The Book of One Kings

Kings, the last book of the "Former Prophets," relates the history of Israel from the declining days of David through the beginning of the Babylonian exile. Its last verses (in the second half, 2 Kings) describe the release of Jehoiachin, exiled king of Judah, from prison in Babylonia during the reign of Evil-merodach, son of Nebuchadnezzar, an event datable through Babylonian sources to 562-561 BCE.

The division of Kings into two books is first attested in the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Bible, where it is combined with Samuel into a single four-part composition. The division of Kings into two books was later followed in the Latin Vulgate version, and was adopted from there to vernacular Bible translations.

Clas­sical Jewish sources through the end of the Middle Ages do not make such a division, and when it first appears in those sources, it is noted as a division used by foreign translators. In the course of time, however, the division has been universally adopted by Jews as a matter of convention and convenience. This division splits the book into two more or less equal parts.

Kings is not a history in the contemporary sense, that is, a factual description of past events and an explanation for their occurrence. It is, in the main, an extended theological essay writ­ten by a person or persons with passionately held beliefs, convinced that the destruction of the Northern Kingdom and the fall of the southern one were due to the misguided policies of their kings. The author described past events selectively, telescoping some and commenting extensively on others, using them as illustrations of the lessons that he believed they taught.

The author maintained that the Lord, the God of history, made His will known to Israel with regard to specific key issues, that punishments are preceded by warnings through prophets, and that people are responsible for the consequences of their choices. He further maintained that kings were responsible for the fate of their people.

It was axiomatic for him that those rul­ing over the tribes of Israel were obligated to maintain the centrality of the Jerusalem Temple as the unique place where offerings acceptable to God might be made and to eliminate the illegitimate worship of any deity other than the Lord. The author's composition demonstrated how all northern and most southern kings failed to meet their obligations and how all adver­sity, from minor disasters to the final catastrophe, followed as a consequence of this failure. Somewhat contradictorily, he also took pains to note that despite this, the divine promise of an eternal dynasty to David was maintained out of God's love for David.

The author expressed his axiomatic notions, described Josiah (2 Kings chapters 22-23)—whom he regarded as best exemplifying what a king should be—and expressed his theme of the unique­ness of the Jerusalem Temple, in language closely tied to that of Deuteronomy chapter 12. Deuteronomy is the only book in the Torah to project an image of the ideal king (Deuteronomy 17.14-20), who bears a striking resemblance to Josiah as depicted in Kings.

The author cites by name three documents to which the original readers might refer for additional information about the kings discussed: Annals of Solomon; Annals of the Kings of Israel; Annals of the Kings of Judah. Although no scholarly consensus exists concerning the nature of these documents, the author, by mentioning them, challenged readers to deny the veracity of the facts he was evaluating and interpreting.

In addition to these, he had access to documents bearing on the Davidic court and the history of the Temple, as well as to some form of edited materials by and about the prophet Isaiah, and to collections of prophetic stories that he interspersed in his narratives about the North­ern Kingdom.

Although no copies of these specific sources survive, and we therefore cannot prove they existed, documents that match each type or genre of document are known from other literate, ancient Near Eastern cultures.

The author's sustained lesson about God's justice in history continues through the untimely death of Josiah in 2 Kings 23.25. This death stilled his voice. According to the author's philoso­phy, Josiah should not have died as he did. The deeds of that good king should have set things right, but did not. Scholars refer to this first author as the first Deuteronomistic writer.

A second person, writing during the Babylonian exile, completed the book, appending terse notices about the last kings but describing only political events, not religious ones. The Annals of Judah are not cited after 2 Kings 24.5 and were most likely not needed because he was noting current events. This writer made no comments and found no lesson to teach in the destruction of Jerusalem.

The combined efforts of the original author and the second writer produced a document relevant to the post-destruction communities in both Judah and Babylonia. Their situation was explained as the outcome not only of the religious policies of their kings, who had violated ancient revealed teachings, but also of the behavior of their own ancestors. The implication of this didactic text was that the very facts of destruction and exile demonstrated the power of God, the validity of His covenant with Israel, and His meticulousness in maintaining it. Therefore, when the punishment of ruin and exile had run its course, His promises of restora­tion made in Deuteronomy 30.1-5 and by different prophets could reasonably be expected to come to fruition. This message was especially important because of the viability of an alternate expla­nation, that Judah was exiled by the Babylonians because the Babylonian gods, headed by Marduk, were stronger than the Israelite God.

At least 25 years after the destruction of Jerusalem, a third writer appended a few sentences to the composition, now the last three verses of the book. This person may have hoped that the event recorded, King Jehoiachin's release from prison, was the harbinger of coming changes in the fortunes of his people.

Jewish tradition has maintained, on the basis of statements in the Babylonian Talmud (Bava Batra 14b-15a), that the prophet Jeremiah, who prophesied from the time of Josiah until the ex­ile, but lived beyond that, wrote Kings. This tradition may be based on the similarities between the final chapter of Kings and parts of Jeremiah. As noted, however, Kings has a much more complex history, and may not be attributed to a single individual; like most ancient Near Eastern compositions, its author is anonymous.

Kings was copied many times in the course of its transmission, and as the many differences between the Hebrew text and the Septuagint concerning number of years that kings reigned indicates, changes were made during this process. Sometimes these were introduced into the text inten­tionally and sometimes accidentally. This is not surprising, since mistakes inevitably occur in the process of transmission. As a result, the raw historical skeleton that the book provides may be considered dependable, even though it is not perfect.

*— Ziony Zevit, The Jewish Study Bible, 2nd edition*

Chapter 1

1 King David was now old, advanced in years; though they covered him with bedclothes, he never felt warm. 2 His courtiers said to him, “Let a young virgin be sought for my lord the king, to wait upon Your Majesty and be his attendant [meaning of Hebrew uncertain];and let her lie in your bosom, and my lord the king will be warm.” 3 So they looked for a beautiful girl throughout the territory of Israel. They found Avishag the Shunammite and brought her to the king. 4 The girl was exceedingly beautiful. She became the king’s attendant [meaning of Hebrew uncertain]and waited upon him; but the king was not intimate with her.

5 Now Adoniyahu ben Chaggit went about boasting [Or “presumed to think.”],“I will be king!” He provided himself with chariots and horses [others“horsemen”;meaningofHebrewparash(im) notalways certain],and an escort of 50 outrunners. 6 His father had never scolded him: “Why did you do that?” He was the one born after Avshalom [Avshalom having died, Adoniyahu was David’s oldest living son] and, like him, was very handsome.

7 He conferred with Yoav ben Tz’ruyah and with the priest Avyatar, and they supported Adoniyahu; 8 but the priest Tzadok, B’nayahu ben Y’hoyada, the prophet Natan, Shimei and Rei, and David’s own ﬁghting men did not side with Adoniyahu. 9 Adoniyahu made a sacriﬁcial feast of sheep, oxen, and fatlings at the Zochelet stone which is near En-rogel; he invited all his brother princes [literally “all his brothers sons of theking”]and all the king’s courtiers of the tribe of Judah; 10 but he did not invite the prophet Natan, or B’nayahu, or the ﬁghting men, or his brother Sh’lomo.

11 Then Natan said to Bat-sheva, Sh’lomo’s mother, “You must have heard that Adoniyahu ben Chaggit has assumed the kingship without the knowledge of our lord David. 12 Now take my advice, so that you may save your life and the life of your son Sh’lomo. 13 Go immediately to King David and say to him, ‘Did not you, O lord king, swear to your maidservant: “Your son Sh’lomo shall succeed me as king, and he shall sit upon my throne”? Then why has Adoniyahu become king?’ 14 While you are still there talking with the king, I will come in after you and conﬁrm your words.”

15 So Bat-sheva went to the king in his chamber—the king was very old, and Avishag the Shunammite was waiting on the king—16 Bat-sheva bowed low in homage to the king; and the king asked, “What troubles you?” 17 She answered him, “My lord, you yourself swore to your maidservant by the Lord your God: ‘Your son Sh’lomo shall succeed me as king, and he shall sit upon my throne.’ 18 Yet now Adoniyahu has become king, and you [so many manuscripts and ancient versions; usual editions “now.”],my lord the king, know nothing about it. 19 He has prepared a sacriﬁcial feast of a great many oxen, fatlings, and sheep, and he has invited all the king’s sons and Avyatar the priest and Yoav commander of the army; but he has not invited your servant Sh’lomo. 20 And so the eyes of all Israel are upon you, O lord king, to tell them who shall succeed my lord the king on the throne. 21 Otherwise, when my lord the king lies down with his fathers, my son Sh’lomo and I will be regarded as traitors.”

22 She was still talking to the king when the prophet Natan arrived. 23 They announced to the king, “The prophet Natan is here,” and he entered the king’s presence [and, it seems, Bat-sheva left the room—Shammai]. Bowing low to the king with his face to the ground, 24 Natan said, “O lord king, you must have said [or “have you said…?”], ‘Adoniyahu shall succeed me as king and he shall sit upon my throne.’ 25 For he has gone down today and prepared a sacrificial feast of a great many oxen, fatlings, and sheep. He invited all the king’s sons and the army officers and Avyatar the priest. At this very moment they are eating and drinking with him, and they are shouting, ‘Long live King Adoniyahu!’ 26 But he did not invite me, your servant, or the priest Tzadok, or B’nayahu ben Y’hoyada, or your servant Sh’lomo. 27 Can this decision have come from my lord the king, without your telling your servant who is to succeed to the throne of my lord the king?”

28 King David’s response was: “Summon Bat-sheva!” She entered the king’s presence and stood before the king. 29 And the king took an oath, saying, “As the Lord lives, who has rescued me from every trouble: 30 The oath I swore to you by the Lord, the God of Israel, that your son Sh’lomo should succeed me as king and that he should sit upon my throne in my stead, I will fulfill this very day!” 31 Bat-sheva bowed low in homage to the king with her face to the ground, and she said, “May my lord King David live forever!”

32 Then King David said, “Summon to me the priest Tzadok, the prophet Natan, and B’nayahu ben Y’hoyada.” When they came before the king, 33the king said to them, “Take my loyal soldiers [literally “your lord’s men.”], and have my son Sh’lomo ride on my mule and bring him down to Gichon. 34 Let the priest Tzadok and the prophet Natan anoint him there king over Israel, whereupon you shall sound the horn and shout, ‘Long live Sh’lomo Hamelech!’ 35 Then march up after him, and let him come in and sit on my throne. For he shall succeed me as king; him I designate to be ruler of Israel and Judah.” 36 B’nayahu ben Y’hoyada spoke up and said to the king, “Amen! And may the Lord, the God of my lord the king, so ordain. 37 As the Lord was with my lord the king, so may He be with Sh’lomo; and may He exalt his throne even higher than the throne of my lord King David.”

38 Then the priest Tzadok, and the prophet Natan, and B’nayahu ben Y’hoyada went down with the K’reiti [Cherethites] and the P’leiti [Pelethites]. They had Sh’lomo ride on King David’s mule and they led him to Gichon. 39 The priest Tzadok took the horn of oil from the Tent and anointed Sh’lomo. They sounded the horn and all the people shouted, “Long live Sh’lomo Hamelech!” 40 All the people then marched up behind him, playing on flutes and making merry till the earth was split open by the uproar.

41 Adoniyahu and all the guests who were with him, who had just finished eating, heard it. When Yoav heard the sound of the horn, he said, “Why is the city in such an uproar?” 42 He was still speaking when the priest Yonatan ben Avyatar arrived. “Come in,” said Adoniyahu. “You are a worthy man, and you surely bring good news.”

