

HISTORY OF THE JEWS

By Josephus

Book Eight

[continues]

CHAPTER EIGHT

HOW, UPON THE DEATH OF SOLOMON THE PEOPLE FORSOOK HIS SON REHOBOAM, AND ORDAINED JEROBOAM KING OVER THE TEN TRIBES.

NOW when Solomon was dead, and his son Rehoboam (who was born of an Amntonite wife; whose name was Naamah) had succeeded him in the kingdom, the rulers of the multitude sent immediately into Egypt, and called back Jeroboam; and when he was come to them, to the city Shethem, Rehoboam came to it also, for he had resolved to declare himself king to the Israelites while they were there gathered together. So the rulers of the people, as well as Jeroboam, came to him, and besought him, and said that he ought to relax, and to be gentler than his father, in the servitude he had imposed on them, because they had borne a heavy yoke, and that then they should be better affected to him, and be well contented to serve him under his moderate government, and should do it more out of

love than fear. But Rehoboam told them they should come to him again in three days' time, when he would give an answer to their request. This delay gave occasion to a present suspicion, since he had not given them a favorable answer to their mind immediately; for they thought that he should have given them a humane answer off-hand, especially since he was but young. However, they thought that this consultation about it, and that he did not presently give them a denial, afforded them some good hope of success.

Rehoboam now called his father's friends, and advised with them what sort of answer he ought to give to the multitude; upon which they gave him the advice which became friends, and those that knew the temper of such a multitude. They advised him to speak in a way more popular than suited the grandeur of a king, because he would thereby oblige them to submit to him with goodwill, it being most agreeable to subjects that their kings should be almost upon the level with them. But Rehoboam rejected this so good, and in general so profitable, advice, (it was such, at least, at that time when he was to be made king,) God himself, I suppose, causing what was most advantageous to be condemned by him. So he called for the young men who were brought up with him, and told them what advice the elders had given him, and bade them speak what they thought he ought to do. They advised him to give the following answer to the people (for neither their youth nor God himself suffered them to discern what was best): That his little finger should be thicker than his father's loins; and if they had met with hard usage from his father, they should

experience much rougher treatment from him; and if his father had chastised them with whips, they must expect that he would do it with scorpions. The king was pleased with this advice, and thought it agreeable to the dignity of his government to give them such an answer. Accordingly, when the multitude was come together to hear his answer on the third day, all the people were in great expectation, and very intent to hear what the king would say to them, and supposed they should hear somewhat of a kind nature; but he passed by his friends, and answered as the young men had given him counsel. Now this was done according to the will of God, that what Ahijah had foretold might come to pass.

By these words the people were struck as it were by all iron hammer, and were so grieved at the words, as if they had already felt the effects of them; and they had great indignation at the king; and all cried out aloud, and said, "We will have no longer any relation to David or his posterity after this day." And they said further, "We only leave to Rehoboam the temple which his father built;" and they threatened to forsake him. Nay, they were so bitter, and retained their wrath so long, that when he sent Adoram, which was over the tribute, that he might pacify them, and render them milder, and persuade them to forgive him, if he had said any thing that was rash or grievous to them in his youth, they would not hear it, but threw stones at him, and killed him. When Rehoboam saw this, he thought himself aimed at by those stones with which they had killed his servant, and feared lest he should undergo the last of punishments in earnest; so he got immediately into

his chariot, and fled to Jerusalem, where the tribe of Judah and that of Benjamin ordained him king; but the rest of the multitude forsook the sons of David from that day, and appointed Jeroboam to be the ruler of their public affairs. Upon this Rehoboam, Solomon's son, assembled a great congregation of those two tribes that submitted to him, and was ready to take a hundred and eighty thousand chosen men out of the army, to make an expedition against Jeroboam and his people, that he might force them by war to be his servants; but he was forbidden of God by the prophet [Shemaiah] to go to war, for that it was not just that brethren of the same contry should fight one against another. He also said that this defection of the multitude was according to the purpose of God. So he did not proceed in this expedition. And now I will relate first the actions of Jeroboam the king of Israel, after which we will relate what are therewith connected, the actions of Rehoboam, the king of the two tribes; by this means we shall preserve the good order of the history entire.

When therefore Jeroboam had built him a palace in the city Shechem, he dwelt there. He also built him another at Penuel, a city so called. And now the feast of tabernacles was approaching in a little time, Jeroboam considered, that if he should permit the multitude to go to worship God at Jerusalem, and there to celebrate the festival, they would probably repent of what they had done, and be enticed by the temple, and by the worship of God there performed, and would leave him, and return to their first kings; and if so, he should run the risk of losing his own life; so he

invented this contrivance; He made two golden heifers, and built two little temples for them, the one in the city Bethel, and the other in Dan, which last was at the fountains of the Lesser Jordan and he put the heifers into both the little temples, in the forementioned cities. And when he had called those ten tribes together over whom he ruled, he made a speech to the people in these words: "I suppose, my countrymen, that you know this, that every place hath God in it; nor is there any one determinate place in which he is, but he every where hears and sees those that worship him; on which account I do not think it right for you to go so long a journey to Jerusalem, which is an enemy's city, to worship him. It was a man that built the temple: I have also made two golden heifers, dedicated to the same God; and the one of them I have consecrated in the city Bethel, and the other in Dan, to the end that those of you that dwell nearest those cities may go to them, and worship God there; and I will ordain for you certain priests and Levites from among yourselves, that you may have no want of the tribe of Levi, or of the sons of Aaron; but let him that is desirous among you of being a priest, bring to God a bullock and a ram, which they say Aaron the first priest brought also." When Jeroboam had said this, he deluded the people, and made them to revolt from the worship of their forefathers, and to transgress their laws. This was the beginning of miseries to the Hebrews, and the cause why they were overcome in war by foreigners, and so fell into captivity. But we shall relate those things in their proper places hereafter.

When the feast [of tabernacles] was just approaching, Jeroboam was desirous to celebrate it himself in Bethel, as did the two tribes celebrate it in Jerusalem. Accordingly he built an altar before the heifer, and undertook to be high priest himself. So he went up to the altar, with his own priests about him; but when he was going to offer the sacrifices and the burnt-offerings, in the sight of all the people, a prophet, whose name was Jadon, was sent by God, and came to him from Jerusalem, who stood in the midst of the multitude, and in the 'hearing of' the king, and directing his discourse to the altar, said thus: God foretells that there shall be a certain man of the family of David, Josiah by name, who shall slay upon thee those false priests that shall live at that time, and upon thee shall burn the bones of those deceivers of the people, those impostors' and wicked wretches. However, that this people may believe that these things shall so come to pass, I foretell a sign to them that shall also come to pass. This altar shall be broken to pieces immediately, and all the fat of the sacrifices that is upon it shall be poured upon the ground." When the prophet had said this, Jeroboam fell into a passion, and stretched out his hand, and bid them lay hold of him; but that hand which he stretched out was enfeebled, and he was not able to pull it in again to him, for it was become withered, and hung down, as if it were a dead hand. The altar also was broken to pieces, and all that was upon it was poured out, as the prophet had foretold should come to pass. So the king understood that he was a man of veracity, and had a Divine foreknowledge; and entreated him to pray to God that he would restore his right hand.

Accordingly the prophet did pray to God to grant him that request. So the king, having his hand recovered to its natural state, rejoiced at it, and invited the prophet to sup with him; but Jadon said that he could not endure to come into his house, nor to taste of bread or water in this city, for that was a thing God had forbidden him to do; as also to go back by the same way which he came, but he said he was to return by another way. So the king wondered at the abstinence of the man, but was himself in fear, as suspecting a change of his affairs for the worse, from what had been said to him.

CHAPTER NINE

HOW JADON THE PROPHET WAS PERSUADED BY ANOTHER LYING PROPHET AND RETURNED [TO BETHEL,] AND WAS AFTERWARDS SLAIN BY A LION. AS ALSO WHAT WORDS THE WICKED PROPHET MADE USE OF TO PERSUADE THE KING, AND THEREBY ALIENATED HIS MIND FROM GOD.

