceable chiefly to his own and his family's patronage and practice of idolatry. But, while rebuking the sins, Elijah paid all due respect to the high rank of the offender. He urged the king to convene, by virtue of his royal mandate, a public assembly, in whose presence it might be solemnly decided which was the troubler of Israel. The appeal could not well be resisted, and

Ahab, from whatever motives, consented to the proposal. God directed and overruled the issue.

**19. *gather ... the prophets of Baal ... the prophets of the groves*** — From the sequel it appears that the former only came. The latter, anticipating some evil, evaded the king's command.

***which eat at Jezebel's table*** — that is, not at the royal table where she herself dined, but they were maintained from her kitchen establishment (see on <sup><9825></sup>1 Samuel 20:25 and <sup><1002></sup>1 Kings 4:22). They were the priests of Astarte, the Zidonian goddess.

**20. *mount Carmel*** — is a bold, bluff promontory, which extends from the western coast of Palestine, at the bay of Acre, for many miles eastward, to the central hills of Samaria. It is a long range, presenting many summits, and intersected by a number of small ravines. The spot where the contest took place is situated at the eastern extremity, which is also the highest point of the whole ridge. It is called El-Mohhraka, "the Burning," or "the Burnt Place." No spot could have been better adapted for the thousands of Israel to have stood drawn up on those gentle slopes. The rock shoots up in an almost perpendicular wall of more than two hundred feet in height, on the side of the vale of Esdraelon. This wall made it visible over the whole plain, and from all the surrounding heights, where gazing multitudes would be stationed.

**21-40. *Elijah said unto all the people, How long halt ye?*** — They had long been attempting to conjoin the service of God with that of Baal. It was an impracticable union and the people were so struck with a sense of their own folly, or dread of the king's displeasure, that they "answered not a word." Elijah proposed to decide for them the controversy between God and Baal by an appeal, not to the authority of the law, for that would have no weight, but by a visible token from Heaven. As fire was the element over which Baal was supposed to preside, Elijah proposed that two bullocks should be slain and placed on separate altars of wood, the one for Baal, and the other for God. On whichever the fire should descend to consume it, the event should determine the true God, whom it was their duty to serve. The proposal, appearing every way reasonable, was received by the people with unanimous approval. The priests of Baal commenced the ceremony by calling on their god. In vain did they continue

invoking their senseless deity from morning till noon, and from noon till evening, uttering the most piercing cries, using the most frantic gesticulations, and mingling their blood with the sacrifice. No response was heard. No fire descended. Elijah exposed their folly and imposture with the severest irony and, as the day was far advanced, commenced his operations. Inviting the people to approach and see the entire proceeding, he first repaired an old altar of God, which Jezebel had demolished. Then, having arranged the cut pieces of the bullock, he caused four barrels or jars of water to be dashed all over the altar and round in the trench. Once, twice, a third time this precaution was taken, and then, when he had offered an earnest prayer, the miraculous fire descended (<sup><032B></sup>Leviticus 9:24 <sup><072A></sup>Judges 6:21 <sup><073D></sup>13:20 <sup><1225></sup>1 Chronicles 21:26 <sup><40D></sup>2 Chronicles 7:1), and consumed not only the sacrifice, but the very stones of the altar. The impression on the minds of the people was that of admiration mingled with awe; and with one voice they acknowledged the supremacy of Jehovah as the true God. Taking advantage of their excited feelings, Elijah called on them to seize the priestly impostors, and by their blood fill the channel of the river (Kishon), which, in consequence of their idolatries, the drought had dried up — a direction, which, severe and relentless as it seems, it was his duty as God's minister to give (<sup><615F></sup>Deuteronomy 15:5 <sup><618D></sup>18:20). The natural features of the mount exactly correspond with the details of this narrative. The conspicuous summit, 1635 feet above the sea, on which the altars were placed, presents an esplanade spacious enough for the king and the priests of Baal to stand on the one side, and Elijah on the other. It is a rocky soil, on which there is abundance of loose stones, to furnish the twelve stones of which the altar was built — a bed of thick earth, in which a trench could be dug; and yet the earth not so loose that the water poured into it would be absorbed; two hundred fifty feet beneath the altar plateau, there is a perennial fountain, which, being close to the altar of the Lord, might not have been accessible to the people; and whence, therefore, even in that season of severe drought, Elijah could procure those copious supplies of water which he poured over the altar. The distance between this spring and the site of the altar is so short, as to make it perfectly possible to go thrice thither and back again, whereas it would have been impossible *once* in an afternoon to fetch water from the sea [VAN DE VELDE]. The summit is one thousand feet above the Kishon, which nowhere runs from the sea so close to the base of the mount as just