43 But Yonatan replied to Adoniyahu, “Alas, our lord King David has made Sh’lomo king! 44 The king sent with him the priest Tzadok and the prophet Natan and B’nayahu ben Y’hoyada, and the K’reiti and P’leiti. They had him ride on the king’s mule, 45 and the priest Tzadok and the prophet Natan anointed him king at Gichon. Then they came up from there making merry, and the city went into an uproar. That’s the noise you heard. 46 Further, Sh’lomo seated himself on the royal throne; 47 further, the king’s courtiers came to congratulate our lord King David, saying, ‘May God make the renown of Sh’lomo even greater than yours, and may He exalt his throne even higher than yours!’ And the king bowed low on his couch. 48 And further, this is what the king said, ‘Praised be the Lord, the God of Israel who has this day provided a successor to my throne, while my own eyes can see it.’” 49 Thereupon, all of Adoniyahu’s guests rose in alarm and each went his own way.

50 Adoniyahu, in fear of Sh’lomo, went at once [to the Tent] and grasped the horns of the altar. 51 It was reported to Sh’lomo: “Adoniyahu is in fear of Sh’lomo Hamelech and has grasped the horns of the altar, saying, ‘Let Sh’lomo Hamelech first swear to me that he will not put his servant to the sword.’” 52 Sh’lomo said, “If he behaves worthily, not a hair of his head shall fall to the ground; but if he is caught in any offense, he shall die.” 53 So Sh’lomo Hamelech sent and had him taken down from the altar. He came and bowed before Sh’lomo Hamelech, and Sh’lomo said to him, “Go home.”

Chapter 2

1 When David’s life was drawing to a close, he instructed his son Sh’lomo as follows: 2 “I am going the way of all the earth; be strong and show yourself a man. 3 Keep the charge of the Lord your God, walking in His ways and following His laws, His commandments, His rules, and His admonitions as recorded in Torat Moshe, in order that you may succeed in whatever you undertake and wherever you turn. 4 Then the Lord will fulfill the promise that He made concerning me: ‘If your descendants are scrupulous in their conduct, and walk before Me faithfully, with all their heart and soul, your line on the throne of Israel shall never end [literally “there shall never cease to be a man of yours on the throne of Israel.”]!

5 “Further, you know what Yoav ben Tz’ruyah did to me, what he did to the two commanders of Israel’s forces, Avner ben Ner and Amasa ben Yeter: he killed them, shedding [meaning of Hebrew uncertain] blood of war in peacetime, staining the girdle of his loins and the sandals on his feet with blood of war [Yoav had thus brought bloodguilt on David’s house]. 6 So act in accordance with your wisdom, and see that his white hair does not go down to Sheol in peace.

7 “But deal graciously with the sons of Barzillai the Gil’adi, for they befriended me when I fled from your brother Avshalom; let them be among those that eat at your table [for whose maintenance you provide]. 8 “You must also deal with Shimei ben Gera, the Binyamini from Bachurim. He insulted me outrageously when I was on my way to Machanaim; but he came down to meet me at the Yarden, and I swore to him by the Lord: ‘I will not put you to the sword.’ 9 So do not let him go unpunished; for you are a wise man and you will know how to deal with him and send his gray hair down to Sheol in blood.”

10 So David slept with his fathers, and he was buried in the City of David. 11 The length of David’s reign over Israel was 40 years: he reigned seven years in Khevron, and he reigned 33 years in Y’rushalayim. 12 And Sh’lomo sat upon the throne of his father David, and his rule was firmly established.

13 Adoniyahu ben Chaggit came to see Bat-sheva, Sh’lomo’s mother. She said, “Do you come with friendly intent?” “Yes,” he replied; 14 and he continued, “I would like to have a word with you.” “Speak up,” she said. 15 Then he said, “You know that the kingship was rightly mine and that all Israel wanted me to reign. But the kingship passed on to my brother; it came to him by the will of the Lord. 16 And now I have one request to make of you; do not refuse me.” She said, “Speak up.” 17 He replied, “Please ask Sh’lomo Hamelech—for he won’t refuse you—to give me Avishag the Shunamit as wife.” 18 “Very well,” said Bat-sheva, “I will speak to the king in your behalf.”

19 So Bat-sheva went to Sh’lomo Hamelech to speak to him about Adoniyahu. The king rose to greet her and bowed down to her. He sat on his throne; and he had a throne placed for the queen mother, and she sat on his right. 20 She said, “I have one small request to make of you, do not refuse me.” He responded, “Ask, Mother; I shall not refuse you.” 21 Then she said, “Let Avishag the Shunamit be given to your brother Adoniyahu as wife.” 22 The king replied to his mother, “Why request Avishag the Shunamit for Adoniyahu? Request the kingship for him! For he is my older brother, and the priest Avyatar and Yoav ben Tz’ruyah are on his side [literally “And for him and for Avyatar and for Yoav ben Tz’ruyah”; meaning of Hebrew uncertain].”

23 Thereupon, Sh’lomo Hamelech swore by the Lord, saying, “So may God do to me and even more, if broaching this matter does not cost Adoniyahu his life! 24 Now, as the Lord lives, who has established me and set me on the throne of my father David and who has provided him [Hebrew “me”] with a house, as He promised, Adoniyahu shall be put to death this very day!” 25 And Sh’lomo instructed B’nayahu ben Y’hoyada, who struck Adoniyahu down; and so he died.

26 To the priest Avyatar, the king said, “Go to your estate at Anatot! You deserve to die, but I shall not put you to death at this time, because you carried the Ark of my Lord God before my father David and because you shared all the hardships that my father endured.” 27 So Sh’lomo dismissed Avyatar from his office of priest of the Lord—thus fulfilling what the Lord had spoken at Shiloh regarding the house of Eli.

28 When the news reached Yoav, he fled to the Tent of the Lord and grasped the horns of the altar—for Yoav had sided with Adoniyahu, though he had not sided with Avshalom. 29 Sh’lomo Hamelech was told that Yoav had fled to the Tent of the Lord and that he was there by the altar; so Sh’lomo sent B’nayahu ben Y’hoyada, saying, “Go and strike him down.” 30 B’nayahu went to the Tent of the Lord and said to him, “Thus said the king: Come out!” “No!” he replied; “I will die here.” B’nayahu reported back to the king that Yoav had answered thus and thus, 31 and the king said, “Do just as he said; strike him down and bury him, and remove guilt from me and my father’s house for the blood of the innocent that Yoav has shed. 32 Thus the Lord will bring his blood guilt down upon his own head, because, unbeknown to my father, he struck down with the sword two men more righteous and honorable than he—Avner ben Ner, the army commander of Israel, and Amasa ben Yeter, the army commander of Judah. 33 May the guilt for their blood come down upon the head of Yoav and his descendants forever, and may good fortune from the Lord be granted forever to David and his descendants, his house and his throne.” 34 So B’nayahu ben Y’hoyada went up and struck him down. And he was buried at his home in the wilderness. 35 In his place, the king appointed B’nayahu ben Y’hoyada over the army, and in place of Avyatar, the king appointed the priest Tzadok.

36 Then the king summoned Shimei and said to him, “Build yourself a house in Y’rushalayim and stay there—do not ever go out from there anywhere else. 37 On the very day that you go out and cross the Wadi Kidron, you can be sure that you will die; your blood shall be on your own head.” 38 “That is fair,” said Shimei to the king, “your servant will do just as my lord the king has spoken.” And for a long time, Shimei remained in Y’rushalayim. 39 Three years later, two slaves of Shimei ran away to King Achish ben Ma-achah of [the Philistine city of] Gat. Shimei was told, “Your slaves are in Gat.” 40 Shimei thereupon saddled his ass and went to Achish in Gat to claim his slaves; and Shimei returned from Gat with his slaves.

41 Sh’lomo was told that Shimei had gone from Y’rushalayim to Gat and back, 42 and the king summoned Shimei and said to him, “Did I not adjure you by the Lord and warn you, ‘On the very day that you leave and go anywhere else, you can be sure that you will die,’ and did you not say to me, ‘It is fair; I accept’? 43 Why did you not abide by the oath before the Lord and by the orders which I gave you?” 44 The king said further to Shimei, “You know all the wrong, which you remember very well, that you did to my father David. Now the Lord brings down your wrongdoing upon your own head. 45 But Sh’lomo Hamelech shall be blessed, and the throne of David shall be established before the Lord forever.”

46 The king gave orders to B’nayahu ben Y’hoyada and he went out and struck Shimei down; and so he died. Thus the kingdom was secured in Sh’lomo’s hands.

Chapter 3

1 Sh’lomo allied himself by marriage with Pharaoh king of Egypt. He married Pharaoh’s daughter and brought her to the City of David [to live there] until he had finished building his palace, and the House of the Lord, and the walls around Y’rushalayim.

2 The people, however, continued to offer sacrifices at the open shrines, because up to that time no house had been built for the name of the Lord. 3 And Sh’lomo, though he loved the Lord and followed the practices of his father David, also sacrificed and offered at the shrines. 4 The king went to Giv’on to sacrifice there, for that was the largest shrine; on that altar Sh’lomo presented a thousand burnt offerings.

5 At Giv’on the Lord appeared to Sh’lomo in a dream by night; and God said, “Ask, what shall I grant you?” 6 Sh’lomo said, “You dealt most graciously with Your servant my father David, because he walked before You in faithfulness and righteousness and in integrity of heart. You have continued this great kindness to him by giving him a son to occupy his throne, as is now the case. 7 And now, O Lord my God, You have made Your servant king in place of my father David; but I am a young lad, with no experience in leadership [literally “do not know to go out and come in”]. 8 Your servant finds himself in the midst of the people You have chosen, a people too numerous to be numbered or counted. 9 Grant, then, Your servant an understanding mind to judge Your people, to distinguish between good and bad; for who can judge this vast people of Yours?”

10 The Lord was pleased that Sh’lomo had asked for this. 11 And God said to him, “Because you asked for this—you did not ask for long life, you did not ask for riches, you did not ask for the life of your enemies, but you asked for discernment in dispensing justice—12 I now do as you have spoken. I grant you a wise and discerning mind; there has never been anyone like you before, nor will anyone like you arise again. 13 And I also grant you what you did not ask for—both riches and glory all your life—the like of which no king has ever had. 14 And I will further grant you long life, *if you will walk in My ways and observe My laws and commandments*, as did your father David.” [Emphasis Shammai] 15 Then Sh’lomo awoke: it was a dream! He went to Y’rushalayim, stood before the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, and sacrificed burnt offerings and presented offerings of well-being; and he made a banquet for all his courtiers.

16 Later two prostitutes came to the king and stood before him. 17 The first woman said, “Please, my lord! This woman and I live in the same house; and I gave birth to a child while she was in the house. 18 On the third day after I was delivered, this woman also gave birth to a child. We were alone; there was no one else with us in the house, just the two of us in the house. 19 During the night this woman’s child died, because she lay on it. 20 She arose in the night and took my son from my side while your maidservant was asleep, and laid him in her bosom; and she laid her dead son in my bosom. 21 When I arose in the morning to nurse my son, there he was, dead; but when I looked at him closely in the morning, it was not the son I had borne.”

22 The other woman spoke up, “No, the live one is my son, and the dead one is yours!” But the first insisted, “No, the dead boy is yours; mine is the live one!” And they went on arguing before the king.

23 The king said, “One says, ‘This is my son, the live one, and the dead one is yours’; and the other says, ‘No, the dead boy is yours, mine is the live one.’ 24 So the king gave the order, “Fetch me a sword.” A sword was brought before the king, 25 and the king said, “Cut the live child in two, and give half to one and half to the other.” 26 But the woman whose son was the live one pleaded with the king, for she was overcome with compassion for her son. “Please, my lord,” she cried, “give her the live child; only don’t kill it!” The other insisted, “It shall be neither yours nor mine; cut it in two!” 27 Then the king spoke up. “Give the live child to her,” he said, “and do not put it to death; she is its mother.”

28 When all Israel heard the decision that the king had rendered, they stood in awe of the king; for they saw that he possessed divine wisdom to execute justice.