NOW there was a certain wicked man in that city, who was a false prophet, whom Jeroboam had in great esteem, but was deceived by him and his flattering words. This man was bedrid, by reason or the infirmities of old age: however, he was informed by his sons concerning the prophet that was come from Jerusalem, and concerning the signs done by him; and how, when Jeroboam's right hand had been enfeebled, at the prophet's prayer he had it revived again. Whereupon he was afraid that this stranger and prophet should be in better esteem with the king than himself, and obtain greater honor from him: and he gave orders to his sons to saddle his ass presently, and make all

ready that he might go out. Accordingly they made haste to do what they were commanded, and he got upon the ass and followed after the prophet.; and when he had overtaken him, as he was resting himself under a very large oak tree that was thick and shady, he at first saluted him, but presently he complained of him, because he had not come into his house, and partaken of his hospitality. And when the other said that God had forbidden him to taste of any one's provision in that city, he replied, that "for certain God had not forbidden that I should set food before thee, for I am a prophet as thou art, and worship God in the same manner that thou dost; and I am now come as sent by him, in order to bring thee into my house, and make thee my guest." Now Jadon gave credit to this lying prophet, and returned back with him. But when they were at dinner, and merry together, God appeared to Jadon, and said that he should suffer punishment for transgressing his commands, - and he told him what that punishment should be for he said that he should meet with a lion as he was going on his way, by which lion he should be torn in pieces, and be deprived of burial in the sepulchers of his fathers; which things came to pass, as I suppose, according to the will of God, that so Jeroboam might not give heed to the words of Jadon as of one that had been convicted of lying. However, as Jadon was again going to Jerusalem, a lion assaulted him, and pulled him off the beast he rode on, and slew him; yet did he not at all hurt the ass, but sat by him, and kept him, as also the prophet's body. This continued till some travelers that saw it came and told it in the city to the false prophet, who sent his sons, and brought the body unto the city, and made

a funeral for him at great expense. He also charged his sons to bury himself with him and said that all which he had foretold against that city, and the altar, and priests, and false prophets, would prove true; and that if he were buried with him, he should receive no injurious treatment after his death, the bones not being then to be distinguished asunder. But now, when he had performed those funeral rites to the prophet, and had given that charge to his sons, as he was a wicked and an impious man, he goes to Jeroboam, and says to him, "And wherefore is it now that thou art disturbed at the words of this silly fellow?" And when the king had related to him what had happened about the altar, and about his own hand, and gave him the names of divine man, and an excellent prophet, he endeavored by a wicked trick to weaken that his opinion; and by using plausible words concerning what had happened, he aimed to injure the truth that was in them; for he attempted to persuade him that his hand was enfeebled by the labor it had undergone in supporting the sacrifices, and that upon its resting awhile it returned to its former nature again; and that as to the altar, it was but new, and had borne abundance of sacrifices, and those large ones too, and was accordingly broken to pieces, and fallen down by the weight of what had been laid upon it. He also informed him of the death of him that had foretold those things, and how he perished; [whence he concluded that] he had not any thing in him of a prophet, nor spake any thing like one. When he had thus spoken, he persuaded the king, and entirely alienated his mind from God, and from doing works that were righteous and holy, and encouraged him to go on in

his impious practices and accordingly he was to that degree injurious to God, and so great a transgressor, that he sought for nothing else every day but how he might be guilty of some new instances of wickedness, and such as should be more detestable than what he had been so insolent as to do before. And so much shall at present suffice to have said concerning Jeroboam.

CHAPTER TEN

CONCERNING REHOBOAM, AND HOW GOD INFLICTED PUNISHMENT UPON HIM FOR HIS IMPIETY BY SHISHAK [KING OF EGYPT].

Now Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, who, as we said before, was king of the two tribes, built strong and large cities, Bethlehem, and Etare, and Tekoa, and Bethzur, and Shoco, and Adullam, and Ipan, and Maresha, and Ziph, and Adorlam, and Lachlsh, and Azekah, and Zorah, and Aijalon, and Hebron; these he built first of all in the tribe of Judah. He also built other large cities in the tribe of Benjamin, and walled them about, and put garrisons in them all, and captains, and a great deal of corn, and wine, and oil, and he furnished every one of them plentifully with other provisions that were necessary for sustenance; moreover, he put therein shields and spears for many ten thousand men. The priests also that were in all Israel, and the Levites, and if there were any of the multitude that were good and righteous men, they gathered themselves together to him, having left their own cities, that they might worship God in Jerusalem; for they were not willing to be forced to worship the heifers which Jeroboam had made;

and they augmented the kingdom of Rehoboam for three years. And after he had married a woman of his own kindred, and had by her three children born to him, he married also another of his own kindred, who was daughter of Absalom by Tamar, whose name was Maachah, and by her he had a son, whom he named Abijah. He had moreover many other children by other wives, but he loved Maachah above them all. Now he had eighteen legitimate wives, and thirty concubines; and he had born to him twenty-eight sons and threescore daughters; but he appointed Abijah, whom he had by Maachah, to be his successor in the kingdom, and intrusted him already with the treasures and the strongest cities.

Now I cannot but think that the greatness of a kingdom, and its change into prosperity, often become the occasion of mischief and of transgression to men; for when Rehoboam saw that his kingdom was so much increased, he went out of the right way unto unrighteous and irreligious practices, and he despised the worship of God, till the people themselves imitated his wicked actions: for so it usually happens, that the manners of subjects are corrupted at the same time with those of their governors, which subjects then lay aside their own sober way of living, as a reproof of their governors' intemperate courses, and follow their wickedness as if it were virtue; for it is not possible to show that men approve of the actions of their kings, unless they do the same actions with them. Agreeable whereto it now happened to the subjects of Rehoboam; for when he was grown impious, and a transgressor himself, they endeavored not to offend him by resolving

still to be righteous. But God sent Shishak, king of Egypt, to punish them for their unjust behavior towards him, concerning whom Herodotus was mistaken, and applied his actions to Sesostris; for this Shishak, in the fifth year of the reign of Rehoboam, made an expedition [into Judea] with many ten thousand men; for he had one thousand two hundred chariots in number that followed him, and threescore thousand horsemen, and four hundred thousand footmen. These he brought with him, and they were the greatest part of them Libyans and Ethiopians. Now therefore when he fell upon the country of the Hebrews, he took the strongest cities of Rehoboam's kingdom without fighting; and when he had put garrisons in them, he came last of all to Jerusalem.

Now when Rehoboam, and the multitude with him, were shut up in Jerusalem by the means of the army of Shishak, and when they besought God to give them victory and deliverance, they could not persuade God to be on their side. But Shemaiah the prophet told them, that God threatened to forsake them, as they had themselves forsaken his worship. When they heard this, they were immediately in a consternation of mind; and seeing no way of deliverance, they all earnestly set themselves to confess that God might justly overlook them, since they had been guilty of impiety towards him, and had let his laws lie in confusion. So when God saw them in that disposition, and that they acknowledge their sins, he told the prophet that he would not destroy them, but that he would, however, make them servants to the Egyptians, that they may learn whether they will suffer less by serving men or God. So when Shishak had taken the

city without fighting, because Rehoboam was afraid, and received him into it, yet did not Shishak stand to the covenants he had made, but he spoiled the temple, and emptied the treasures of God, and those of the king, and carried off innumerable ten thousands of gold and silver, and left nothing at all behind him. He also took away the bucklers of gold, and the shields, which Solomon the king had made; nay, he did not leave the golden quivers which David had taken from the king of Zobah, and had dedicated to God; and when he had thus done, he returned to his own kingdom. Now Herodotus of Halicarnassus mentions this expedition, having only mistaken the king's name; and [in saying that] he made war upon many other nations also, and brought Syria of Palestine into subjection, and took the men that were therein prisoners without fighting. Now it is manifest that he intended to declare that our nation was subdued by him; for he saith that he left behind him pillars in the land of those that delivered themselves up to him without fighting, and engraved upon them the secret parts of women. Now our king Rehoboam delivered up our city without fighting. He says withal that the Ethiopians learned to circumcise their privy parts from the Egyptians, with this addition, that the Phoenicians and Syrians that live in Palestine confess that they learned it of the Egyptians. Yet it is evident that no other of the Syrians that live in Palestine, besides us alone, are circumcised. But as to such matters, let every one speak what is agreeable to his own opinion.