beneath El-Mohhraka; so that the priests of Baal could, in a few minutes, be taken down to the brook (torrent), and slain there.

## ~~<1181>~~ 1 KINGS 18:41-46.

### ELIJAH, BY PRAYER, OBTAINS RAIN.

**42. *Ahab went up to eat and to drink*** — Ahab, kept in painful excitement by the agonizing scene, had eaten nothing all the day. He was recommended to refresh himself without a moment's delay; and, while the king was thus occupied, the prophet, far from taking rest, was absorbed in prayer for the fulfillment of the promise (~~<1181>~~ 1 Kings 18:1).

***put his face between his knees*** — a posture of earnest supplication still used.

**43. *Go up now, look toward the sea*** — From the place of worship there is a *small eminence*, which, on the west and northwest side, intercepts the view of the sea [STANLEY; VAN DE VELDE]. It can be ascended in a few minutes, and presents a wide prospect of the Mediterranean. Six times the servant went up, but the sky was clear — the sea tranquil. On the seventh he described the sign of approaching rain [~~<1184>~~ 1 Kings 18:44].

**44. *Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand*** — The clearness of the sky renders the smallest speck distinctly visible; and this is in Palestine the uniform precursor of rain. It rises higher and higher, and becomes larger and larger with astonishing celerity, till the whole heaven is black, and the cloud bursts in a deluge of rain.

***Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not*** — either by the river Kishon being suddenly so swollen as to be impassable, or from the deep layer of dust in the arid plain being turned into thick mud, so as to impede the wheels.

**45. *Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel*** — now Zerin, a distance of about ten miles. This race was performed in the midst of a tempest of rain. But all rejoiced at it, as diffusing a sudden refreshment over all the land of Jezreel.

**46. *Elijah ... girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab*** — It was anciently, and still is in some countries of the East, customary for kings and nobles to have runners before their chariots, who are tightly girt for the purpose. The prophet, like the Bedouins of his native Gilead, had been trained to run; and, as the Lord was with him, he continued with unabated agility and strength. It was, in the circumstances, a most proper service for Elijah to render. It tended to strengthen the favorable impression made on the heart of Ahab and furnished an answer to the cavils of Jezebel for it showed that he who was so zealous in the service of God, was, at the same time, devotedly loyal to his king. The result of this solemn and decisive contest was a heavy blow and great discouragement to the cause of idolatry. But subsequent events seem to prove that the impressions, though deep, were but partial and temporary.

# CHAPTER 19

## 1 KINGS 19:1-3.

### ELIJAH FLEES TO BEER-SHEBA.

3. *he arose, and went for his life* — He entered Jezreel full of hope. But a message from the incensed and hard-hearted queen, vowing speedy vengeance for her slaughtered priests, dispelled all his bright visions of the future. It is probable, however, that in the present temper of the people, even she would not have dared to lay violent hands on the Lord's servant, and purposely threatened him because she could do no more. The threat produced the intended effect, for his faith suddenly failed him. He fled out of the kingdom into the southernmost part of the territories in Judah; nor did he deem himself safe even there, but, dismissing his servant, he resolved to seek refuge among the mountain recesses of Sinai, and there longed for death (<sup><4717></sup>James 5:17). This sudden and extraordinary depression of mind arose from too great confidence inspired by the miracles wrought at Carmel, and by the disposition the people evinced there. Had he remained steadfast and immovable, the impression on the mind of Ahab and the people generally might have been followed by good results. But he had been exalted above measure (<sup><4712></sup>2 Corinthians 12:7-9), and being left to himself, the great prophet, instead of showing the indomitable spirit of a martyr, fled from his post of duty.