Chapter 4

1 Sh’lomo Hamelech was now king over all Israel. 2 These were his officials: Azaryahu ben Tzadok—the priest; 3 Elichoref and Achiyah b’nei Shisha— scribes; Y’hoshafat ben Achilud—recorder; 4 B’nayahu ben Y’hoyada—over the army; Tzadok and Avyatar—priests; 5 Azaryahu ben Natan—in charge of the prefects; Zavud ben Natan the priest—companion of the king; 6 Achishar—in charge of the palace; and Adoniram ben Avda—in charge of the forced labor.

7 Sh’lomo had 12 prefects governing all Israel, who provided food for the king and his household; each had to provide food for one month in the year. 8 And these were their names: Ben-chur, in the hill country of Efrayim; 9 Bendeker, in Makatz, Sha-alvim, Bet-shemesh, and Elon-bet-chanan; 10 Ben-chesed in Arubot— he governed Socho and all the Chefer area; 11 Ben-avinadav, [in] all of Nafat-dor (Sh’lomo’s daughter Tafat was his wife); 12 Ba-ana ben Achilud [in] Ta-anach and Megiddo and all Bet-sh’an, which is beside Tzartana, below Yizrael—from Bet-sh’an to Avel-m’cholah as far as the other side of Yokm’am; 13 Ben-gever, in Ramot-gil’ad—he governed the villages of Yair ben Menasheh which are in Gil’ad, and he also governed the district of Argov which is in Bashan, 60 large towns with walls and bronze bars; 14 Achinadav ben Iddo, in Machanaim; 15 Achima-atz, in Naftali (he too took a daughter of Sh’lomo— Bas’mat—to wife); 16 Ba-anah ben Chushi, in Asher and B’alot [or “in Alot]; 17 Y’hoshafat ben Paruach, in Yisachar; 18 Shimei ben Ela, in Binyamin; 19 Gever ben Uri, in the region of Gil’ad, the country of Sichon, king of the Amori, and Og, king of Bashan; and one prefect who was in the land [meaning of Hebrew uncertain]. 20 Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sands of the sea; they ate and drank and were content.

Chapter 5

1 Sh’lomo’s rule extended over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates to the land of the Philistines and the boundary of Egypt. They brought Sh’lomo tribute and were subject to him all his life. 2 Sh’lomo’s daily provisions consisted of 30 kors of semolina, and 60 kors of [ordinary] flour, 3 10 fattened oxen, 20 pasture-fed oxen, and 100 sheep and goats, besides deer and gazelles, roebucks and fatted geese [meaning of Hebrew uncertain]. 4 For he controlled the whole region west of the Euphrates—all the kings west of the Euphrates, from Tifsah to Gaza—and he had peace on all his borders roundabout. 5 All the days of Sh’lomo, Judah and Israel from Dan to B’ er-sheva dwelt in safety, everyone under his own vine and under his own fig tree. 6 Sh’lomo had 40,000 stalls of horses for his chariotry and 12,000 horsemen. 7 [Resuming the account begun in 4.2] All those prefects, each during his month, would furnish provisions for Sh’lomo Hamelech and for all who were admitted to Sh’lomo Hamelech’s table; they did not fall short in anything. 8 They would also, each in his turn, deliver barley and straw for the horses and the swift steeds to the places where they were stationed.

9 God endowed Sh’lomo with wisdom and discernment in great measure, with understanding as vast as the sands on the seashore. 10 Sh’lomo’s wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the Kedemites and than all the wisdom of the Egyptians. 11 He was the wisest of all men: [wiser] than Ethan the Ezrachi, and Heman, Chalkol, and Darda b’nei Machol. His fame spread among all the surrounding nations. 12 He composed 3,000 proverbs, and his songs numbered 1,005. 13 He discoursed about trees, from the cedar in Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of the wall; and he discoursed about beasts, birds, creeping things, and fishes. 14 Men of all peoples came to hear Sh’lomo’s wisdom, [sent] by all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom.

15 King Khiram of Tzur [Hiram of Tyre] sent his officials to Sh’lomo when he heard that he had been anointed king in place of his father; for Khiram had always been a friend of David. 16 Sh’lomo sent this message to Khiram: 17 “You know that my father David could not build a house for the name of the Lord his God because of the enemies [Hebrew “war”] that encompassed him, until the Lord had placed them under the soles of his feet. 18 But now the Lord my God has given me respite all around; there is no adversary and no mischance. 19 And so I propose to build a house for the name of the Lord my God, as the Lord promised my father David, saying, ‘Your son, whom I will set on your throne in your place, shall build the house for My name.’ 20 Please, then, give orders for cedars to be cut for me in the Lebanon. My servants will work with yours, and I will pay you any wages you may ask for your servants; for as you know, there is none among us who knows how to cut timber like the Tzidonim [Sidonians].”

21 When Khiram heard Sh’lomo’s message, he was overjoyed. “Praised be the Lord this day,” he said, “for granting David a wise son to govern this great people.” 22 So Khiram sent word to Sh’lomo: “I have your message; I will supply all the cedar and cypress logs you require. 23 My servants will bring them down to the sea from the Lebanon; and at the sea I will make them into floats and [deliver them] to any place that you designate to me. There I shall break them up for you to carry away. You, in turn, will supply the food I require for my household.” 24 So Khiram kept Sh’lomo provided with all the cedar and cypress wood he required, 25 and Sh’lomo delivered to Khiram 20,000 kors of wheat as provisions for his household and 20 kors of beaten oil [Septuagint reads, “20,000 baths”]. Such was Sh’lomo’s annual payment to Khiram. 26 The Lord had given Sh’lomo wisdom, as He had promised him. There was friendship between Khiram and Sh’lomo, and the two of them made a treaty. 27 Sh’lomo Hamelech imposed forced labor on all Israel; the levy came to 30,000 men. 28 He sent them to the Lebanon in shifts of 10,000 a month: they would spend one month in the Lebanon and two months at home. Adoniram was in charge of the forced labor. 29 Sh’lomo also had 70,000 porters and 80,000 quarriers in the hills, 30 apart from Sh’lomo’s 3,300 officials who were in charge of the work and supervised the gangs doing the work. 31 The king ordered huge blocks of choice stone to be quarried, so that the foundations of the house might be laid with hewn stones. 32 Sh’lomo’s masons, Khiram’s masons, and the men of G’val shaped them. Thus the timber and the stones for building the house were made ready.1

Chapter 6

1 In the 480th year after the Israelites left the land of Egypt, in the month of Ziv—that is, the second month—in the fourth year of his reign over Israel, Sh’lomo began to build the House of the Lord. 2 The House which Sh’lomo Hamelech built for the Lord was 60 cubits long, 20 cubits wide, and 30 cubits high. 3 The portico in front of the Great Hall of the House was 20 cubits long—along the width of the House—and 10 cubits deep to the front of the House. 4 [The meaning of parts of verses 4–6 are uncertain] He made windows for the House, recessed and latticed. 5 Against the outside wall of the House—the outside walls of the House enclosing the Great Hall and the Shrine [the “Holy of Holies”]—he built a storied structure; and he made side chambers all around. 6 The lowest story was 5 cubits wide, the middle one 6 cubits wide, and the third 7 cubits wide; for he had provided recesses around the outside of the House so as not to penetrate the walls of the House. 7 When the House was built, only finished stones cut at the quarry were used, so that no hammer or ax or any iron tool was heard in the House while it was being built. 8 The entrance to the middle [Septuagint and Targum read “lowest”] [story of] the side chambers was on the right side of the House; and winding stairs led up to the middle chambers, and from the middle chambers to the third story. 9 When he finished building the House, he paneled the House with beams and planks of cedar [meaning of Hebrew uncertain]. 10 He built the storied structure against the entire House—each story 5 cubits high, so that it encased the House with timbers of cedar. 11 Then the word of the Lord came to Sh’lomo, 12 “With regard to this House you are building—if you follow My laws and observe My rules and faithfully keep My commandments, I will fulfill for you the promise that I gave to your father David: 13 I will abide among the children of Israel, and I will never forsake My people Israel.” 14 When Sh’lomo had completed the construction of the House, 15 he paneled the walls of the House on the inside with planks of cedar. He also overlaid the walls on the inside with wood, from the floor of the House to the ceiling. And he overlaid the floor of the House with planks of cypress. 16 Twenty cubits from the rear of the House, he built [a partition] of cedar planks from the floor to the walls [Septuagint reads “rafters”]; he furnished its interior to serve as a shrine, as the Holy of Holies. 17 [The meaning of verses 17–22 is unclear in part] The front part of the House, that is, the Great Hall, measured 40 cubits. 18 The cedar of the interior of the House had carvings of gourds and calyxes; it was all cedar, no stone was exposed. 19 In the innermost part of the House, he fixed a Shrine in which to place the Ark of the Lord’s Covenant. 20 The interior of the Shrine was 20 cubits long, 20 cubits wide, and 20 cubits high. He overlaid it with solid gold; he similarly overlaid [its] cedar altar. 21 Sh’lomo overlaid the interior of the House with solid gold; and he inserted golden chains into the door of [Hebrew “in front of] the Shrine. He overlaid [the Shrine] with gold, 22 so that the entire House was overlaid with gold; he even overlaid with gold the entire altar of the Shrine. And so the entire House was completed. 23 In the Shrine he made two cherubim of olive wood, each 10 cubits high. 24 [One] had a wing measuring 5 cubits and another wing measuring 5 cubits, so that the spread from wingtip to wingtip was 10 cubits; 25 and the wingspread of the other cherub was also 10 cubits. The two cherubim had the same measurements and proportions: 26 the height of the one cherub was 10 cubits, and so was that of the other cherub. 27 He placed the cherubim inside the inner chamber [the Holy of Holies]. Since the wings of the cherubim were extended, a wing of the one touched one wall and a wing of the other touched the other wall, while their wings in the center of the chamber touched each other. 28 He overlaid the cherubim with gold. 29 All over the walls of the House, of both the inner area and the outer area, he carved reliefs of cherubim, palms, and calyxes, 30 and he overlaid the floor of the House with gold, both the inner and the outer areas. 31 For the entrance of the Shrine he made doors of olive wood, the pilasters and the doorposts having five sides. 32 The double doors were of olive wood, and on them he carved reliefs of cherubim, palms, and calyxes. He overlaid them with gold, hammering the gold onto the cherubim and the palms. 33 For the entrance of the Great Hall, too, he made doorposts of oleaster wood, having four sides [meaning of Hebrew uncertain], 34 and the double doors of cypress wood, each door consisting of two rounded planks. 35 On them he carved cherubim, palms, and calyxes, overlaying them with gold applied evenly over the carvings. 36 He built the inner enclosure of three courses of hewn stones and one course of cedar beams. 37 In the fourth year, in the month of Ziv, the foundations of the House were laid; 38and in the 11th year, in the month of Bul—that is, the eighth month—the House was completed according to all its details and all its specifications. It took him seven years to build it.