When Shishak was gone away, king Rehoboam made bucklers and shields of brass, instead of those of

gold, and delivered the same number of them to the keepers of the king's palace. So, instead of warlike expeditions, and that glory which results from those public actions, he reigned in great quietness, though not without fear, as being always an enemy to Jeroboam, and he died when he had lived fifty-seven years, and reigned seventeen. He was in his disposition a proud and a foolish man, and lost [part of his] dominions by not hearkening to his father's friends. He was buried in Jerusalem, in the sepulchers of the kings; and his son Abijah succeeded him in the kingdom, and this in the eighteenth year of Jeroboam's reign over the ten tribes; and this was the conclusion of these affairs. It must be now our business to relate the affairs of Jeroboam, and how he ended his life; for he ceased not nor rested to be injurious to God, but every day raised up altars upon high mountains, and went on making priests out of the multitude.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

CONCERNING THE DEATH OF A SON OF JEROBOAM. HOW JEROBOAM WAS BEATEN BY ABIJAH WHO DIED A LITTLE AFTERWARD AND WAS SUCCEEDED IN HIS KINGDOM BY ASA. AND ALSO HOW, AFTER THE DEATH OF JEROBOAM BAASHA DESTROYED HIS SON NADAB AND ALL THE HOUSE OF JEROBOAM.

HOWEVER, God was in no long time ready to return Jeroboam's wicked actions, and the punishment they deserved, upon his own head, and upon the heads of all his house. And whereas a soil of his lay sick at that time, who was called Abijah, he enjoined his wife to lay aside her robes, and to take the

garments belonging to a private person, and to go to Ahijah the prophet, for that he was a wonderful man in foretelling futurities, it having been he who told me that I should be king. He also enjoined her, when she came to him, to inquire concerning the child, as if she were a stranger, whether he should escape this distemper. So she did as her husband bade her, and changed her habit, and came to the city Shiloh, for there did Ahijah live. And as she was going into his house, his eyes being then dim with age, God appeared to him, and informed him of two things; that the wife of Jeroboam was come to him, and what answer he should make to her inquiry. Accordingly, as the woman was coming into the house like a private person and a stranger, he cried out, "Come in, O thou wife of Jeroboam! Why concealest thou thyself? Thou art not concealed from God, who hath appeared to me, and informed me that thou wast coming, and hath given me in command what I shall say to thee." So he said that she should go away to her husband, and speak to him thus: "Since I made thee a great man when thou wast little, or rather wast nothing, and rent the kingdom from the house of David, and gave it to thee, and thou hast been unmindful of these benefits, hast left off my worship, hast made thee molten gods and honored them, I will in like manner cast thee down again, and will destroy all thy house, and make them food for the dogs and the fowls; for a certain king is rising up, by appointment, over all this people, who shall leave none of the family of Jeroboam remaining. The multitude also shall themselves partake of the same punishment, and shall be cast out of this good land, and shall be scattered into the places beyond Euphrates, because they have

followed the wicked practices of their king, and have worshipped the gods that he made, and forsaken my sacrifices. But do thou, O woman, make haste back to thy husband, and tell him this message; but thou shalt then find thy son dead, for as thou enterest the city he shall depart this life; yet shall he be buried with the lamentation of all the multitude, and honored with a general mourning, for he was the only person of goodness of Jeroboam's family." When the prophet had foretold these events, the woman went hastily away with a disordered mind, and greatly grieved at the death of the forenamed child. So she was in lamentation as she went along the road, and mourned for the death of her son, that was just at hand. She was indeed in a miserable condition at the unavoidable misery of his death, and went apace, but in circumstances very unfortunate, because of her son: for the greater haste she made, she would the sooner see her son dead, yet was she forced to make such haste on account of her husband. Accordingly, when she was come back, she found that the child had given up the ghost, as the prophet had said; and she related all the circumstances to the king.

Yet did not Jeroboam lay any of these things to heart, but he brought together a very numerous army, and made a warlike expedition against Abijah, the son of Rehoboam, who had succeeded his father in the kingdom of the two tribes; for he despised him because of his age. But when he heard of the expedition of Jeroboam, he was not affrighted at it, but proved of a courageous temper of mind, superior both to his youth and to the hopes of his enemy; so he chose him an army

out of the two tribes, and met Jeroboam at a place called Mount Zemaraim, and pitched his camp near the other, and prepared everything necessary for the fight. His army consisted of four hundred thousand, but the army of Jeroboam was double to it. Now as the armies stood in array, ready for action and dangers, and were just going to fight, Abijah stood upon an elevated place, and beckoning with his hand, he desired the multitude and Jeroboam himself to hear first with silence what he had to say. And when silence was made, he began to speak, and told them, - "God had consented that David and his posterity should be their rulers for all time to come, and this you yourselves are not unacquainted with; but I cannot but wonder how you should forsake my father, and join yourselves to his servant Jeroboam, and are now here with him to fight against those who, by God's own determination, are to reign, and to deprive them of that dominion which they have still retained; for as to the greater part of it, Jeroboam is unjustly in possession of it. However, I do not suppose he will enjoy it any longer; but when he hath suffered that punishment which God thinks due to him for what is past, he will leave off the transgressions he hath been guilty of, and the injuries he hath offered to him, and which he hath still continued to offer and hath persuaded you to do the same: yet when you were not any further unjustly treated by my father, than that he did not speak to you so as to please you, and this only in compliance with the advice of wicked men, you in anger forsook him, as you pretended, but, in reality, you withdrew yourselves from God, and from his laws, although it had been right for you to have forgiven a man that was young in age, and

not used to govern people, not only some disagreeable words, but if his youth and unskilfulness in affairs had led him into some unfortunate actions, and that for the sake of his father Solomon, and the benefits you received from him; for men ought to excuse the sins of posterity on account of the benefactions of parent; but you considered nothing of all this then, neither do you consider it now, but come with so great an army against us. And what is it you depend upon for victory? Is it upon these golden heifers, and the altars that you have on high places, which are demonstrations of your impiety, and not of religious worship? Or is it the exceeding multitude of your army which gives you such good hopes? Yet certainly there is no strength at all in an army of many ten thousands, when the war is unjust; for we ought to place our surest hopes of success against our enemies in righteousness alone, and in piety towards God; which hope we justly have, since we have kept the laws from the beginning, and have worshipped our own God, who was not made by hands out of corruptible matter; nor was he formed by a wicked king, in order to deceive the multitude; but who is his own workmanship, and the beginning and end of all things. I therefore give you counsel even now to repent, and to take better advice, and to leave off the prosecution of the war; to call to mind the laws of your country, and to reflect what it hath been that hath advanced you to so happy a state as you are now in."

This was the speech which Abijah made to the multitude. But while he was still speaking Jeroboam sent some of his soldiers privately to

encompass Abijah round about, on certain parts of the camp that were not taken notice of; and when he was thus within the compass of the enemy, his army was affrighted, and their courage failed them; but Abijah encouraged them, and exhorted them to place their hopes on God, for that he was not encompassed by the enemy. So they all at once implored the Divine assistance, while the priests sounded with the trumpet, and they made a shout, and fell upon their enemies, and God brake the courage and cast down the force of their enemies, and made Ahijah's army superior to them; for God vouchsafed to grant them a wonderful and very famous victory; and such a slaughter was now made of Jeroboam's army as is never recorded to have happened in any other war, whether it were of the Greeks or of the Barbarians, for they overthrew [and slew] five hundred thousand of their enemies, and they took their strongest cities by force, and spoiled them; and besides those, they did the same to Bethel and her towns, and Jeshanah and her towns. And after this defeat Jeroboam never recovered himself during the life of Abijah, who yet did not long survive, for he reigned but three years, and was buried in Jerusalem in the sepulchers of his forefathers. He left behind him twenty-two sons, and sixteen daughters; and he had also those children by fourteen wives; and Asa his son succeeded in the kingdom; and the young man's mother was Michaiah. Under his reign the country of the Israelites enjoyed peace for ten years.