## 1 KINGS 19:4-18.

### HE IS COMFORTED BY AN ANGEL.

4-18. *went a day's journey into the wilderness* — on the way from Beer-sheba to Horeb — a wide expanse of sand hills, covered with the retem (not juniper, but broom shrubs), whose tall and spreading branches, with their white leaves, afford a very cheering and refreshing shade. His gracious

God did not lose sight of His fugitive servant, but watched over him, and, miraculously ministering to his wants, enabled him, in a better but not wholly right frame of mind, by virtue of that supernatural supply, to complete his contemplated journey. In the solitude of Sinai, God appeared to instruct him. “What doest thou here, Elijah?” was a searching question addressed to one who had been called to so arduous and urgent a mission as his. By an awful exhibition of divine power, he was made aware of the divine speaker who addressed him; his attention was arrested, his petulance was silenced, his heart was touched, and he was bid without delay return to the land of Israel, and prosecute the Lord’s work there. To convince him that an idolatrous nation will not be unpunished, He commissions him to anoint three persons who were destined in Providence to avenge God’s controversy with the people of Israel. Anointing is used synonymously with appointment (<sup><000B</sup>Judges 9:8), and is applied to all named, although Jehu alone had the consecrated oil poured over his head. They were all three destined to be eminent instruments in achieving the destruction of idolaters, though in different ways. But of the three commissions, Elijah personally executed only one; namely, the call of Elisha to be his assistant and successor [<sup><1199</sup>1 Kings 19:19], and by him the other two were accomplished (<sup><1202</sup>2 Kings 8:7-13 9:1-10). Having thus satisfied the fiery zeal of the erring but sincere and pious prophet, the Lord proceeded to correct the erroneous impression under which Elijah had been laboring, of his being the sole adherent of the true religion in the land; for God, who seeth in secret, and knew all that were His, knew that there were seven thousand persons who had not done homage (literally, “kissed the hand”) to Baal.

**16. *Abel-meholah*** — that is, “the meadow of dancing,” in the valley of the Jordan.



~~1199~~ **1 KINGS 19:19-21.**

**ELISHA FOLLOWS ELIJAH.**

**19. *Elisha the son of Shaphat*** — Most probably he belonged to a family distinguished for piety, and for their opposition to the prevailing calf-worship.

***ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen*** — indicating that he was a man of substance.

***Elijah ... cast his mantle upon him*** — This was an investiture with the prophetic office. It is in this way that the Brahmins, the Persian Sufis, and other priestly or sacred characters in the East are appointed — a mantle being, by some eminent priest, thrown across their shoulders. Elisha had probably been educated in the schools of the prophets.

**20. *what have I done to thee?*** — that is, Go, but keep in mind the solemn ceremony I have just performed on thee. It is not I, but God, who calls thee. Do not allow any earthly affection to detain you from obeying His call.

**21. *took a yoke of oxen*** — Having hastily prepared (~~1202~~ 2 Samuel 24:22) a farewell entertainment to his family and friends, he left his native place and attached himself to Elijah as his minister.

# CHAPTER 20

## 1 KINGS 20:1-12.

### BEN-HADAD BESIEGES SAMARIA.

1. *Ben-hadad the king of Syria* — This monarch was the son of that Ben-hadad who, in the reign of Baasha, made a raid on the northern towns of Galilee (<sup>1150</sup>1 Kings 15:20). The thirty-two kings that were confederate with him were probably tributary princes. The ancient kings of Syria and Phoenicia ruled only over a single city, and were independent of each other, except when one great city, as Damascus, acquired the ascendancy, and even then they were allied only in time of war. The Syrian army encamped at the gates and besieged the town of Samaria.