Chapter 7

1 And it took Sh’lomo 13 years to build his palace, until his whole palace was completed. 2 He built the Lebanon Forest House with four rows of cedar columns [Septuagint reads “three rows” instead of “four rows”], and with hewn cedar beams above the columns. Its length was 100 cubits, its breadth 50 cubits, and its height 30 cubits. 3 It was paneled above with cedar, with the planks [apparently the “planks” connected the columns longitudinally, and the “beams” (verse 2) connected the planks transversely] that were above on the 45 columns— 15 in each row. 4 And there were three rows of window frames, with three tiers of windows facing each other. 5 All the doorways and doorposts [Septuagint reads “windows”] had square frames—with three tiers of windows facing each other. 6 He made the portico of columns 50 cubits long and 30 cubits wide; the portico was in front of [the columns], and there were columns with a canopy in front of them [meaning of Hebrew uncertain]. 7 He made the throne portico, where he was to pronounce judgment—the Hall of Judgment. It was paneled with cedar from floor to floor [Syriac reads “rafters”]. 8 The house that he used as a residence, in the rear courtyard, back of the portico, was of the same construction. Sh’lomo also constructed a palace like that portico for the daughter of Pharaoh, whom he had married. 9 All these buildings, from foundation to coping and all the way out to the great courtyard, were of choice stones, hewn according to measure, smooth on all sides [literally “sawed with a saw in the inside and outside]. 10 The foundations were huge blocks of choice stone, stones of 10 cubits and stones of 8 cubits; 11 and above were choice stones, hewn according to measure, and cedar wood. 12 The large surrounding courtyard had three tiers of hewn stone and a row of cedar beams, the same as for the inner court of the House of the Lord, and for the portico of the House. 13 Sh’lomo Hamelech sent for Khiram and brought him down from Tzur. 14 He was the son of a widow of the tribe of Naftali, and his father had been a Tyrian, a coppersmith. He was endowed with skill, ability, and talent for executing all work in bronze [Hebrew n’choshet means both copper and bronze. In the translation “copper” is ordinarily used to denote the natural product and “bronze” for the artifacts]. He came to Sh’lomo Hamelech and executed all his work. 15 He cast two columns of bronze; one column was 18 cubits high and measured 12 cubits in circumference, [and similarly] the other column. 16 He made two capitals, cast in bronze, to be set upon the two columns, the height of each of the two capitals being 5 cubits; 17 also nets of meshwork with festoons of chain-work for the capitals that were on the top of the columns, seven for each of the two capitals. 18 He made the columns [two Hebrew manuscripts read “pomegranates”] so that there were two rows [of pomegranates] encircling the top of the one network, to cover the capitals that were on the top of the pomegranates [about fifty Hebrew manuscripts read “columns”]; and he did the same for [the network on] the second capital. 19 The capitals upon the columns of the portico were of lily design, 4 cubits high; 20 so also the capitals upon the two columns extended above and next to the bulge [literally “belly”; exact force of Hebrew uncertain] that was beside the network. There were 200 pomegranates in rows around the top of the second capital [each of the two capitals]. 21 He set up the columns at the portico of the Great Hall; he set up one column on the right and named it Yachin, and he set up the other column on the left and named it Boaz. 22 Upon the top of the columns there was a lily design. Thus the work of the columns was completed. 23 Then he made the tank [literally “sea”] of cast metal, 10 cubits across from brim to brim, completely round; it was 5 cubits high, and it measured 30 cubits in circumference. 24 There were gourds below the brim completely encircling it—10 to a cubit, encircling the tank; the gourds were in two rows, cast in one piece with it. 25 It stood upon 12 oxen: three facing north, three facing west, three facing south, and three facing east, with the tank resting upon them; their haunches were all turned inward. 26 It was a handbreadth thick, and its brim was made like that of a cup, like the petals of a lily. Its capacity was 2,000 baths. 27 He made the 10 laver stands of bronze. The length of each laver stand was 4 cubits and the width 4 cubits, and the height was 3 cubits. 28 The structure of the laver stands was as follows: They had insets [or frames], and there were insets within the frames; 29 and on the insets within the frames were lions, oxen, and cherubim. Above the frames was a stand; and both above and below the lions and the oxen were spirals of hammered metal. 30 Each laver stand had four bronze wheels and [two] bronze axletrees. Its four legs had brackets; the brackets were under the laver, cast with spirals beyond each [meaning of Hebrew uncertain]. 31 Its funnel, within the crown, rose a cubit above it; this funnel was round, in the fashion of a stand, a cubit and a half in diameter. On the funnel too there were carvings. But the insets were square, not round. 32 And below the insets were the four wheels. The axletrees of the wheels were [fixed] in the laver stand, and the height of each wheel was a cubit and a half. 33 The structure of the wheels was like the structure of chariot wheels; and their axletrees, their rims, their spokes, and their hubs were all of cast metal. 34 Four brackets ran to the four corners of each laver stand; the brackets were of a piece with the laver stand. 35 At the top of the laver stand was a round band half a cubit high, and together with the top of the laver stand; its sides and its insets were of one piece with it. 36 On its surface—on its sides—and on its insets [Khiram] engraved cherubim, lions, and palms, as the clear space on each allowed [meaning of Hebrew verse uncertain], with spirals roundabout. 37 It was after this manner that he made the 10 laver stands, all of them cast alike, of the same measure and the same form. 38 Then he made 10 bronze lavers, one laver on each of the 10 laver stands, each laver measuring 4 cubits and each laver containing 40 baths. 39 He disposed the laver stands, five at the right side of the House and five at its left side; and the tank he placed on the right side of the House, at the southeast [corner]. 40 Khiram also made the lavers, the scrapers, and the sprinkling bowls. So Khiram finished all the work that he had been doing for Sh’lomo Hamelech on the House of the Lord: 41 the two columns, the two globes of the capitals upon the columns; and the two pieces of network to cover the two globes of the capitals upon the columns; 42 the 400 pomegranates for the two pieces of network, two rows of pomegranates for each network, to cover the two globes of the capitals upon the columns; 43 the 10 stands and the 10 lavers upon the stands; 44 the one tank with the 12 oxen underneath the tank; 45 the pails, the scrapers, and the sprinkling bowls. All those vessels in the House of the Lord that Khiram made for Sh’lomo Hamelech were of burnished bronze. 46 The king had them cast in earthen molds [literally “in the thick of the earth”], in the plain of the Yarden between Sukkot and Tzar’tan. 47 Sh’lomo left all the vessels [unweighed] because of their very great quantity; the weight of the bronze was not reckoned. 48 And Sh’lomo made all the furnishings that were in the House of the Lord: the altar, of gold; the table for the bread of display, of gold; 49 the lampstands—five on the right side and five on the left—in front of the Shrine, of solid gold; and the petals, lamps, and tongs, of gold; 50 the basins, snuffers, sprinkling bowls, ladles, and fire pans, of solid gold; and the hinge sockets for the doors of the innermost part of the House, the Holy of Holies, and for the doors of the Great Hall of the House, of gold. 51 When all the work that Sh’lomo Hamelech had done in the House of the Lord was completed, Sh’lomo brought in the sacred donations of his father David—the silver, the gold, and the vessels— and deposited them in the treasury of the House of the Lord.

Chapter 8

1 Then Sh’lomo convoked the elders of Israel—all the heads of the tribes and the ancestral chieftains of the Israelites—before Sh’lomo Hamelech in Y’rushalayim, to bring up the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord from the City of David, that is, Tzion [Zion]. 2 All the men of Israel gathered before Sh’lomo Hamelech at the Feast [Sukkot], in the month of Eitanim—that is, the seventh month. 3 When all the elders of Israel had come, the priests lifted the Ark 4 and carried up the Ark of the Lord. Then the priests and the Levites brought the Tent of Meeting and all the holy vessels that were in the Tent.

5 Meanwhile, Sh’lomo Hamelech and the whole community of Israel, who were assembled with him before the Ark, were sacrificing sheep and oxen in such abundance that they could not be numbered or counted. 6 The priests brought the Ark of the Lord’s Covenant to its place underneath the wings of the cherubim, in the Shrine of the House, in the Holy of Holies; 7 for the cherubim had their wings spread out over the place of the Ark, so that the cherubim shielded the Ark and its poles from above. 8 The poles projected so that the ends of the poles were visible in the sanctuary in front of the Shrine, but they could not be seen outside; and there they remain to this day. 9 There was nothing inside the Ark but the two tablets of stone which Moshe placed there at Khorev, when the Lord made [a covenant] with the Israelites after their departure from the land of Egypt.

10 When the priests came out of the sanctuary—for the cloud had filled the House of the Lord 11 and the priests were not able to remain and perform the service because of the cloud, for the Presence of the Lord filled the House of the Lord—12 then Sh’lomo declared: “The Lord has chosen to abide in a thick cloud: 13 I have now built for You a stately House, a place where You may dwell forever.” 14 Then, with the whole congregation of Israel standing, the king faced about and blessed the whole congregation of Israel. 15 He said: “Praised be the Lord, the God of Israel, who has fulfilled with deeds the promise He made [literally “who spoke with His own mouth … and has fulfilled with His own hand”] to my father David. For He said, 16 ‘Ever since I brought My people Israel out of Egypt, I have not chosen a city among all the tribes of Israel for building a House where My name might abide; but I have chosen David to rule My people Israel.’

17 “Now my father David had intended to build a House for the name of the Lord, the God of Israel. 18 But the Lord said to my father David, ‘As regards your intention to build a House for My name, you did right to have that intention. 19 However, you shall not build the House yourself; instead, your son, the issue of your loins, shall build the House for My name.’

20 “And the Lord has fulfilled the promise that He made: I have succeeded [literally “risen in place of”] my father David and have ascended the throne of Israel, as the Lord promised. I have built the House for the name of the Lord, the God of Israel; 21and I have set a place there for the Ark, containing the covenant which the Lord made with our fathers when He brought them out from the land of Egypt.”

22 Then Sh’lomo stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of the whole community of Israel; he spread the palms of his hands toward heaven 23 and said, “O Lord God of Israel, in the heavens above and on the earth below there is no god like You, who keep Your gracious covenant with Your servants when they walk before You in wholehearted devotion; 24 You who have kept the promises You made to Your servant, my father David, fulfilling with deeds the promise You made—as is now the case. 25 And now, O Lord God of Israel, keep the further promise that You made to Your servant, my father David: ‘Your line on the throne of Israel shall never end, if only your descendants will look to their way and walk before Me as you have walked before Me.’ 26 Now, therefore, O God of Israel, let the promise that You made to Your servant my father David be fulfilled.

27 “But will God really dwell [2 Chronicles 6.18 adds “with man”] on earth? Even the heavens to their uttermost reaches cannot contain You, how much less this House that I have built! 28 Yet turn, O Lord my God, to the prayer and supplication of Your servant, and hear the cry and prayer which Your servant offers before You this day. 29 May Your eyes be open day and night toward this House, toward the place of which You have said, ‘My name shall abide there’; may You heed the prayers which Your servant will offer toward this place. 30 And when You hear the supplications which Your servant and Your people Israel offer toward this place, give heed in Your heavenly abode—give heed and pardon.

31 “Whenever one man commits an offense against another, and the latter utters an imprecation to bring a curse upon him, and comes with his imprecation before Your altar in this House, 32 oh, hear in heaven and take action to judge Your servants, condemning him who is in the wrong and bringing down the punishment of his conduct on his head, vindicating him who is in the right by rewarding him according to his righteousness.

33 “Should Your people Israel be routed by an enemy because they have sinned against You, and then turn back to You and acknowledge Your name, and they offer prayer and supplication to You in this House, 34 oh, hear in heaven and pardon the sin of Your people Israel, and restore them to the land that You gave to their fathers. 35 “Should the heavens be shut up and there be no rain, because they have sinned against You, and then they pray toward this place and acknowledge Your name and repent of their sins, when You answer [the Septuagint, with a different vocalization, reads “chastise”] them, 36 oh, hear in heaven and pardon the sin of Your servants, Your people Israel, after You have shown them the proper way in which they are to walk; and send down rain upon the land which You gave to Your people as their heritage. 37 So, too, if there is a famine in the land, if there is pestilence, blight, mildew, locusts or caterpillars, or if an enemy oppresses them in any of the settlements of the land.

“In any plague and in any disease, 38 in any prayer or supplication offered by any person among all Your people Israel—each of whom knows his own affliction—when he spreads his palms toward this House, 39 oh, hear in Your heavenly abode, and pardon and take action! Render to each man according to his ways as You know his heart to be—for You alone know the hearts of all men—40 so that they may revere You all the days that they live on the land that You gave to our fathers.