And so far concerning Abijah, the son of Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, as his history hath come down to us. But Jeroboam, the king of the ten tribes, died when he had governed them two and

twenty years; whose son Nadab succeeded him, in the second year of the reign of Asa. Now Jeroboam's son governed two years, and resembled his father in impiety and wickedness. In these two years he made an expedition against Gibbethon, a city of the Philistines, and continued the siege in order to take it; but he was conspired against while he was there by a friend of his, whose name was Baasha, the son of Ahijah, and was slain; which Baasha took the kingdom after the other's death, and destroyed the whole house of Jeroboam. It also came to pass, according as God had foretold, that some of Jeroboam's kindred that died in the city were torn to pieces and devoured by dogs, and that others of them that died in the fields were torn and devoured by the fowls. So the house of Jeroboam suffered the just punishment of his impiety, and of his wicked actions.

CHAPTER TWELVE

HOW ZERAH, KING OF THE ETHIOPIANS, WAS BEATEN BY ASA; AND HOW ASA, UPON BAASHA'S MAKING WAR AGAINST HIM, INVITED THE KING OF THE DAMASCENS TO ASSIST HIM; AND HOW, ON THE DESTRUCTION OF THE HOUSE OF BAASHA ZIMRI GOT THE KINGDOM AS DID HIS SON AHAB AFTER HIM.

Now Asa, the king of Jerusalem, was of an excellent character, and had a regard to God, and neither did nor designed any thing but what had relation to the observation of the laws. He made a reformation of his kingdom, and cut off whatsoever was wicked therein, and purified it from every impurity. Now he had an army of chosen men that were armed with targets and spears; out of the

tribe of Judah three hundred thousand; and out of the tribe of Benjamin, that bore shields and drew bows, two hundred and fifty thousand. But when he had already reigned ten years, Zerah, king of Ethiopia, made an expedition against him, with a great army, of nine hundred thousand footmen, and one hundred thousand horsemen, and three hundred chariots, and came as far as Mareshah, a city that belonged to the tribe of Judah. Now when Zerah had passed so far with his own army, Asa met him, and put his army in array over against him, in a valley called Zephathah, not far from the city; and when he saw the multitude of the Ethiopians, he cried out, and besought God to give him the victory, and that he might kill many ten thousands of the enemy: "For," said he, "I depend on nothing else but that assistance which I expect from thee, which is able to make the fewer superior to the more numerous, and the weaker to the stronger; and thence it is alone that I venture to meet Zerah, and fight him."

While Asa was saying this, God gave him a signal of victory, and joining battle cheerfully on account of what God had foretold about it, he slew a great many of the Ethiopians; and when he had put them to flight, he pursued them to the country of Gerar; and when they left off killing their enemies, they betook themselves to spoiling them, (for the city Gerar was already taken,) and to spoiling their camp, so that they carried off much gold, and much silver, and a great deal of [other] prey, and camels, and great cattle, and flocks of sheep. Accordingly, when Asa and his army had obtained such a victory, and such wealth from God, they returned to Jerusalem. Now as they were

coming, a prophet, whose name was Azariah, met them on the road, and bade them stop their journey a little; and began to say to them thus: That the reason why they had obtained this victory from God was this, that they had showed themselves righteous and religious men, and had done every thing according to the will of God; that therefore, he said, if they persevered therein, God would grant that they should always overcome their enemies, and live happily; but that if they left off his worship, all things shall fall out on the contrary; and a time should come, wherein no true prophet shall be left in your whole multitude, nor a priest who shall deliver you a true answer from the oracle; but your cities shall be overthrown, and your nation scattered over the whole earth, and live the life of strangers and wanderers. So he advised them, while they had time, to be good, and not to deprive themselves of the favor of God. When the king and the people heard this, they rejoiced; and all in common, and every one in particular, took great care to behave themselves righteously. The king also sent some to take care that those in the country should observe the laws also.

And this was the state of Asa, king of the two tribes. I now return to Baasha, the king of the multitude of the Israelites, who slew Nadab, the son of Jeroboam, and retained the government. He dwelt in the city Tirzah, having made that his habitation, and reigned twenty-four years. He became more wicked and impious than Jeroboam or his son. He did a great deal of mischief to the multitude, and was injurious to God, who sent the prophet Jehu, and told him beforehand that his

whole family should be destroyed, and that he would bring the same miseries on his house which had brought that of Jeroboam to ruin; because when he had been made king by him, he had not requited his kindness, by governing the multitude righteously and religiously; which things, in the first place, tended to their own happiness, and, in the next place, were pleasing to God: that he had imitated this very wicked king Jeroboam; and although that man's soul had perished, yet did he express to the life his wickedness; and he said that he should therefore justly experience the like calamity with him, since he had been guilty of the like wickedness. But Baasha, though he heard beforehand what miseries would befall him and his whole family for their insolent behavior, yet did not he leave off his wicked practices for the time to come, nor did he care to appear other than worse and worse till he died; nor did he then repent of his past actions, nor endeavor to obtain pardon of God for them, but did as those do who have rewards proposed to them, when they have once in earnest set about their work, they do not leave off their labors; for thus did Baasha, when the prophet foretold to him what would come to pass, grow worse, as if what were threatened, the perdition of his family, and the destruction of his house, (which are really among the greatest of evils,) were good things; and, as if he were a combatant for wickedness, he every day took more and more pains for it: and at last he took his army and assaulted a certain considerable city called Ramah, which was forty furlongs distant from Jerusalem; and when he had taken it, he fortified it, having determined beforehand to leave a garrison in it, that they might thence

make excursions, and do mischief to the kingdom of Asa.

Whereupon Asa was afraid of the attempts the enemy might make upon him; and considering with himself how many mischiefs this army that was left in Ramah might do to the country over which he reigned, he sent ambassadors to the king of the Damascenes, with gold and silver, desiring his assistance, and putting him in mind that we have had a friendship together from the times of our forefathers. So he gladly received that sum of money, and made a league with him, and broke the friendship he had with Baasha, and sent the commanders of his own forces unto the cities that were under Baasha's dominion, and ordered them to do them mischief. So they went and burnt some of them, and spoiled others; Ijon, and Dan, and Abelmain and many others. Now when the king of Israel heard this, he left off building and fortifying Ramah, and returned presently to assist his own people under the distresses they were in; but Asa made use of the materials that were prepared for building that city, for building in the same place two strong cities, the one of which was called Geba, and the other Mizpah; so that after this Baasha had no leisure to make expeditions against Asa, for he was prevented by death, and was buried in the city Tirzah; and Elah his son took the kingdom, who, when he had reigned two years, died, being treacherously slain by Zimri, the captain of half his army; for when he was at Arza, his steward's house, he persuaded some of the horsemen that were under him to assault Elah, and by that means he slew him when he was without his armed men and his captains, for

they were all busied in the siege of Gibbethon, a city of the Philistines.

When Zimri, the captain of the army, had killed Elah, he took the kingdom himself, and, according to Jehu's prophecy, slew all the house of Baasha; for it came to pass that Baasha's house utterly perished, on account of his impiety, in the same manner as we have already described the destruction of the house of Jeroboam. But the army that was besieging Gibbethon, when they heard what had befallen the king, and that when Zimri had killed him, he had gained the kingdom, they made Omri their general king, who drew off his army from Gibbethon, and came to Tirzah, where the royal palace was, and assaulted the city, and took it by force. But when Zimri saw that the city had none to defend it, he fled into the inmost part of the palace, and set it on fire, and burnt himself with it, when he had reigned only seven days. Upon which the people of Israel were presently divided, and part of them would have Tibni to be king, and part Omri; but when those that were for Omri's ruling had beaten Tibni, Omri reigned over all the multitude. Now it was in the thirtieth year of the reign of Asa that Omri reigned for twelve years; six of these years he reigned in the city Tirzah, and the rest in the city called Semareon, but named by the Greeks Samaria; but he himself called it Semareon, from Semer, who sold him the mountain whereon he built it. Now Omri was no way different from those kings that reigned before him, but that he grew worse than they, for they all sought how they might turn the people away from God by their daily wicked practices; and on that account it was that God made one of them to be slain by

another, and that no one person of their families should remain. This Omri also died in Samaria and Ahab his son succeeded him.