2-12. *Thus said Ben-hadad, Thy silver and thy gold is mine* — To this message sent him during the siege, Ahab returned a tame and submissive answer, probably thinking it meant no more than an exaction of tribute. But the demand was repeated with greater insolence; and yet, from the abject character of Ahab, there is reason to believe he would have yielded to this arrogant claim also, had not the voice of his subjects been raised against it. Ben-hadad's object in these and other boastful menaces was to intimidate Ahab. But the weak sovereign began to show a little more spirit, as appears in his abandoning "my lord the king" for the single "tell him," and giving him a dry but sarcastic hint to glory no more till the victory is won. Kindling into a rage at the cool defiance, Ben-hadad gave orders for the immediate sack of the city.

12. *as he was drinking, he and the kings in the pavilions* — booths made of branches of trees and brushwood; which were reared for kings in the camp, as they still are for Turkish pashas or agas in their expeditions [KEIL].

*Set yourselves in array* — Invest the city.

## 1 KINGS 20:13-20.

### THE SYRIANS ARE SLAIN.

**13-21. *behold, there came a prophet unto Ahab*** — Though the king and people of Israel had highly offended Him, God had not utterly cast them off. He still cherished designs of mercy towards them, and here, though unasked, gave them a signal proof of His interest in them, by a prophet's animating announcement that the Lord would that day deliver the mighty hosts of the enemy into his hand by means of a small, feeble, inadequate band. Conformably to the prophet's instructions, two hundred thirty-two young men went boldly out towards the camp of the enemy, while seven thousand more, apparently volunteers, followed at some little distance, or posted themselves at the gate, to be ready to reinforce those in front if occasion required it. Ben-hadad and his vassals and princes were already, at that early hour — scarcely midday — deep in their cups; and though informed of this advancing company, yet confiding in his numbers, or it may be, excited with wine, he ordered with indifference the proud intruders to be taken alive, whether they came with peaceful or hostile intentions. It was more easily said than done; the young men smote right and left, making terrible havoc among their intended captors; and their attack, together with the sight of the seven thousand, who soon rushed forward to mingle in the fray, created a panic in the Syrian army, who immediately took up flight. Ben-hadad himself escaped the pursuit of the victors on a fleet horse, surrounded by a squadron of horse guards. This glorious victory, won so easily, and with such a paltry force opposed to overwhelming numbers, was granted that Ahab and his people might know that God is the Lord. But we do not read of this acknowledgment being made, or of any sacrifices being offered in token of their national gratitude.

**22-26. *the prophet came to the king of Israel, and said*** — The same prophet who had predicted the victory shortly reappeared, admonishing the king to take every precaution against a renewal of hostilities in the following campaign.

***at the return of the year*** — that is, in spring, when, on the cessation of the rainy season, military campaigns (<sup>1</sup>2 Samuel 11:1), were anciently begun.

It happened as the prophet had forewarned. Brooding over their late disastrous defeat, the attendants of Ben-hadad ascribed the misfortune to two causes — the one arose from the principles of heathenism which led them to consider the gods of Israel as “gods of the hills”; whereas their power to aid the Israelites would be gone if the battle was maintained on the plains. The other cause to which the Syrian courtiers traced their defeat at Samaria, was the presence of the tributary kings, who had probably been the first to take flight; and they recommended “captains to be put in their rooms.” Approving of these recommendations, Ben-hadad renewed his invasion of Israel the next spring by the siege of Aphek in the valley of Jezreel (compare <sup>4021</sup>1 Samuel 29:1, with <sup>4020</sup>1 Samuel 28:4), not far from En-dor.