41 “Or if a foreigner who is not of Your people Israel comes from a distant land for the sake of Your name—42 for they shall hear about Your great name and Your mighty hand and Your outstretched arm—when he comes to pray toward this House, 43 oh, hear in Your heavenly abode and grant all that the foreigner asks You for. Thus all the peoples of the earth will know Your name and revere You, as does Your people Israel; and they will recognize that Your name is attached to this House that I have built.

44 “When Your people take the field against their enemy by whatever way You send them, and they pray to the Lord in the direction of the city which You have chosen, and of the House which I have built to Your name, 45oh, hear in heaven their prayer and supplication and uphold their cause.

46 “When they sin against You—for there is no man who does not sin—and You are angry with them and deliver them to the enemy, and their captors carry them off to an enemy land, near or far; 47 and then they take it to heart in the land to which they have been carried off, and they repent and make supplication to You in the land of their captors, saying: ‘We have sinned, we have acted perversely, we have acted wickedly,’ 48 and they turn back to You with all their heart and soul, in the land of the enemies who have carried them off, and they pray to You in the direction of their land which You gave to their fathers, of the city which You have chosen, and of the House which I have built to Your name—49 oh, give heed in Your heavenly abode to their prayer and supplication, uphold their cause, 50 and pardon Your people who have sinned against You for all the transgressions that they have committed against You. Grant them mercy in the sight of their captors that they may be merciful to them. 51 For they are Your very own people that You freed from Egypt, from the midst of the iron furnace. 52 May Your eyes be open to the supplication of Your servant and the supplication of Your people Israel, and may You heed them whenever they call upon You. 53 For You, O Lord God, have set them apart for Yourself from all the peoples of the earth as Your very own, as You promised through Moshe Your servant when You freed our fathers from Egypt.”

54 When Sh’lomo finished offering to the Lord all this prayer and supplication, he rose from where he had been kneeling, in front of the altar of the Lord, his hands spread out toward heaven. 55 He stood, and in a loud voice blessed the whole congregation of Israel: 56 “Praised be the Lord who has granted a haven to His people Israel, just as He promised; not a single word has failed of all the gracious promises that He made through His servant Moshe. 57 May the Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers. May He never abandon or forsake us. 58 May He incline our hearts to Him, that we may walk in all His ways and keep the commandments, the laws, and the rules, which He enjoined upon our fathers. 59 And may these words of mine, which I have offered in supplication before the Lord, be close to the Lord our God day and night, that He may provide for His servant and for His people Israel, according to each day’s needs—60 to the end that all the peoples of the earth may know that the Lord alone is God, there is no other. 61 And may you be wholehearted with the Lord our God, to walk in His ways and keep His commandments, even as now.”

62 The king and all Israel with him offered sacrifices before the Lord. 63 Sh’lomo offered 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep as sacrifices of well-being to the Lord. Thus the king and all the Israelites dedicated the House of the Lord. 64 That day the king consecrated the center of the court that was in front of the House of the Lord. For it was there that he presented the burnt offerings, the meal offerings, and the fat parts of the offerings of well-being, because the bronze altar that was before the Lord was too small to hold the burnt offerings, the meal offerings, and the fat parts of the offerings of well-being.

65 So Sh’lomo and all Israel with him—a great assemblage, [coming] from L’vo-chamat to the Wadi of Egypt [from one end of the country to the other]—observed the Feast [Sukkot] at that time before the Lord our God, seven days and again seven days, 14 days in all. 66 On the eighth day [Sh’mini Atzeret] he let the people go. They bade the king good-bye and went to their homes, joyful and glad of heart over all the goodness that the Lord had shown to His servant David and His people Israel.

Chapter 9

1 When Sh’lomo had finished building the House of the Lord and the royal palace and everything that Sh’lomo had set his heart on constructing, 2 the Lord appeared to Sh’lomo a second time, as He had appeared to him at Giv’on. 3 The Lord said to him, “I have heard the prayer and the supplication which you have offered to Me. I consecrate this House which you have built and I set My name there forever. My eyes and My heart shall ever be there. 4 As for you, if you walk before Me as your father David walked before Me, wholeheartedly and with uprightness, doing all that I have commanded you [and] keeping My laws and My rules, 5 then I will establish your throne of kingship over Israel forever, as I promised your father David, saying, ‘Your line on the throne of Israel shall never end.’ 6 [But] if you and your descendants turn away from Me and do not keep the commandments [and] the laws which I have set before you, and go and serve other gods and worship them, 7 then I will sweep [literally “cut”] Israel off the land which I gave them; I will reject [literally “dismiss from My presence”] the House which I have consecrated to My name; and Israel shall become a proverb and a byword among all peoples. 8 And as for this House, once so exalted [Targum and some other ancient versions read “and this House shall become a ruin”], everyone passing by it shall be appalled and shall hiss. And when they ask, ‘Why did the Lord do thus to the land and to this House?’ 9they shall be told, ‘It is because they forsook the Lord their God who freed them from the land of Egypt, and they embraced other gods and worshiped them and served them; therefore the Lord has brought all this calamity upon them.’”

10 At the end of the 20 years during which Sh’lomo constructed the two buildings, the Lord’s House and the royal palace—11 since King Khiram of Tzur had supplied Sh’lomo with all the cedar and cypress timber and gold that he required—Sh’lomo Hamelech in turn gave Khiram 20 towns in the region of Galilee. 12 But when Khiram came from Tzur to inspect the towns that Sh’lomo had given him, he was not pleased with them. 13 “My brother,” he said, “what sort of towns are these you have given me?” So they were named the land of Cabul, as is still the case. 14 However, Khiram sent the king 120 talents of gold.

15 This was the purpose of the forced labor which Sh’lomo imposed: It was to build the House of the Lord, his own palace, the [citadel of] Millo, and the wall of Y’rushalayim, and [to fortify] Chatzor, Megiddo, and Gezer. (16 Pharaoh king of Egypt had come up and captured Gezer; he destroyed it by fire, killed the Canaanites who dwelt in the town, and gave it as dowry to his daughter, Sh’lomo’s wife.) 17 So Sh’lomo fortified Gezer, lower Beth-choron, 18 Baalit, and Tamar in the wilderness, in the land [of Judah], 19 and all of Sh’lomo’s garrison towns, chariot towns, and cavalry towns—everything that Sh’lomo set his heart on building in Y’rushalayim and in the Lebanon, and throughout the territory that he ruled. 20 All the people that were left of the Amori, Chiti, P’rizzi, Chivi, and Y’vusi who were not of the Israelite stock—21 those of their descendants who remained in the land and whom the Israelites were not able to annihilate—of these Sh’lomo made a slave force, as is still the case. 22 But he did not reduce any Israelites to slavery; they served, rather, as warriors and as his attendants, officials, and officers, and as commanders of his chariotry and cavalry. 23 These were the prefects that were in charge of Sh’lomo’s works and were foremen over the people engaged in the work, who numbered 550. [Their names are not listed in the text.]

24 As soon as Pharaoh’s daughter went up from the City of David to the palace that he had built for her, he built the [citadel of] Millo. 25 Sh’lomo used to offer burnt offerings and sacrifices of well-being three times a year on the altar that he had built for the Lord, and he used to offer incense on the one that was before the Lord. And he kept the House in repair [meaning of Hebrew uncertain]. 26 Sh’lomo Hamelech also built a fleet of ships at Etzion-gever, which is near Elot [Eilat elsewhere] on the shore of the Sea of Reeds in the land of Edom. 27 Khiram sent servants of his with the fleet, mariners who were experienced on the sea, to serve with Sh’lomo’s men. 28 They came to Ofir; there they obtained gold in the amount of 420 talents, which they delivered to Sh’lomo Hamelech.

Chapter 10

1 The queen of Sheba heard of Sh’lomo’s fame, through the name of the Lord [The force of the phrase is uncertain], and she came to test him with hard questions. 2 She arrived in Y’rushalayim with a very large retinue, with camels bearing spices, a great quantity of gold, and precious stones. When she came to Sh’lomo, she asked him all that she had in mind. 3 Sh’lomo had answers for all her questions; there was nothing that the king did not know, [nothing] to which he could not give her an answer. 4 When the queen of Sheba observed all of Sh’lomo’s wisdom, and the palace he had built, 5the fare of his table [2 Chronicles 9.4 reads “…and the procession with which he went up to…”], the seating of his courtiers, the service and attire of his attendants, and his wine service, and the burnt offerings that he offered at the House of the Lord, she was left breathless.

6 She said to the king, “The report I heard in my own land about you and your wisdom was true. 7 But I did not believe the reports until I came and saw with my own eyes that not even the half had been told me; your wisdom and wealth surpass the reports that I heard. 8 How fortunate are your men and how fortunate are these your courtiers, who are always in attendance on you and can hear your wisdom! 9 Praised be the Lord your God, who delighted in you and set you on the throne of Israel. It is because of the Lord’s everlasting love for Israel that He made you king to administer justice and righteousness.” 10 She presented the king with 120 talents of gold, and a large quantity of spices, and precious stones. Never again did such a vast quantity of spices arrive as that which the queen of Sheba gave to Sh’lomo Hamelech.— 11 Moreover, Khiram’s fleet, which carried gold from Ofir, brought in from Ofir a huge quantity of almug wood [others “sandalwood”] and precious stones. 12 The king used the almug wood for decorations in the House of the Lord and in the royal palace, and for harps and lyres for the musicians. Such a quantity of almug wood has never arrived or been seen to this day.—13 Sh’lomo Hamelech, in turn, gave the queen of Sheba everything she wanted and asked for, in addition to what Sh’lomo Hamelech gave her out of his royal bounty. Then she and her attendants left and returned to her own land.

14 The weight of the gold which Sh’lomo received every year was 666 talents of gold, 15 besides what came from tradesmen, from the traffic of the merchants, and from all the kings of Arabia and the governors of the regions. 16 Sh’lomo Hamelech made 200 shields of beaten gold—600 shekels of gold to each shield—17 and 300 bucklers of beaten gold—three minas of gold to each buckler. The king placed them in the Lebanon Forest House. 18 The king also made a large throne of ivory, and he overlaid it with refined gold. 19 Six steps led up to the throne, and the throne had a back with a rounded top, and arms on either side of the seat. Two lions stood beside the arms, 20 and 12 lions stood on the six steps, six on either side. No such throne was ever made for any other kingdom [or “prince”].

21 All Sh’lomo Hamelech’s drinking cups were of gold, and all the utensils of the Lebanon Forest House were of pure gold: silver did not count for anything in Sh’lomo’s days. 22 For the king had a Tarshish fleet on the sea [probably a fleet of large ships], along with Khiram’s fleet. Once every three years, the Tarshish fleet came in, bearing gold and silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks.

23 Sh’lomo Hamelech excelled all the kings on earth in wealth and in wisdom. 24 All the world came to pay homage to Sh’lomo and to listen to the wisdom with which God had endowed him; 25 and each one would bring his tribute—silver and gold objects, robes, weapons and spices, horses and mules—in the amount due each year. 26 Sh’lomo assembled chariots and horses. He had 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horses, which he stationed [this follows 2 Chronicles 1.14; 9.25; the Hebrew here actually reads “led”] in the chariot towns and with the king in Y’rushalayim. 27The king made silver as plentiful in Y’rushalayim as stones, and cedars as plentiful as sycamores in the Shephelah. 28Sh’lomo’s horses were procured from Mitzrayim and Kue. The king’s dealers would buy them from Kue at a fixed price. 29 A chariot imported from Mitzrayim cost 600 shekels of silver, and a horse 150; these in turn were exported by them [Sh’lomo’s dealers] to all the kings of the Chiti and the kings of the Arami.