Now by these events we may learn what concern God hath for the affairs of mankind, and how he loves good men, and hates the wicked, and destroys them root and branch; for many of these kings of Israel, they and their families, were miserably destroyed, and taken away one by another, in a short time, for their transgression and wickedness; but Asa, who was king of Jerusalem, and of the two tribes, attained, by God's blessing, a long and a blessed old age, for his piety and righteousness, and died happily, when he had reigned forty and one years; and when he was dead, his son Jehoshaphat succeeded him in the government. He was born of Asa's wife Azubah. And all men allowed that he followed the works of David his forefather, and this both in courage and piety; but we are not obliged now to speak any more of the affairs of this king.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

HOW AHAB WHEN HE HAD TAKEN JEZEBEL TO WIFE BECAME MORE WICKED THAN ALL THE KINGS THAT HAD BEEN BEFORE HIM; OF THE ACTIONS OF THE PROPHET ELIJAH, AND WHAT BEFELL NABOTH.

NOW Ahab the king of Israel dwelt in Samaria, and held the government for twenty-two years; and made no alteration in the conduct of the kings that were his predecessors, but only in such things as were of his own invention for the worse, and in his most gross wickedness. He imitated them in

their wicked courses, and in their injurious behavior towards God, and more especially he imitated the transgression of Jeroboam; for he worshipped the heifers that he had made; and he contrived other absurd objects of worship besides those heifers: he also took to wife the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Tyrians and Sidonians, whose name was Jezebel, of whom he learned to worship her own gods. This woman was active and bold, and fell into so great a degree of impurity and madness, that she built a temple to the god of the Tyrians, which they call Belus, and planted a grove of all sorts of trees; she also appointed priests and false prophets to this god. The king also himself had many such about him, and so exceeded in madness and wickedness all [the kings] that went before him.

There was now a prophet of God Almighty, of Thesbon, a country in Gilead, that came to Ahab, and said to him, that God foretold he would not send rain nor dew in those years upon the country but when he should appear. And when he had confirmed this by an oath, he departed into the southern parts, and made his abode by a brook, out of which he had water to drink; for as for his food, ravens brought it to him every day: but when that river was dried up for want of rain, he came to Zarephath, a city not far from Sidon and Tyre, for it lay between them, and this at the command of God, for [God told him] that he should there find a woman who was a widow that should give him sustenance. So when he was not far off the city, he saw a woman that labored with her own hands, gathering of sticks: so God informed him that this was the woman who was to give him sustenance. So

he came and saluted her, and desired her to bring him some water to drink; but as she was going so to do, he called to her, and would have her to bring him a loaf of bread also; whereupon she affirmed upon oath that she had at home nothing more than one handful of meal, and a little oil, and that she was going to gather some sticks, that she might knead it, and make bread for herself and her son; after which, she said, they must perish, and be consumed by the famine, for they had nothing for themselves any longer. Hereupon he said, "Go on with good courage, and hope for better things; and first of all make me a little cake, and bring it to me, for I foretell to thee that this vessel of meal and this cruse of oil shall not fail until God send rain." When the prophet had said this, she came to him, and made him the before-named cake; of which she had part for herself, and gave the rest to her son, and to the prophet also; nor did any thing of this fall until the drought ceased. Now Menander mentions this drought in his account of the acts of Ethbaal, king of the Tyrians; where he says thus: "Under him there was a want of rain from the month Hyperberetmus till the month Hyperberetmus of the year following; but when he made supplications, there came great thunders. This Ethbaal built the city Botrys in Phoenicia, and the city Auza in Libya." By these words he designed the want of rain that was in the days of Ahab, for at that time it was that Ethbaal also reigned over the Tyrians, as Menander informs us.

Now this woman, of whom we spake before, that sustained the prophet, when her son was fallen into a distemper till he gave up the ghost, and

appeared to be dead, came to the prophet weeping, and beating her breasts with her hands, and sending out such expressions as her passions dictated to her, and complained to him that he had come to her to reproach her for her sins, and that on this account it was that her son was dead. But he bid her be of good cheer, and deliver her son to him, for that he would deliver him again to her alive. So when she had delivered her son up to him, he carried him into an upper room, where he himself lodged, and laid him down upon the bed, and cried unto God, and said, that God had not done well, in rewarding the woman who had entertained him and sustained him, by taking away her son; and he prayed that he would send again the soul of the child into him, and bring him to life again. Accordingly God took pity on the mother, and was willing to gratify the prophet, that he might not seem to have come to her to do her a mischief, and the child, beyond all expectation, came to life again. So the mother returned the prophet thanks, and said she was then clearly satisfied that God did converse with him.

After a little while Elijah came to king Ahab, according to God's will, to inform him that rain was coming. Now the famine had seized upon the whole country, and there was a great want of what was necessary for sustenance, insomuch that it was after the recovery of the widow's son of Sarepta, God sent not only men that wanted it, but the earth itself also, which did not produce enough for the horse and the other beasts of what was useful for them to feed on, by reason of the drought. So the king called for Obadiah, who was steward over his cattle, and said to him, that he

would have him go to the fountains of water, and to the brooks, that if any herbs could be found for them, they might mow it down, and reserve it for the beasts. And when he had sent persons all over the habitable earth to discover the prophet Elijah, and they could not find him, he bade Obadiah accompany him. So it was resolved they should make a progress, and divide the ways between them; and Obadiah took one road, and the king another. Now it happened that the same time when queen Jezebel slew the prophets, that this Obadiah had hidden a hundred prophets, and had fed them with nothing but bread and water. But when Obadiah was alone, and absent from the king, the prophet Elijah met him; and Obadiah asked him who he was; and when he had learned it from him, he worshipped him. Elijah then bid him go to the king, and tell him that I am here ready to wait on him. But Obadiah replied, "What evil have I done to thee, that thou sendest me to one who seeketh to kill thee, and hath sought over all the earth for thee? Or was he so ignorant as not to know that the king had left no place untouched unto which he had not sent persons to bring him back, in order, if they could take him, to have him put to death?" For he told him he was afraid lest God should appear to him again, and he should go away into another place; and that when the king should send him for Elijah, and he should miss of him, and not be able to find him any where upon earth, he should be put to death. He desired him therefore to take care of his preservation; and told him how diligently he had provided for those of his own profession, and had saved a hundred prophets, when Jezebel slew the rest of them, and had kept them concealed, and that they had been

sustained by him. But Elijah bade him fear nothing, but go to the king; and he assured him upon oath that he would certainly show himself to Ahab that very day.

So when Obadiah had informed the king that Elijah was there, Ahab met him, and asked him, in anger, if he were the man that afflicted the people of the Hebrews, and was the occasion of the drought they lay under? But Elijah, without any flattery, said that he was himself the man, he and his house, which brought such sad afflictions upon them, and that by introducing strange gods into their country, and worshipping them, and by leaving their own, who was the only true God, and having no manner of regard to him. However, he bade him go his way, and gather together all the people to him to Mount Carmel, with his own prophets, and those of his wife, telling him how many there were of them, as also the prophets of the groves, about four hundred in number. And as all the men whom Ahab sent for ran away to the forenamed mountain, the prophet Elijah stood in the midst of them, and said, "How long will you live thus in uncertainty of mind and opinion?" He also exhorted them, that in case they esteemed their own country God to be the true and the only God, they would follow him and his commandments; but in case they esteemed him to be nothing, but had an opinion of the strange gods, and that they ought to worship them, his counsel was, that they should follow them. And when the multitude made no answer to what he said, Elijah desired that, for a trial of the power of the strange gods, and of their own God, he, who was his only prophet, while they had four hundred, might take a heifer and