**27-31. *like two little flocks of kids*** — Goats are never seen in large flocks, or scattered, like sheep; and hence the two small but compact divisions of the Israelite force are compared to goats, not sheep. Humanly speaking, that little handful of men would have been overpowered by numbers. But a prophet was sent to the small Israelite army to announce the victory, in order to convince the Syrians that the God of Israel was omnipotent everywhere, in the valley as well as on the hills. And, accordingly, after the two armies had pitched opposite each other for seven days, they came to an open battle. One hundred thousand Syrians lay dead on the field, while the fugitives took refuge in Aphek, and there, crowding on the city walls, they endeavored to make a stand against their pursuers; but the old walls giving way under the incumbent weight, fell and buried twenty-seven thousand in the ruins. Ben-hadad succeeded in extricating himself, and, with his attendants, sought concealment in the city, fleeing from chamber to chamber; or, as some think it, an inner chamber, that is, a harem; but seeing no ultimate means of escape, he was advised to throw himself on the tender mercies of the Israelitish monarch.

**32-34. *put ropes on their heads*** — Captives were dragged by ropes round their necks in companies, as is depicted on the monuments of Egypt. Their voluntary attitude and language of submission flattered the pride of Ahab, who, little concerned about the dishonor done to the God of Israel by the Syrian king, and thinking of nothing but victory, paraded his clemency, called the vanquished king “his brother,” invited him to sit in the royal chariot, and dismissed him with a covenant of peace.

**34. *streets for thee in Damascus*** — implying that a quarter of that city was to be assigned to Jews, with the free exercise of their religion and laws, under a judge of their own. This misplaced kindness to a proud and impious idolater, so unbecoming a theocratic monarch, exposed Ahab to the same censure and fate as Saul (<sup><1059></sup>1 Samuel 15:9, etc.). It was in opposition to God's purpose in giving him the victory.

## <sup><1125></sup>1 KINGS 20:35-42.

### A PROPHET REPROVES HIM.

**35-38. *Smite me*** — This prophet is supposed (<sup><1118></sup>1 Kings 20:8) to have been Micaiah. The refusal of his neighbor to smite the prophet was manifestly wrong, as it was a withholding of necessary aid to a prophet in the discharge of a duty to which he had been called by God, and it was severely punished (<sup><1126></sup>1 Kings 20:36), as a beacon to warn others (see on <sup><1132></sup>1 Kings 13:2-24). The prophet found a willing assistant, and then, waiting for Ahab, leads the king unconsciously, in the parabolic manner of Nathan (<sup><1012></sup>2 Samuel 12:1-4), to pronounce his own doom; and this consequent punishment was forthwith announced by a prophet (see on <sup><1217></sup>1 Kings 21:17).

**39. *a talent of silver*** — about \$2,000.

# CHAPTER 21

## ~~1201~~ 1 KINGS 21:1-4.

### NABOTH REFUSES AHAB HIS VINEYARD.

**1-3.** *Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard, which was in Jezreel* — Ahab was desirous, from its contiguity to the palace, to possess it for a vegetable garden. He proposed to Naboth to give him a better in exchange, or to obtain it by purchase; but the owner declined to part with it. In persisting in his refusal, Naboth was not actuated by any feelings of disloyalty or disrespect to the king, but solely from a conscientious regard to the divine law, which, for important reasons, had prohibited the sale of a paternal inheritance [~~1252~~ Leviticus 25:23 ~~1261~~ Numbers 36:7]; or if, through extreme poverty or debt, an assignation of it to another was unavoidable, the conveyance was made on the condition of its being redeemable at any time [~~1252~~ Leviticus 25:25-27]; at all events, of its reverting at the jubilee to the owner [~~1252~~ Leviticus 25:28]. In short, it could not be alienated from the family, and it was on this ground that Naboth (~~1218~~ 1 Kings 21:3) refused to comply with the king's demand. It was not, therefore, any rudeness or disrespect that made Ahab heavy and displeased, but his sulky and pettish demeanor betrays a spirit of selfishness that could not brook to be disappointed of a favorite object, and that would have pushed him into lawless tyranny had he possessed any natural force of character.

**4.** *turned away his face* — either to conceal from his attendants the vexation of spirit he felt, or, by the affectation of great sorrow, rouse them to devise some means of gratifying his wishes.

## 1 KINGS 21:5-16.

### JEZEBEL CAUSES NABOTH TO BE STONED.

**7. *Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel?*** — This is not so much a question as an exclamation — a sarcastic taunt; “A pretty king thou art! Canst thou not use thy power and take what thy heart is set upon?”