Chapter 11

1 Sh’lomo Hamelech loved many foreign women in addition to Pharaoh’s daughter—Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Phoenician, and Hittite women, 2 from the nations of which the Lord had said to the Israelites, “None of you shall join them and none of them shall join you [in marriage, as per Deuteronomy 7:3-4, 23.4, 8-9] lest they turn your heart away to follow their gods.” Such Sh’lomo clung to and loved. 3 He had 700 royal wives and 300 concubines; and his wives turned his heart away. 4 In his old age, his wives turned away Sh’lomo’s heart after other gods, and he was not as wholeheartedly devoted to the Lord his God as his father David had been. 5 Sh’lomo followed Ashtoret the goddess of the Phoenicians, and Milcom the abomination of the Ammoni. 6 Sh’lomo did what was displeasing to the Lord and did not remain loyal to the Lord like his father David.

7 At that time, Sh’lomo built a shrine for Chemosh the abomination of Moav on the hill near Y’rushalayim, and one for Molech the abomination of the Ammoni. 8 And he did the same for all his foreign wives who offered and sacrificed to their gods. 9 The Lord was angry with Sh’lomo, because his heart turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice 10 and had commanded him about this matter, not to follow other gods; he did not obey what the Lord had commanded.

11 And the Lord said to Sh’lomo, “Because you are guilty of this [literally “This is with you”]—you have not kept My covenant and the laws which I enjoined upon you—I will tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your servants. 12 But, for the sake of your father David, I will not do it in your lifetime; I will tear it away from your son. 13 However, I will not tear away the whole kingdom; I will give your son one tribe, for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Y’rushalayim which I have chosen.”

14 So the Lord raised up an adversary against Sh’lomo, the Edomite Hadad, who was of the royal family of Edom. 15 When David was in [emendation yields “defeated”] Edom, Yoav the army commander went up to bury the slain, and he killed every male in Edom; 16 for Yoav and all Israel stayed there for six months until he had killed off every male in Edom. 17 But Hadad [Hebrew Adad], together with some Edomite men, servants of his father, escaped and headed for Egypt; Hadad was then a young boy. 18 Setting out from Midian, they came to Paran and took along with them men from Paran. Thus they came to Egypt, to Pharaoh king of Egypt, who gave him a house, assigned a food allowance to him, and granted him an estate.

19 Pharaoh took a great liking to Hadad and gave him his sister-in-law, the sister of Queen Tachp’nes, as wife. The sister of Tachp’nes bore him a son, G’nuvat. Tachp’nes weaned [Septuagint reads “reared”] him in Pharaoh’s palace, and G’nuvat remained in Pharaoh’s palace among the sons of Pharaoh. 21 When Hadad heard in Egypt that David had been laid to rest with his fathers and that Yoav the army commander was dead, Hadad said to Pharaoh, “Give me leave to go to my own country.” 22 Pharaoh replied, “What do you lack with me, that you want to go to your own country?” But he said, “Nevertheless, give me leave to go.”

23 Another adversary that God raised up against Sh’lomo [Hebrew “him”] was R’zon ben Eliada, who had fled from his lord, King Hadadezer of Tzovah, 24 when David was slaughtering them. He gathered men about him and became captain over a troop; they went to Damascus and settled there, and they established a kingdom in Damascus. 25 He was an adversary of Israel all the days of Sh’lomo, adding to the trouble [caused by] Hadad; he repudiated [the authority of] Israel and reigned over Aram.

26 Y’rovam ben N’vat, an Efrayimite of Tz’redah, the son of a widow whose name was Tz’ruah, was in Sh’lomo’s service; he raised his hand against the king. 27 The circumstances under which he raised his hand against the king were as follows: Sh’lomo built the [citadel of] Millo and repaired the breach of the city of his father, David. 28 This Y’rovam was an able man, and when Sh’lomo saw that the young man was a capable worker, he appointed him over all the forced labor of the House of Joseph.

29 During that time Y’rovam went out of Y’rushalayim and the prophet Achiyah of Shiloh met him on the way. He had put on a new robe; and when the two were alone in the open country, 30 Achiyah took hold of the new robe he was wearing and tore it into 12 pieces. 31 “Take 10 pieces,” he said to Y’rovam. “For thus said the Lord, the God of Israel: I am about to tear the kingdom out of Sh’lomo’s hands, and I will give you 10 tribes. 32 But one tribe shall remain his—for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Y’rushalayim, the city that I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel. 33 For they have forsaken Me; they have worshiped Ashtoret the goddess of the Phoenicians, Chemosh the god of Moav, and Milcom the god of the Ammoni; they have not walked in My ways, or done what is pleasing to Me, or [kept] My laws and rules, as his father David did.

34 “However, I will not take the entire kingdom away from him, but will keep him as ruler as long as he lives for the sake of My servant David whom I chose, and who kept My commandments and My laws. 35 But I will take the kingship out of the hands of his son and give it to you—the 10 tribes. 36 To his son I will give one tribe, so that there may be a lamp for My servant David forever before Me in Y’rushalayim—the city where I have chosen to establish My name. 37 But you have been chosen by Me; reign [establish your residence] wherever you wish, and you shall be king over Israel. 38 If you heed all that I command you, and walk in My ways, and do what is right in My sight, keeping My laws and commandments as My servant David did, then I will be with you and I will build for you a lasting dynasty as I did for David. I hereby give Israel to you; 39 and I will chastise David’s descendants for that [sin], though not forever.”

40 Sh’lomo sought to put Y’rovam to death, but Y’rovam promptly fled to King Shishak of Egypt; and he remained in Egypt till the death of Sh’lomo.

41 The other events of Sh’lomo’s reign, and all his actions and his wisdom, are recorded in the book of the Annals of Sh’lomo. 42 The length of Sh’lomo’s reign in Y’rushalayim, over all Israel, was 40 years. 43 Sh’lomo slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of his father David; and his son R’chavam succeeded him as king.

Chapter 12

1 R’chavam went to Shechem, for all Israel had come to Shechem to acclaim him as king. 2 Y’rovam ben N’vat learned of it while he was still in Egypt; for Y’rovam had fled from Sh’lomo Hamelech, and had settled in Egypt [2 Chronicles 10.2 reads “So Y’rovam returned from Egypt”]. 3 They sent for him; and Y’rovam and all the assembly of Israel came and spoke to R’chavam as follows: 4 “Your father made our yoke heavy. Now lighten the harsh labor and the heavy yoke which your father laid on us, and we will serve you.” 5 He answered them, “Go away for three days and then come back to me.” So the people went away. 6 King R’chavam took counsel with the elders who had served his father Sh’lomo during his lifetime. He said, “What answer do you advise [me] to give to this people?” 7 They answered him, “If you will be a servant to those people today and serve them, and if you respond to them with kind words, they will be your servants always.”

8 But he ignored the advice that the elders gave him, and took counsel with the young men who had grown up with him and were serving him. 9 “What,” he asked, “do you advise that we reply to the people who said to me, ‘Lighten the yoke that your father placed upon us’?” 10 And the young men who had grown up with him answered, “Speak thus to the people who said to you, ‘Your father made our yoke heavy, now you make it lighter for us.’ Say to them, ‘My little finger is thicker than my father’s loins. 11 My father imposed a heavy yoke on you, and I will add to your yoke; my father flogged you with whips, but I will flog you with scorpions.’”

12 Y’rovam and all the people came to R’chavam on the third day, since the king had told them: “Come back on the third day.” 13 The king answered the people harshly, ignoring the advice that the elders had given him. 14 He spoke to them in accordance with the advice of the young men, and said, “My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke; my father flogged you with whips, but I will flog you with scorpions.” 15 (The king did not listen to the people; for the Lord had brought it about in order to fulfill the promise that the Lord had made through Achiyah the Shiloni to Y’rovam ben N’vat.)

16 When all Israel saw that the king had not listened to them, the people answered the king: “We have no portion in David, no share in Jesse’s son! To your tents, O Israel! Now look to your own House, O David.” So the Israelites returned to their homes [literally “tents”].

17 But R’chavam continued to reign over the Israelites who lived in the towns of Judah. 18 King R’chavam sent Adoram [elsewhere called Adoniram], who was in charge of the forced labor, but all Israel pelted him to death with stones. Thereupon King R’chavam hurriedly mounted his chariot and fled to Y’rushalayim. 19 Thus Israel revolted against the House of David, as is still the case.

20 When all Israel heard that Y’rovam had returned, they sent messengers and summoned him to the assembly and made him king over all Israel. Only the tribe of Judah remained loyal to the House of David. 21 On his return to Y’rushalayim, R’chavam mustered all the House of Judah and the tribe of Binyamin, 180,000 picked warriors, to fight against the House of Israel, in order to restore the kingship to R’chavam ben Sh’lomo. 22 But the word of God came to Shemaiah, the man of God: 23 “Say to King R’chavam ben Sh’lomo of Judah, and to all the House of Judah and Binyamin and the rest of the people: 24 Thus said the Lord: You shall not set out to make war on your kinsmen the Israelites. Let every man return to his home, for this thing has been brought about by Me.” They heeded the word of the Lord and turned back, in accordance with the word of the Lord.

25 Y’rovam fortified Shechem in the hill country of Efrayim and resided there; he moved out from there and fortified Penuel. 26 Y’rovam said to himself, “Now the kingdom may well return to the House of David. 27 If these people still go up to offer sacrifices at the House of the Lord in Y’rushalayim, the heart of these people will turn back to their master, King R’chavam of Judah; they will kill me and go back to King R’chavam of Judah.” 28 So the king took counsel and made two golden calves. He said to the people [Hebrew “them”], “You have been going up to Y’rushalayim long enough. This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt!” 29 He set up one in Bethel and placed the other in Dan. 30 That proved to be a cause of guilt, for the people went to worship [the calf at Bethel and] the one at Dan.

31 He also made cult places and appointed priests from the ranks of the people who were not of Levite descent. 32 He stationed at Bethel the priests of the shrines that he had appointed to sacrifice to the calves that he had made. And Y’rovam established a festival on the 15th day of the eighth month; in imitation of the festival in Judah, he established one at Bethel, and he ascended the altar [there]. 33 On the 15th day of the eighth month—the month in which he had contrived of his own mind to establish a festival for the Israelites—Y’rovam ascended the altar that he had made in Bethel.

Chapter 13

As he ascended the altar to present an offering, 1a man of God arrived at Bethel from Judah at the command of the Lord. While Y’rovam was standing on the altar [at the top of the steps or ramp] to present the offering, the man of God, at the command of the Lord, cried out against the altar: 2 “O altar, altar! Thus said the Lord: A son shall be born to the House of David, Yoshiyahu by name; and he shall slaughter upon you the priests of the shrines who bring offerings upon you. And human bones shall be burned upon you.” 3 He gave a portent on that day, saying, “Here is the portent that the Lord has decreed: This altar shall break apart, and the ashes on it shall be spilled.”

4 When the king heard what the man of God had proclaimed against the altar in Bethel, Y’rovam stretched out his arm above the altar and cried, “Seize him!” But the arm that he stretched out against him became rigid, and he could not draw it back. 5 The altar broke apart and its ashes were spilled—the very portent that the man of God had announced at the Lord’s command. 6 Then the king spoke up and said to the man of God, “Please entreat the Lord your God and pray for me that I may be able to draw back my arm.” The man of God entreated the Lord and the king was able to draw his arm back; it became as it was before.

7The king said to the man of God, “Come with me to my house and have some refreshment; and I shall give you a gift.” 8 But the man of God replied to the king, “Even if you give me half your wealth, I will not go in with you, nor will I eat bread or drink water in this place; 9 for so I was commanded by the word of the Lord: You shall eat no bread and drink no water, nor shall you go back by the road by which you came.” 10 So he left by another road and did not go back by the road on which he had come to Bethel.