kill it as a sacrifice, and lay it upon pieces of wood, and not kindle any fire, and that they should do the same things, and call upon their own gods to set the wood on fire; for if that were done, they would thence learn the nature of the true God. This proposal pleased the people. So Elijah bade the prophets to choose out a heifer first, and kill it, and to call on their gods. But when there appeared no effect of the prayer or invocation of the prophets upon their sacrifice, Elijah derided them, and bade them call upon their gods with a loud voice, for they might either be on a journey, or asleep; and when these prophets had done so from morning till noon, and cut themselves with swords and lances, according to the customs of their country, and he was about to offer his sacrifice, he bade [the prophets] go away, but bade [the people] come near and observe what he did, lest he should privately hide fire among the pieces of wood. So, upon the approach of the multitude, he took twelve stones, one for each tribe of the people of the Hebrews, and built an altar with them, and dug a very deep trench; and when he had laid the pieces of wood upon the altar, and upon them had laid the pieces of the sacrifices, he ordered them to fill four barrels with the water of the fountain, and to pour it upon the altar, till it ran over it, and till the trench was filled with the water poured into it. When he had done this, he began to pray to God, and to invoke him to make manifest his power to a people that had already been in an error a long time; upon which words a fire came on a sudden from heaven in the sight of the multitude, and fell upon the altar, and consumed the sacrifice, till the very water was set on fire, and the place

was become dry.

Now when the Israelites saw this, they fell down upon the ground, and worshipped one God, and called him The great and the only true God; but they called the others mere names, framed by the evil and vile opinions of men. So they caught their prophets, and, at the command of Elijah, slew them. Elijah also said to the king, that he should go to dinner without any further concern, for that in a little time he would see God send them rain. Accordingly Ahab went his way. But Elijah went up to the highest top of Mount Carmel, and sat down upon the ground, and leaned his head upon his knees, and bade his servant go up to a certain elevated place, and look towards the sea, and when he should see a cloud rising any where, he should give him notice of it, for till that time the air had been clear. When the Servant had gone up, and had said many times that he saw nothing, at the seventh time of his going up, he said that he saw a small black thing in the sky, not larger than a man's foot. When Elijah heard that, he sent to Ahab, and desired him to go away to the city before the rain came down. So he came to the city Jezreel; and in a little time the air was all obscured, and covered with clouds, and a vehement storm of wind came upon the earth, and with it a great deal of rain; and the prophet was under a Divine fury, and ran along with the king's chariot unto Jezreel a city of Izar [Issaachar].

When Jezebel, the wife of Ahab, understood what signs Elijah had wrought, and how he had slain her prophets, she was angry, and sent messengers to him, and by them threatened to kill him, as he had

destroyed her prophets. At this Elijah was affrighted, and fled to the city called Beersheba, which is situate at the utmost limits of the country belonging to the tribe of Judah, towards the land of Edom; and there he left his servant, and went away into the desert. He prayed also that he might die, for that he was not better than his fathers, nor need he be very desirous to live, when they were dead; and he lay and slept under a certain tree; and when somebody awakened him, and he was risen up, he found food set by him and water: so when he had eaten, and recovered his strength by that his food, he came to that mountain which is called Sinai, where it is related that Moses received his laws from God; and finding there a certain hollow cave, he entered into it, and continued to make his abode in it. But when a certain voice came to him, but from whence he knew not, and asked him, why he was come thither, and had left the city? he said, that because he had slain the prophets of the foreign gods, and had persuaded the people that he alone whom they had worshipped from the beginning was God, he was sought for by the king's wife to be punished for so doing. And when he had heard another voice, telling him that he should come out the next day into the open air, and should thereby know what he was to do, he came out of the cave the next day accordingly, When he both heard an earthquake, and saw the bright splendor of a fire; and after a silence made, a Divine voice exhorted him not to be disturbed with the circumstances he was in, for that none of his enemies should have power over him. The voice also commanded him to return home, and to ordain Jehu, the son of Nimshi, to be king over their own multitude; and

Hazael, of Damascus, to be over the Syrians; and Elisha, of the city Abel, to be a prophet in his stead; and that of the impious multitude, some should be slain by Hazael, and others by Jehu. So Elijah, upon hearing this charge, returned into the land of the Hebrews. And when he found Elisha, the son of Shaphat, ploughing, and certain others with him, driving twelve yoke of oxen, he came to him, and cast his own garment upon him; upon which Elisha began to prophesy presently, and leaving his oxen, he followed Elijah. And when he desired leave to salute his parents, Elijah gave him leave so to do; and when he had taken his leave of them, he followed him, and became the disciple and the servant of Elijah all the days of his life. And thus have I despatched the affairs in which this prophet was concerned.

Now there was one Naboth, of the city Izar, [Jezreel,] who had a field adjoining to that of the king: the king would have persuaded him to sell him that his field, which lay so near to his own lands, at what price he pleased, that he might join them together, and make them one farm; and if he would not accept of money for it, he gave him leave to choose any of his other fields in its stead. But Naboth said he would not do so, but would keep the possession of that land of his own, which he had by inheritance from his father. Upon this the king was grieved, as if he had received an injury, when he could not get another man's possession, and he would neither wash himself, nor take any food: and when Jezebel asked him what it was that troubled him, and why he would neither wash himself, nor eat either dinner or supper, he related to her the perverseness of Naboth, and

how, when he had made use of gentle words to him, and such as were beneath the royal authority, he had been affronted, and had not obtained what he desired. However, she persuaded him not to be cast down at this accident, but to leave off his grief, and return to the usual care of his body, for that she would take care to have Naboth punished; and she immediately sent letters to the rulers of the Israelites [Jezreelites] in Ahab's name, and commanded them to fast and to assemble a congregation, and to set Naboth at the head of them, because he was of an illustrious family, and to have three bold men ready to bear witness that he had blasphemed God and the king, and then to stone him, and slay him in that manner.

Accordingly, when Naboth had been thus testified against, as the queen had written to them, that he had blasphemed against God and Ahab the king, she desired him to take possession of Naboth's vineyard on free cost. So Ahab was glad at what had been done, and rose up immediately from the bed whereon he lay to go to see Naboth's vineyard; but God had great indignation at it, and sent Elijah the prophet to the field of Naboth, to speak to Ahab, and to say to him, that he had slain the true owner of that field unjustly. And as soon as he came to him, and the king had said that he might do with him what he pleased, (for he thought it a reproach to him to be thus caught in his sin,) Elijah said, that in that very place in which the dead body of Naboth was eaten by dogs both his own blood and that of his wife's should be shed, and that all his family should perish, because he had been so insolently wicked, and had slain a citizen unjustly, and contrary to the laws of his country. Hereupon Ahab began to be sorry

for the things he had done, and to repent of them; and he put on sackcloth, and went barefoot and would not touch any food; he also confessed his sins, and endeavored thus to appease God. But God said to the prophet, that while Ahab was living he would put off the punishment of his family, because he repented of those insolent crimes he had been guilty of, but that still he would fulfill his threatening under Ahab's son; which message the prophet delivered to the king.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

HOW HADAD KING OF DAMASCUS AND OF SYRIA, MADE TWO EXPEDITIONS AGAINST AHAB AND WAS BEATEN.