***arise, and eat bread, and let thine heart be merry: I will give thee the vineyard*** — After upbraiding Ahab for his pusillanimity and bidding him act as a king, Jezebel tells him to trouble himself no more about such a trifle; she would guarantee the possession of the vineyard.

**8. *So she wrote letters in Ahab’s name, and sealed them with his seal*** — The seal-ring contained the name of the king and gave validity to the documents to which it was affixed (<sup><1708></sup>Esther 8:8 <sup><2167></sup>Daniel 6:17). By allowing her the use of his signet-ring, Ahab passively consented to Jezebel’s proceeding. Being written in the king’s name, it had the character of a royal mandate.

***sent the letters unto the elders and to the nobles that were in his city*** — They were the civic authorities of Jezreel, and would, in all likelihood, be the creatures and fit tools of Jezebel. It is evident that, though Ahab had recently been in Jezreel, when he made the offer to Naboth, both he and Jezebel were now in Samaria (<sup><1008></sup>1 Kings 20:43).

**9. *Proclaim a fast***, etc. — Those obsequious and unprincipled magistrates did according to orders. Pretending that a heavy guilt lay on one, or some unknown party, who was charged with blaspheming God and the king and that Ahab was threatening vengeance on the whole city unless the culprit were discovered and punished, they assembled the people to observe a solemn fast. Fasts were commanded on extraordinary occasions affecting the public interests of the state (<sup><4013></sup>2 Chronicles 20:3 <sup><4502></sup>Ezra 8:21 <sup><2014></sup>Joel 1:14 <sup><3105></sup>2:15 <sup><3385></sup>Jonah 3:5). The wicked authorities of Jezreel, by proclaiming the fast, wished to give an external appearance of justice to their proceedings and convey an impression among the people that Naboth’s crime amounted to treason against the king’s life.

*set Naboth on high* — During a trial the panel, or accused person, was placed on a high seat, in the presence of all the court; but as the guilty person was supposed to be unknown, the setting of Naboth on high among the people must have been owing to his being among the distinguished men of the place.

**13. *there came in two men*** — worthless fellows who had been bribed to swear a falsehood. The law required two witnesses in capital offenses (<sup><1576></sup>Deuteronomy 17:6 <sup><1595></sup>19:15 <sup><1631></sup>Numbers 35:30 <sup><1166></sup>Matthew 26:60). Cursing God and cursing the king are mentioned in the law (<sup><1223></sup>Exodus 22:28) as offenses closely connected, the king of Israel being the earthly representative of God in His kingdom.

*they carried him forth out of the city, and stoned him* — The law, which forbade cursing the rulers of the people, does not specify the penalty for this offense but either usage had sanctioned or the authorities of Jezreel had originated stoning as the proper punishment. It was always inflicted out of the city (<sup><4158></sup>Acts 7:58).

**14-16. *Jezebel said to Ahab, Arise, take possession*** — Naboth's execution having been announced, and his family being involved in the same fatal sentence (<sup><1186></sup>2 Kings 9:26), his property became forfeited to the crown, not by law, but traditional usage (see <sup><1161></sup>2 Samuel 16:4).

**16. *Ahab rose up to go down*** — from Samaria to Jezreel.

## <sup><1217></sup>1 KINGS 21:17-29.

### ELIJAH DENOUNCES JUDGMENTS AGAINST AHAB AND JEZEBEL.

**17-19. *Hast thou killed, and also taken possession?*** — While Ahab was in the act of surveying his ill-gotten possession, Elijah, by divine commission, stood before him. The appearance of the prophet, at such a time, was ominous of evil, but his language was much more so (compare <sup><3618></sup>Ezekiel 45:8 <sup><3616></sup>46:16-18). Instead of shrinking with horror from the atrocious crime, Ahab eagerly hastened to his newly acquired property.