11 There was an old prophet living in Bethel; and his sons [Hebrew “son”] came and told him all the things that the man of God had done that day in Bethel [and] the words that he had spoken to the king. When they told it to their father, 12 their father said to them, “Which road did he leave by?” His sons had seen [Septuagint reads “And his sons showed”] the road taken by the man of God who had come from Judah. 13 “Saddle the ass for me,” he said to his sons. They saddled the ass for him, and he mounted it 14 and rode after the man of God. He came upon him sitting under a terebinth and said to him, “Are you the man of God who came from Judah?” “Yes, I am,” he answered. 15 “Come home with me,” he said, “and have something to eat.” 16 He replied, “I may not go back with you and enter your home; and I may not eat bread or drink water in this place; 17 the order I received by the word of the Lord was: You shall not eat bread or drink water there; nor shall you return by the road on which you came.” 18 “I am a prophet, too,” said the other, “and an angel said to me by command of the Lord: Bring him back with you to your house, that he may eat bread and drink water.” He was lying to him. 19 So he went back with him, and he ate bread and drank water in his house.

20 While they were sitting at the table, the word of the Lord came to the prophet who had brought him back. 21 He cried out to the man of God who had come from Judah: “Thus said the Lord: Because you have flouted the word of the Lord and have not observed what the Lord your God commanded you, 22 but have gone back and eaten bread and drunk water in the place of which He said to you, ‘Do not eat bread or drink water [there],’ your corpse shall not come to the grave of your fathers.” 23 After he had eaten bread and had drunk, he saddled the ass for him—for the prophet whom he had brought back. 24 He set out, and a lion came upon him on the road and killed him. His corpse lay on the road, with the ass standing beside it, and the lion also standing beside the corpse.

25 Some men who passed by saw the corpse lying on the road and the lion standing beside the corpse; they went and told it in the town where the old prophet lived. 26 And when the prophet who had brought him back from the road heard it, he said, “That is the man of God who flouted the Lord’s command; the Lord gave him over to the lion, which mauled him and killed him in accordance with the word that the Lord had spoken to him.” 27 He said to his sons, “Saddle the ass for me,” and they did so. 28 He set out and found the corpse lying on the road, with the ass and the lion standing beside the corpse; the lion had not eaten the corpse nor had it mauled the ass. 29 The prophet lifted up the corpse of the man of God, laid it on the ass, and brought it back; it was brought [literally “it came”] to the town of the old prophet for lamentation and burial. 30 He laid the corpse in his own burial place; and they lamented over it, “Alas, my brother!”

31 After burying him, he said to his sons, “When I die, bury me in the grave where the man of God lies buried; lay my bones beside his. 32 For what he announced by the word of the Lord against the altar in Bethel, and against all the cult places in the towns of Samaria, shall surely come true.”

33 Even after this incident, Y’rovam did not turn back from his evil way, but kept on appointing priests for the shrines from the ranks of the people. He ordained as priests of the shrines any who so desired. 34 Thereby the House of Y’rovam incurred guilt—to their utter annihilation from the face of the earth.

Chapter 14

1 At that time, Abijah, a son of Y’rovam, fell sick. 2 Y’rovam said to his wife, “Go and disguise yourself, so that you will not be recognized as Y’rovam’s wife, and go to Shiloh. The prophet Achiyah lives there, the one who predicted that I would be king over this people. 3 Take with you 10 loaves, some wafers, and a jug of honey, and go to him; he will tell you what will happen to the boy.”

4 Y’rovam’s wife did so; she left and went to Shiloh and came to the house of Achiyah. Now Achiyah could not see, for his eyes had become sightless with age; 5 but the Lord had said to Achiyah, “Y’rovam’s wife is coming to inquire of you concerning her son, who is sick. Speak to her thus and thus. When she arrives, she will be in disguise.”

6 Achiyah heard the sound of her feet as she came through the door, and he said, “Come in, wife of Y’rovam. Why are you disguised? I have a harsh message for you. 7 Go tell Y’rovam: Thus said the Lord, the God of Israel: I raised you up from among the people and made you a ruler over My people Israel; 8 I tore away the kingdom from the House of David and gave it to you. But you have not been like My servant David, who kept My commandments and followed Me with all his heart, doing only what was right in My sight. 9 You have acted worse than all those who preceded you; you have gone and made for yourself other gods and molten images to vex Me; and Me you have cast behind your back. 10 Therefore I will bring disaster upon the House of Y’rovam and will cut off from Y’rovam every male, bond and free [meaning of Hebrew uncertain; possibly “kinsman and friend”], in Israel. I will sweep away the House of Y’rovam utterly, as dung is swept away. 11 Anyone belonging to Y’rovam who dies in the town shall be devoured by dogs; and anyone who dies in the open country shall be eaten by the birds of the air; for the Lord has spoken.

12 “As for you, go back home; as soon as you set foot in the town, the child will die. 13 And all Israel shall lament over him and bury him; he alone of Y’rovam’s family shall be brought to burial, for in him alone of the House of Y’rovam has some devotion been found to the Lord, the God of Israel. 14 Moreover, the Lord will raise up a king over Israel who will destroy the House of Y’rovam, this day and even now [meaning of Hebrew uncertain]. 15 The Lord will strike Israel until it sways like a reed in water. He will uproot Israel from this good land that He gave to their fathers, and will scatter them beyond the Euphrates, because they have provoked the Lord by the sacred posts that they have made for themselves. 16 He will forsake Israel because of the sins that Y’rovam committed and led Israel to commit.”

17 Y’rovam’s wife got up and left, and she went to Tirztah. As soon as she stepped over the threshold of her house, the child died. 18 They buried him and all Israel lamented over him, in accordance with the word that the Lord had spoken through His servant the prophet Achiyah. 19 The other events of Y’rovam’s reign, how he fought and how he ruled, are recorded in the Annals of the Kings of Israel. 20 Y’rovam reigned 22 years; then he slept with his fathers, and his son Nadav succeeded him as king.

21 Meanwhile, R’chavam ben Sh’lomo had become king in Judah. R’chavam was 41 years old when he became king, and he reigned 17 years in Y’rushalayim—the city the Lord had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel to establish His name there. His mother’s name was Na-amah the Ammoni. 22 Judah did what was displeasing to the Lord, and angered Him more than their fathers had done by the sins that they committed. 23 They too built for themselves shrines, pillars, and sacred posts on every high hill and under every leafy tree; 24 there were also male prostitutes in the land. [Judah] imitated all the abhorrent practices of the nations that the Lord had dispossessed before the Israelites.

25 In the fifth year of King R’chavam, King Shishak of Egypt marched against Y’rushalayim 26 and carried off the treasures of the House of the Lord and the treasures of the royal palace. He carried off everything; he even carried off all the golden shields that Sh’lomo had made. 27 King R’chavam had bronze shields made instead, and he entrusted them to the officers of the guard [literally “runners”] who guarded the entrance to the royal palace. 28 Whenever the king went into the House of the Lord, the guards would carry them and then bring them back to the armory of the guards.

29 The other events of R’chavam’s reign, and all his actions, are recorded in the Annals of the Kings of Judah. 30 There was continual war between R’chavam and Y’rovam. 31 R’chavam slept with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the City of David; his mother’s name was Na amah the Ammoni. His son Aviyam succeeded him as king.

Chapter 15

In the 18th year of King Y’rovam ben N’vat, Aviyam became king over Judah. 2 He reigned three years in Y’rushalayim; his mother’s name was Ma-achah daughter of Avishalom [2 Chronicles 13.2 reads “Micaiah daughter of Uriel of Giv’ah”; see verse 10 below, where Ma-achah, daughter of Avishalom, appears as mother of Ahsa]. 3 He continued in all the sins that his father before him had committed; he was not wholehearted with the Lord his God, like his father David. 4 Yet, for the sake of David, the Lord his God gave him a lamp in Y’rushalayim, by raising up his descendant after him and by preserving Y’rushalayim. 5 For David had done what was pleasing to the Lord and never turned throughout his life from all that He had commanded him, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite. 6 There was war between Aviyam [so several manuscripts; most manuscripts and the editions read “R’chavam”] and Y’rovam all the days of his life. 7 The other events of Aviyam’s reign and all his actions are recorded in the Annals of the Kings of Judah; there was war between Aviyam and Y’rovam. Aviyam slept with his fathers; he was buried in the City of David, and his son Ahsa succeeded him as king.

9 In the 20th year of King Y’rovam of Israel, Ahsa became king over Judah. 10 He reigned 41e years in Y’rushalayim; his mother’s name was Ma-achah daughter of Avishalom. 11 Asa did what was pleasing to the Lord, as his father David had done. 12 He expelled the male prostitutes from the land, and he removed all the idols that his ancestors had made. 13 He also deposed his mother Ma-achah from the rank of queen mother, because she had made an abominable thing [exact meaning of Hebrew uncertain] for [the goddess] Asherah. Ahsa cut down her abominable thing and burnt it in the Wadi Kidron. 14 The shrines, indeed, were not abolished; however, Ahsa was wholehearted with the Lord his God all his life. 15 He brought into the House of the Lord all the consecrated things of his father and his own consecrated things [so the k’tiv, the pronounced Masoretic text, and 2 Chronicles 15.18]—silver, gold, and utensils.

16 There was war between Ahsa and King Ba-asha of Israel all their days. 17 King Ba-asha of Israel advanced against Judah, and he fortified Ramah to prevent anyone belonging to King Ahsa from going out or coming in. 18 So Ahsa took all the silver and gold that remained in the treasuries of the House of the Lord as well as the treasuries of the royal palace, and he entrusted them to his officials. King Ahsa sent them to King Ben-hadad ben Tavrimmon ben Chezion of Aram, who resided in Damascus, with this message: 19 “There is a pact between you and me, and between your father and my father. I herewith send you a gift of silver and gold: Go and break your pact with King Ba-asha of Israel, so that he may withdraw from me.” 20 Ben-hadad responded to King Ahsa’s request; he sent his army commanders against the towns of Israel and captured Iyon, Dan, Avel-bet-Ma-achah, and all Khin’rot, as well as all the land of Naftali. 21 When Ba-asha heard about it, he stopped fortifying Ramah and remained in Tirtzah.

22 Then King Ahsa mustered all Judah, with no exemptions; and they carried away the stones and timber with which Ba-asha had fortified Ramah. With these King Ahsa fortified Geva of Binyamin, and Mitzpah.

23 All the other events of Ahsa’s reign, and all his exploits, and all his actions, and the towns that he fortified, are recorded in the Annals of the Kings of Judah. However, in his old age he suffered from a foot ailment. 24 Asa slept with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the city of his father David. His son Y’hoshafat succeeded him as king.

25 Nadav ben Y’rovam had become king over Israel in the second year of King Ahsa of Judah, and he reigned over Israel for two years. 26 He did what was displeasing to the Lord; he continued in the ways of his father, in the sins which he caused Israel to commit. 27 Then Ba-asha ben Achiyah, of the House of Yisachar, conspired against him; and Ba-asha struck him down at Gib’ton of the Philistines, while Nadav and all Israel were laying siege to Gib’ton. 28 Ba-asha killed him in the third year of King Ahsa of Judah and became king in his stead. 29 As soon as he became king, he struck down all the House of Y’rovam; he did not spare a single soul belonging to Y’rovam until he destroyed it—in accordance with the word that the Lord had spoken through His servant, the prophet Achiyah the Shiloni—30 because of the sins which Y’rovam committed and which he caused Israel to commit thereby vexing the Lord, the God of Israel.

31 The other events of Nadav’s reign and all his actions are recorded in the Annals of the Kings of Israel. 32 There was war between Ahsa and King Ba-asha of Israel all their days. 33 In the third year of King Ahsa of Judah, Ba-asha ben Achiyah became king in Tirtzah over all Israel—for 24 years. 34 He did what was displeasing to the Lord; he followed the ways of Y’rovam and the sins which he caused Israel to commit.

Chapter 16

1 The word of the Lord came to Yehu ben Chanani against Ba-asha: 2 “Because I lifted you up from the dust and made you a ruler over My people Israel, but you followed the way of Y’rovam and caused My people Israel to sin, vexing Me with their sins—3 I am going to sweep away Ba-asha and his house. I will make your house like the House of Y’rovam ben N’vat. 4 Anyone belonging to Ba-asha who dies in the town shall be devoured by dogs, and anyone belonging to him who dies in the open country shall be devoured by the birds of the sky.” 5 The other events of Ba-asha’s reign and his actions and his exploits are recorded in the Annals of the Kings of Israel. 6 Ba-asha slept with his fathers and was buried in Tirtzah. His son Elah succeeded him as king.