WHEN the affairs of Ahab were thus, at that very time the son of Hadad, [Benhadad,] who was king of the Syrians and of Damascus, got together an army out of all his country, and procured thirty-two kings beyond Euphrates to be his auxiliaries: so he made an expedition against Ahab; but because Ahab's army was not like that of Benhadad, he did not set it in array to fight him, but having shut up every thing that was in the country in the strongest cities he had, he abode in Samaria himself, for the walls about it were very strong, and it appeared to be not easily to be taken in other respects also. So the king of Syria took his army with him, and came to Samaria, and placed his army round about the city, and besieged it. He also sent a herald to Ahab, and desired he would admit the ambassadors he would send him, by whom he would let him know his pleasure. So, upon the king of Israel's permission for him to send, those ambassador's came, and by their king's command

spake thus: That Ahab's riches, and his children, and his wives were Benhadad's, and if he would make an agreement, and give him leave to take as much of what he had as he pleased, he would withdraw his army, and leave off the siege. Upon this Ahab bade the ambassadors to go back, and tell their king, that both he himself and all that he hath are his possessions. And when these ambassadors had told this to Berthadad, he sent to him again, and desired, since he confessed that all he had was his, that he would admit those servants of his which he should send the next day; and he commanded him to deliver to those whom he should send whatsoever, upon their searching his palace, and the houses of his friends and kindred, they should find to be excellent in its kind, but that what did not please them they should leave to him. At this second embassy of the king of Syria, Ahab was surprised, and gathered together the multitude to a congregation, and told them that, for himself, he was ready, for their safety and peace, to give up his own wives and children to the enemy, and to yield to him all his own possessions, for that was what the Syrian king required at his first embassy; but that now he desires to send his servants to search all their houses, and in them to leave nothing that is excellent in its kind, seeking an occasion of fighting against him, "as knowing that I would not spare what is mine own for your sakes, but taking a handle from the disagreeable terms he offers concerning you to bring a war upon us; however, I will do what you shall resolve is fit to be done." But the multitude advised him to hearken to none of his proposals, but to despise him, and be in readiness to fight him. Accordingly, when he had

given the ambassadors this answer to be reported, that he still continued in the mind to comply with what terms he at first desired, for the safety of the citizens; but as for his second desires, he cannot submit to them, - he dismissed them.

Now when Benhadad heard this, he had indignation, and sent ambassadors to Ahab the third time, and threatened that his army would raise a bank higher than those walls, in confidence of whose strength he despised him, and that by only each man of his army taking a handful of earth; hereby making a show of the great number of his army, and aiming to affright him. Ahab answered, that he ought not to vaunt himself when he had only put on his armor, but when he should have conquered his enemies in the battle. So the ambassadors came back, and found the king at supper with his thirty-two kings, and informed him of Ahab's answer; who then immediately gave order for proceeding thus: To make lines round the city, and raise a bulwark, and to prosecute the siege all manner of ways. Now, as this was doing, Ahab was in a great agony, and all his people with him; but he took courage, and was freed from his fears, upon a certain prophet coming to him, and saying to him, that God had promised to subdue so many ten thousands of his enemies under him. And when he inquired by whose means the victory was to be obtained, he said, "By the sons of the princes; but under thy conduct as their leader, by reason of their unskilfulness [in war]." Upon which he called for the sons of the princes, and found them to be two hundred and thirty-two persons. So when he was informed that the king of Syria had betaken himself to feasting and repose, he opened the

gates, and sent out the princes' sons. Now when the sentinels told Benhadad of it, he sent some to meet them, and commanded them, that if these men were come out for fighting, they should bind them, and bring them to him; and that if they came out peaceably, they should do the same. Now Ahab had another army ready within the walls, but the sons of the princes fell upon the out-guard, and slew many of them, and pursued the rest of them to the camp; and when the king of Israel saw that these had the upper hand, he sent out all the rest of his army, which, falling suddenly upon the Syrians, beat them, for they did not think they would have come out; on which account it was that they assaulted them when they were naked and drunk, insomuch that they left all their armor behind them when they fled out of the camp, and the king himself escaped with difficulty, by fleeing away on horseback. But Ahab went a great way in pursuit of the Syrians; and when he had spoiled their camp, which contained a great deal of wealth, and moreover a large quantity of gold and silver, he took Benhadad's chariots and horses, and returned to the city; but as the prophet told him he ought to have his army ready, because the Syrian king would make another expedition against him the next year, Ahab was busy in making provision for it accordingly.

Now Benhadad, when he had saved himself, and as much of his army as he could, out of the battle, he consulted with his friends how he might make another expedition against the Israelites. Now those friends advised him not to fight with them on the hills, because their God was potent in such places, and thence it had come to pass that they

had very lately been beaten; but they said, that if they joined battle with them in the plain, they should beat them. They also gave him this further advice, to send home those kings whom he had brought as his auxiliaries, but to retain their army, and to set captains over it instead of the kings, and to raise an army out of their country, and let them be in the place of the former who perished in the battle, together with horses and chariots. So he judged their counsel to be good, and acted according to it in the management of the army.

At the beginning of the spring, Benhadad took his army with him, and led it against the Hebrews; and when he was come to a certain city which was called Aphek, he pitched his camp in the great plain. Ahab also went to meet him with his army, and pitched his camp over against him, although his army was a very small one, if it were compared with the enemy's; but the prophet came again to him, and told him, that God would give him the victory, that he might demonstrate his own power to be, not only on the mountains, but on the plains also; which it seems was contrary to the opinion of the Syrians. So they lay quiet in their camp seven days; but on the last of those days, when the enemies came out of their camp, and put themselves in array in order to fight, Ahab also brought out his own army; and when the battle was joined, and they fought valiantly, he put the enemy to flight, and pursued them, and pressed upon them, and slew them; nay, they were destroyed by their own chariots, and by one another; nor could any more than a few of them escape to their own city Aphek, who were also killed by the walls

falling upon them, being in number twenty-seven thousand. Now there were slain in this battle a hundred thousand more; but Benhadad, the king of the Syrians, fled away, with certain others of his most faithful servants, and hid himself in a cellar under ground; and when these told him that the kings of Israel were humane and merciful men, and that they might make use of the usual manner of supplication, and obtain deliverance from Ahab, in case he would give them leave to go to him, he gave them leave accordingly. So they came to Ahab, clothed in sackcloth, with ropes about their heads, (for this was the ancient manner of supplication among the Syrians,) and said, that Benhadad desired he would save him, and that he would ever be a servant to him for that favor. Ahab replied he was glad that he was alive, and not hurt in the battle; and he further promised him the same honor and kindness that a man would show to his brother. So they received assurances upon oath from him, that when he came to him he should receive no harm from him, and then went and brought him out of the cellar wherein he was hid, and brought him to Ahab as he sat in his chariot. So Benhadad worshipped him; and Ahab gave him his hand, and made him come up to him into his chariot, and kissed him, and bid him be of good cheer, and not to expect that any mischief should be done to him. So Berthadad returned him thanks, and professed that he would remember his kindness to him all the days of his life; and promised he would restore those cities of the Israelites which the former kings had taken from them, and grant that he should have leave to come to Damascus, as his forefathers had to come to Samaria. So they confirmed their covenant by oaths, and Ahab made

him many presents, and sent him back to his own kingdom. And this was the conclusion of the war that Benhadad made against Ahab and the Israelites.

But a certain prophet, whose name was Micaiah, came to one of the Israelites, and bid him smite him on the head, for by so doing he would please God; but when he would not do so, he foretold to him, that since he disobeyed the commands of God, he should meet with a lion, and be destroyed by him. When that sad accident had befallen the man, the prophet came again to another, and gave him the same injunction; so he smote him, and wounded his skull; upon which he bound up his head, and came to the king, and told him that he had been a soldier of his, and had the custody of one of the prisoners committed to him by an officer, and that the prisoner being run away, he was in danger of losing his own life by the means of that officer, who had threatened him, that if the prisoner escaped he would kill him. And when Ahab had said that he would justly die, he took off the binding about his head, and was known by the king to be Micaiah the prophet, who made use of this artifice as a prelude to his following words; for he said that God would punish him who had suffered Benhadad, a blasphemer against him, to escape punishment; and that he would so bring it about, that he should die by the other's means and his people by the other's army. Upon which Ahab was very angry at the prophet, and gave commandment that he should be put in prison, and there kept; but for himself, he was in confusion at the words of Micaiah, and returned to his own house.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

CONCERNING JEHOSHAPHAT THE KING OF JERUSALEM AND HOW AHAB MADE AN EXPEDITION AGAINST THE SYRIANS AND WAS ASSISTED THEREIN BY JEHOSHAPHAT, BUT WAS HIMSELF OVERCOME IN BATTLE AND PERISHED THEREIN.