**19. *In the place where dogs licked***, etc. — a righteous retribution of Providence. The prediction was accomplished, not in Jezreel, but in Samaria; and not on Ahab personally, in consequence of his repentance (<sup><1213></sup>1 Kings 21:29), but on his son (<sup><1325></sup>2 Kings 9:25). The words “in the place where” might be rendered “in like manner as.”

**20. *thou hast sold thyself to work evil*** — that is, allowed sin to acquire the unchecked and habitual mastery over thee (<sup><1277></sup>2 Kings 17:17 <sup><6711></sup>Romans 7:11).

**21, 22. *will make thine house***, etc. — (see on <sup><1159></sup>1 Kings 15:29 and <sup><1168></sup>1 Kings 16:3-12). Jezebel, though included among the members of Ahab’s house, has her ignominious fate expressly foretold (see <sup><1338></sup>2 Kings 9:30).

**27-29. *Ahab ... rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly*** — He was not obdurate, like Jezebel. This terrible announcement made a deep impression on the king’s heart, and led, for a while, to sincere repentance. Going softly, that is, barefoot, and with a pensive manner, within doors. He manifested all the external signs, conventional and natural, of the deepest sorrow. He was wretched, and so great is the mercy of God, that, in consequence of his humiliation, the threatened punishment was deferred.

# CHAPTER 22

## 1 KINGS 22:1-36.

### AHAB SLAIN AT RAMOTH-GILEAD.

**1. *continued three years without war between Syria and Israel*** — The disastrous defeat of Ben-hadad had so destroyed his army and exhausted the resources of his country, that, however eager, he was unable to recommence active hostilities against Israel. But that his hereditary enmity remained unsubdued, was manifest by his breach of faith concerning the treaty by which he had engaged to restore all the cities which his father had seized (<sup><121></sup>1 Kings 20:34).

**2. *Jehoshaphat the king of Judah came down to the king of Israel*** — It was singular that a friendly league between the sovereigns of Israel and Judah should, for the first time, have been formed by princes of such opposite characters — the one pious, the other wicked. Neither this league nor the matrimonial alliance by which the union of the royal families was more closely cemented, met the Lord's approval (<sup><440></sup>2 Chronicles 19:2). It led, however, to a visit by Jehoshaphat, whose reception in Samaria was distinguished by the most lavish hospitality (<sup><440></sup>2 Chronicles 18:2). The opportunity of this visit was taken advantage of, to push an object on which Ahab's heart was much set.

**3-8. *Know ye that Ramoth in Gilead is ours*** — a Levitical and free town on the north border of Gad (<sup><104></sup>Deuteronomy 4:43 <sup><107></sup>Joshua 21:38), on the site of the present Salt Lake, in the province of Belka. It lay within the territories of the Israelitish monarch, and was unjustly alienated; but whether it was one of the cities usurped by the first Ben-hadad, which his son had promised to restore, or was retained for some other reasons, the sacred historian has not mentioned. In the expedition which Ahab meditated for the recovery of this town, the aid of Jehoshaphat was asked and promised (see <sup><440></sup>2 Chronicles 18:3). Previous to declaring hostilities, it was customary to consult the prophets (see on <sup><100></sup>1 Samuel 28:8); and

Jehoshaphat having expressed a strong desire to know the Lord's will concerning this war, Ahab assembled four hundred of his prophets. These could not be either the prophets of Baal or of Ashteroth (<sup><1189></sup>1 Kings 18:19), but seem (<sup><122></sup>1 Kings 22:12) to have been false prophets, who conformed to the symbolic calf-worship of Jehovah. Being the creatures of Ahab, they unanimously predicted a prosperous issue to the war. But dissatisfied with them, Jehoshaphat inquired if there was any true prophet of the Lord. Ahab agreed, with great reluctance, to allow Micaiah to be summoned. He was the only true prophet then to be found residing in Samaria, and he had to be brought out of prison (<sup><1226></sup>1 Kings 22:26), into which, according to JOSEPHUS, he had been cast on account of his rebuke to Ahab for sparing the king of Syria.