AND these were the circumstances in which Ahab was. But I now return to Jehoshaphat, the king of Jerusalem, who, when he had augmented his kingdom, had set garrisons in the cities of the countries belonging to his subjects, and had put such garrisons no less into those cities which were taken out of the tribe of Ephraim by his grandfather Abijah, when Jeroboam reigned over the ten tribes [than he did into the other]. But then he had God favorable and assisting to him, as being both righteous and religious, and seeking to do somewhat every day that should be agreeable and acceptable to God. The kings also that were round about him honored him with the presents they made him, till the riches that he had acquired were immensely great, and the glory he had gained was of a most exalted nature.

Now, in the third year of this reign, he called together the rulers of the country, and the priests, and commanded them to go round the land, and teach all the people that were under him, city by city, the laws of Moses, and to keep them, and to be diligent in the worship of God. With this the whole multitude was so pleased, that they were not so eagerly set upon or affected with any thing so much as the observation of the laws. The neighboring nations also continued to love Jehoshaphat, and to be at peace with him. The

Philistines paid their appointed tribute, and the Arabians supplied him every year with three hundred and sixty lambs, and as many kids of the goats. He also fortified the great cities, which were many in number, and of great consequence. He prepared also a mighty army of soldiers and weapons against their enemies. Now the army of men that wore their armor, was three hundred thousand of the tribe of Judah, of whom Adnah was the chief; but John was chief of two hundred thousand. The same man was chief of the tribe of Benjamin, and had two hundred thousand archers under him. There was another chief, whose name was Jehozabad, who had a hundred and fourscore thousand armed men. This multitude was distributed to be ready for the king's service, besides those whom he sent to the best fortified cities.

Jehoshaphat took for his son Jehoram to wife the daughter of Ahab, the king of the ten tribes, whose name was Athaliah. And when, after some time, he went to Samaria, Ahab received him courteously, and treated the army that followed him in a splendid manner, with great plenty of corn and wine, and of slain beasts; and desired that he would join with him in his war against the king of Syria, that he might recover from him the city Ramoth, in Gilead; for though it had belonged to his father, yet had the king of Syria's father taken it away from him; and upon Jehoshaphat's promise to afford him his assistance, (for indeed his army was not inferior to the other,) and his sending for his army from Jerusalem to Samaria, the two kings went out of the city, and each of them sat on his own throne, and each gave their orders to their several armies. Now Jehoshaphat

bid them call some of the prophets, if there were any there, and inquire of them concerning this expedition against the king of Syria, whether they would give them counsel to make that expedition at this time, for there was peace at that time between Ahab and the king of Syria, which had lasted three years, from the time he had taken him captive till that day.

So Ahab called his own prophets, being in number about four hundred, and bid them inquire of God whether he would grant him the victory, if he made an expedition against Benhadad, and enable him to overthrow that city, for whose sake it was that he was going to war. Now these prophets gave their counsel for making this expedition, and said that he would beat the king of Syria, and, as formerly, would reduce him under his power. But Jehoshaphat, understanding by their words that they were false prophets, asked Ahab whether there were not some other prophet, and he belonging to the true God, that we may have surer information concerning futurities. Hereupon Ahab said there was indeed such a one, but that he hated him, as having prophesied evil to him, and having foretold that he should be overcome and slain by the king of Syria, and that for this cause he had him now in prison, and that his name was Micaiah, the son of Imlah. But upon Jehoshaphat's desire that he might be produced, Ahab sent a eunuch, who brought Micaiah to him. Now the eunuch had informed him by the way, that all the other prophets had foretold that the king should gain the victory; but he said, that it was not lawful for him to lie against God, but that he must speak what he should say to him about the king, whatsoever it were.

When he came to Ahab, and he had adjured him upon oath to speak the truth to him, he said that God had shown to him the Israelites running away, and pursued by the Syrians, and dispersed upon the mountains by them, as flocks of sheep are dispersed when their shepherd is slain. He said further, that God signified to him, that those Israelites should return:in peace to their own home, and that he only should fall in the battle. When Micalab had thus spoken, Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, "I told thee a little while ago the disposition of the man with regard to me, and that he uses to prophesy evil to me." Upon which Micaiah replied, that he ought to hear all, whatsoever it be, that God foretells; and that in particular, they were false prophets that encouraged him to make this war in hope of victory, whereas he must fight and be killed. Whereupon the king was in suspense with himself: but Zedekiah, one of those false prophets, came near, and exhorted him not to hearken to Micaiah, for he did not at all speak truth; as a demonstration of which he instanced in what Elijah had said, who was a better prophet in foretelling futurities than Micaiah for he foretold that the dogs should lick his blood in the city of Jezreel, in the field of Naboth, as they licked the blood of Naboth, who by his means was there stoned to death by the multitude; that therefore it was plain that this Micalab was a liar, as contradicting a greater prophet than himself, and saying that he should be slain at three days' journey distance: "and [said he] you shall soon know whether he be a true prophet, and hath the power of the Divine Spirit; for I will smite him, and let him then hurt my hand, as Jadon caused the

hand of Jeroboam the king to wither when he would have caught him; for I suppose thou hast certainly heard of that accident." So when, upon his smiting Micaiah, no harm happened to him, Ahab took courage, and readily led his army against the king of Syria; for, as I suppose, fate was too hard for him, and made him believe that the false prophets spake truer than the true one, that it might take an occasion of bringing him to his end. However, Zedekiah made horns of iron, and said to Ahab, that God made those horns signals, that by them he should overthrow all Syria. But Micaiah replied, that Zedekiah, in a few days, should go from one secret chamber to another to hide himself, that he might escape the punishment of his lying. Then did the king give orders that they should take Micaiah away, and guard him to Amon, the governor of the city, and to give him nothing but bread and water.

Then did Ahab, and Jehoshaphat the king of Jerusalem, take their forces, and marched to Ramoth a city of Gilead; and when the king of Syria heard of this expedition, he brought out his army to oppose them, and pitched his camp not far from Ramoth. Now Ahab and Jehoshaphat had agreed that Ahab should lay aside his royal robes, but that the king of Jerusalem should put on his [Ahab's] proper habit, and stand before the army, in order to disprove, by this artifice, what Micaiah had foretold. But Ahab's fate found him out without his robes; for Benhadad, the king of Assyria, had charged his army, by the means of their commanders, to kill nobody else but only the king of Israel. So when the Syrians, upon their joining battle with the Israelites, saw Jehoshaphat stand before the army, and conjectured

that he was Ahab, they fell violently upon him, and encompassed him round; but when they were near, and knew that it was not he, they all returned back; and while the fight lasted from the morning till late in the evening, and the Syrians were conquerors, they killed nobody, as their king had commanded them. And when they sought to kill Ahab alone, but could not find him, there was a young nobleman belonging to king Benhadad, whose name was Naaman; he drew his bow against the enemy, and wounded the king through his breastplate, in his lungs. Upon this Ahab resolved not to make his mischance known to his army, lest they should run away; but he bid the driver of his chariot to turn it back, and carry him out of the battle, because he was sorely and mortally wounded. However, he sat in his chariot and endured the pain till sunset, and then he fainted away and died.

And now the Syrian army, upon the coming on of the night, retired to their camp; and when the herald belonging to the camp gave notice that Ahab was dead, they returned home; and they took the dead body of Ahab to Samaria, and buried it there; but when they had washed his chariot in the fountain of Jezreel, which was bloody with the dead body of the king, they acknowledged that the prophecy of Elijah was true, for the dogs licked his blood, and the harlots continued afterwards to wash themselves in that fountain; but still he died at Ramoth, as Micaiah had foretold. And as what things were foretold should happen to Ahab by the two prophets came to pass, we ought thence to have high notions of God, and every where to honor and worship him, and never to suppose that what is

pleasant and agreeable is worthy of belief before what is true, and to esteem nothing more advantageous than the gift of prophecy and that foreknowledge of future events which is derived from it, since God shows men thereby what we ought to avoid. We may also guess, from what happened to this king, and have reason to consider the power of fate; that there is no way of avoiding it, even when we know it. It creeps upon human souls, and flatters them with pleasing hopes, till it leads them about to the place where it will be too hard for them. Accordingly Ahab appears to have been deceived thereby, till he disbelieved those that foretold his defeat; but, by giving credit to such as foretold what was grateful to him, was slain; and his son Ahaziah succeeded him.