**10. *a void place*** — literally, “a threshing-floor,” formed at the gate of Samaria.

**11. *Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah made him horns of iron*** — Small projections, of the size and form of our candle extinguishers (worn in many parts of the East as military ornaments), were worn by the Syrians of that time, and probably by the Israelite warriors also. Zedekiah, by assuming two horns, personated two heroes, and, pretending to be a prophet, wished in this manner to represent the kings of Israel and Judah in a military triumph. It was a symbolic action, to impart greater force to his language (see <sup><637></sup>Deuteronomy 33:17); but it was little more than a flourish with a *spontoon* [CALMET, *Fragments*].

**14-17. *what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak*** — On the way the messenger who conducted [Micaiah] to the royal presence informed him of the tenor of the prophecies already given and recommended him to agree with the rest, no doubt from the kindly motive of seeing him released from imprisonment. But Micaiah, inflexibly faithful to his divine mission as a prophet, announced his purpose to proclaim honestly whatever God should bid him. On being asked by the king, “Shall I go against Ramoth-gilead, or shall I forbear?” the prophet gave precisely the same answer as the previous oracles that had been consulted; but it must have been given in a sarcastic tone and in ironical mockery of their way of speaking. Being solemnly urged to give a serious and truthful answer, Micaiah then declared the visionary scene the Spirit had revealed to him; —

**17. *I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd*** — The purport of this was that the army of Israel would be defeated and dispersed; that Ahab would fall in the battle, and the people return without either being pursued or destroyed by the enemy.

**18-23. *Did I not tell thee that he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil?*** — Since Ahab was disposed to trace this unwelcome truth to personal enmity, Micaiah proceeded fearlessly to tell the incensed monarch in full detail what had been revealed to him. The Hebrew prophets, borrowing their symbolic pictures from earthly scenes, described God in heaven as a king in His kingdom. And as earthly princes do nothing of importance without asking the advice of their counsellors, God is represented as consulting about the fate of Ahab. This prophetic language must not be interpreted literally, and the command must be viewed as only a permission to the lying spirit (<sup>451B</sup>Romans 11:34) [CALMET].

**24, 25. *Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah went near, and smote Micaiah on the cheek*** — The insolence of this man, the leader of the false prophets, seems to have been provoked by jealousy at Micaiah's assumed monopoly of the spirit of inspiration. This mode of smiting, usually with a shoe, is both severe and ignominious. The calm reply of the Lord's prophet consisted in announcing the fate of the false prophets who suffered as the advisers of the disastrous expedition.

**26-28. *Take Micaiah, ... Put this fellow in prison*** — Ahab, under the impulse of vehement resentment, remands the prophet until his return.

**27, 28. *bread of affliction, water of affliction*** — that is, the poorest prison fare. Micaiah submitted, but reiterated aloud, in the presence of all, that the issue of the war would be fatal to Ahab.

**29-38. *went up to Ramoth-gilead*** — The king of Israel, bent on this expedition, marched, accompanied by his ally, with all his forces to the siege; but on approaching the scene of action, his courage failed, and, hoping to evade the force of Micaiah's prophecy by a secret stratagem, he assumed the uniform of a subaltern, while he advised Jehoshaphat to fight in his royal attire. The Syrian king, with a view either to put the speediest end to the war, or perhaps to wipe out the stain of his own humiliation

(<sup><1218></sup>1 Kings 20:31), had given special instructions to his generals to single out Ahab, and to take or kill him, as the author of the war. The officers at first directed their assault on Jehoshaphat, but, becoming aware of their mistake, desisted. Ahab was wounded by a random arrow, which, being probably poisoned, and the state of the weather increasing the virulence of the poison, he died at sunset. The corpse was conveyed to Samaria; and, as the chariot which brought it was being washed, in a pool near the city, from the blood that had profusely oozed from the wound, the dogs, in conformity with Elijah's prophecy, came and licked it [<sup><1219></sup>1 Kings 21:19]. Ahab was succeeded by his son Ahaziah [<sup><1220></sup>1 Kings 22:40].