7 But the word of the Lord had come through the prophet Yehu ben Chanani against Ba-asha and against his house, that it would fare like the House of Y’rovam, which He himself had struck down, because of all the evil he did which was displeasing to the Lord, vexing him with his deeds.

8 In the 26th year of King Ahsa of Judah, Elah ben Ba-asha became king over Israel, at Tirtzah—for two years. 9 His officer Zimri, commander of half the chariotry, committed treason against him while he was at Tirtzah drinking himself drunk in the house of Artza, who was in charge of the palace at Tirtzah. 10 Zimri entered, struck him down, and killed him; he succeeded him as king in the 27th year of King Ahsa of Judah. 11 No sooner had he become king and ascended the throne than he struck down all the House of Ba-asha; he did not leave a single male of his, nor any kinsman or friend. 12 Thus Zimri destroyed all the House of Ba-asha, in accordance with the word that the Lord had spoken through the prophet Yehu—13 because of the sinful acts which Ba-asha and his son Elah committed, and which they caused Israel to commit, vexing the Lord, the God of Israel, with their false gods. 14 The other events of Elah’s reign and all his actions are recorded in the Annals of the Kings of Israel.

15 During the 27th year of King Ahsa of Judah, Zimri reigned in Tirtzah for seven days. At the time, the troops were encamped at Gib’ton of the Philistines. 16 When the troops who were encamped there learned that Zimri had committed treason and had struck down the king, that very day, in the camp, all Israel acclaimed the army commander Omri king over Israel. 17 Omri and all Israel then withdrew from Gib’ton and laid siege to Tirtzah. 18 When Zimri saw that the town was taken, he went into the citadel of the royal palace and burned down the royal palace over himself. And so he died—19 because of the sins which he committed and caused Israel to commit, doing what was displeasing to the Lord and following the ways of Y’rovam. 20 The other events of Zimri’s reign, and the treason which he committed, are recorded in the Annals of the Kings of Israel. 21 Then the people of Israel split into two factions: a part of the people followed Tivni ben Ginat to make him king, and the other part followed Omri. 22 Those who followed Omri proved stronger than those who followed Tivni ben Ginat; Tivni died and Omri became king.

23 In the 31st year of King Ahsa of Judah, Omri became king over Israel—for 12 years. He reigned in Tirtzah six years. 24 Then he bought the hill of Samaria from Shemer for two talents of silver; he built [a town] on the hill and named the town which he built Samaria, after Shemer, the owner of the hill. 25 Omri did what was displeasing to the Lord; he was worse than all who preceded him. 26 He followed all the ways of Y’rovam ben N’vat and the sins which he committed and caused Israel to commit, vexing the Lord, the God of Israel, with their futilities.

27 The other events of Omri’s reign, [and] his actions, and the exploits he performed, are recorded in the Annals of the Kings of Israel. 28 Omri slept with his fathers and was buried in Samaria; and his son Achav succeeded him as king.

29 Achav ben Omri became king over Israel in the 38th year of King Ahsa of Judah, and Achav ben Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria for 33 years. 30 Achav ben Omri did what was displeasing to the Lord, more than all who preceded him. 31 Not content to follow the sins of Y’rovam ben N’vat, he took as wife Ee-zevel [Jezebel] daughter of King Etbaal of the Sidoni [Phoenicians], and he went and served Baal and worshiped him. 32 He erected an altar to Baal in the temple of Baal which he built in Samaria. 33 Achav also made a sacred post. Achav did more to vex the Lord, the God of Israel, than all the kings of Israel who preceded him. 34 During his reign, Khiel of Bet-el fortified Jericho. He laid its foundations at the cost of Aviram his first-born, and set its gates in place at the cost of S’guv his youngest, in accordance with the words that the Lord had spoken through Y’hoshua bin Nun [see Joshua 6:26].

Chapter 17

1 Eliyahu the Tishbi, an inhabitant of Gil’ad, said to Achav, “As the Lord lives, the God of Israel whom I serve, there will be no dew or rain except at my bidding.”

2 The word of the Lord came to him: 3 “Leave this place; turn eastward and go into hiding by the Wadi K’rit, which is east of the Yarden. 4 You will drink from the wadi, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there.” 5 He proceeded to do as the Lord had bidden: he went, and he stayed by the Wadi K’rit, which is east of the Yarden. 6 The ravens brought him bread and meat every morning and every evening, and he drank from the wadi.

7 After some time the wadi dried up, because there was no rain in the land. 8 And the word of the Lord came to him: 9 “Go at once to Tzar’fat of Sidon, and stay there; I have designated a widow there to feed you.” 10 So he went at once to Tzar’fat. When he came to the entrance of the town, a widow was there gathering wood. He called out to her, “Please bring me a little water in your pitcher, and let me drink.” 11 As she went to fetch it, he called out to her, “Please bring along a piece of bread for me.” 12 “As the Lord your God lives,” she replied, “I have nothing baked, nothing but a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. I am just gathering a couple of sticks, so that I can go home and prepare it for me and my son; we shall eat it and then we shall die.” 13 “Don’t be afraid,” said Eliyahu to her. “Go and do as you have said; but first make me a small cake from what you have there, and bring it out to me; then make some for yourself and your son. 14 For thus said the Lord, the God of Israel: The jar of flour shall not give out and the jug of oil shall not fail until the day that the Lord sends rain upon the ground.” 15 She went and did as Eliyahu had spoken, and she and he and her household had food for a long time. 16 The jar of flour did not give out, nor did the jug of oil fail, just as the Lord had spoken through Eliyahu.

17 After a while, the son of the mistress of the house fell sick, and his illness grew worse, until he had no breath left in him. 18 She said to Eliyahu, “What harm have I done you, O man of God, that you should come here to recall my sin and cause the death of my son?” 19 “Give me the boy,” he said to her; and taking him from her arms, he carried him to the upper chamber where he was staying, and laid him down on his own bed. 20 He cried out to the Lord and said, “O Lord my God, will You bring calamity upon this widow whose guest I am, and let her son die?” 21 Then he stretched out over the child three times, and cried out to the Lord, saying, “O Lord my God, let this child’s life return to his body!”

22 The Lord heard Eliyahu’s plea; the child’s life returned to his body, and he revived. 23 Eliyahu picked up the child and brought him down from the upper room into the main room, and gave him to his mother. “See,” said Eliyahu, “your son is alive.” 24 And the woman answered Eliyahu, “Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the Lord is truly in your mouth.” 1

Chapter 18

1 Much later, in the third year [of the drought], the word of the Lord came to Eliyahu: “Go, appear before Achav; then I will send rain upon the earth.” 2 Thereupon Eliyahu set out to appear before Achav. The famine was severe in Samaria. 3 Achav had summoned Ovadyahu, the steward of the palace. (Ovadyahu revered the Lord greatly. 4 When Ee-zevel was killing off the prophets of the Lord, Ovadyahu had taken 100 prophets and hidden them, 50 to a cave, and provided them with food and drink.) 5 And Achav had said to Ovadyahu, “Go through the land, to all the springs of water and to all the wadis. Perhaps we shall find some grass to keep horses and mules alive, so that we are not left without beasts.”

6 They divided the country between them to explore it, Achav going alone in one direction and Ovadyahu going alone in another direction. 7 Ovadyahu was on the road, when Eliyahu suddenly confronted him. [Ovadyahu] recognized him and flung himself on his face, saying, “Is that you, my lord Eliyahu?” 8 “Yes, it is I,” he answered. “Go tell your lord: Eliyahu is here!”

9 But he said, “What wrong have I done, that you should hand your servant over to Achav to be killed? 10 As the Lord your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom to which my lord has not sent to look for you; and when they said, ‘He is not here,’ he made that kingdom or nation swear that you could not be found. 11 And now you say, ‘Go tell your lord: Eliyahu is here!’ 12 When I leave you, the spirit of the Lord will carry you off I don’t know where; and when I come and tell Achav and he does not find you, he will kill me. Yet your servant has revered the Lord from my youth. 13 My lord has surely been told what I did when Ee-zevel was killing the prophets of the Lord, how I hid 100 of the prophets of the Lord, 50 men to a cave, and provided them with food and drink. 14 And now you say, ‘Go tell your lord: Eliyahu is here.’ Why, he will kill me!”

15 Eliyahu replied, “As the Lord of Hosts lives, whom I serve, I will appear before him this very day.”

16 Ovadyahu went to find Achav, and informed him; and Achav went to meet Eliyahu. 17 When Achav caught sight of Eliyahu, Achav said to him, “Is that you, you troubler of Israel?” 18 He retorted, “It is not I who have brought trouble on Israel, but you and your father’s House, by forsaking the commandments of the Lord and going after the Baalim. 19 Now summon all Israel to join me at Mount Carmel, together with the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah, who eat at Ee-zevel’s table [i.e., who are maintained by Ee-zevel].”

20 Achav sent orders to all the Israelites and gathered the prophets at Mount Carmel. 21 Eliyahu approached all the people and said, “How long will you keep hopping between two opinions [literally “on the two boughs”? If the Lord is God, follow Him; and if Baal, follow him!” But the people answered him not a word. 22 Then Eliyahu said to the people, “I am the only prophet of the Lord left, while the prophets of Baal are 450 men. 23 Let two young bulls be given to us. Let them choose one bull, cut it up, and lay it on the wood, but let them not apply fire; I will prepare the other bull, and lay it on the wood, and will not apply fire. 24 You will then invoke your god by name, and I will invoke the Lord by name; and let us agree [literally “and it shall be”]: the god who responds with fire, that one is God.” And all the people answered, “Very good!”

25 Eliyahu said to the prophets of Baal, “Choose one bull and prepare it first, for you are the majority; invoke your god by name, but apply no fire.” 26 They took the bull that was given them; they prepared it, and invoked Baal by name from morning until noon, shouting, “O Baal, answer us!” But there was no sound, and none who responded; so they performed a hopping dance about the altar that had been set up.

27 When noon came, Eliyahu mocked them, saying, “Shout louder! After all, he is a god. But he may be in conversation, he may be detained, or he may be on a journey [meaning of Hebrew uncertain], or perhaps he is asleep and will wake up.” 28 So they shouted louder, and gashed themselves with knives and spears, according to their practice, until the blood streamed over them. 29 When noon passed, they kept raving [others “prophesied”] until the hour of presenting the meal offering. Still there was no sound, and none who responded or heeded.

30 Then Eliyahu said to all the people, “Come closer to me”; and all the people came closer to him. He repaired the damaged altar of the Lord. 31 Then Eliyahu took 12 stones, corresponding to the number of the tribes of the sons of Yaakov—to whom the word of the Lord had come: “Israel shall be your name”—32 and with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord. Around the altar he made a trench large enough for two seahs of seed [i.e., of an area which would require two seahs of seed if sown]. 33 He laid out the wood, and he cut up the bull and laid it on the wood. 34 And he said, “Fill four jars with water and pour it over the burnt offering and the wood.” Then he said, “Do it a second time”; and they did it a second time. “Do it a third time,” he said; and they did it a third time. 35 The water ran down around the altar, and even the trench was filled with water.

36 When it was time to present the meal offering, the prophet Eliyahu came forward and said, “O Lord, God of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yisrael! Let it be known today that You are God in Israel and that I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your bidding. 37 Answer me, O Lord, answer me, that this people may know that You, O Lord, are God; for You have turned their hearts backward [meaning of Hebrew uncertain].” 38 Then fire from the Lord descended and consumed the burnt offering, the wood, the stones, and the earth; and it licked up the water that was in the trench.

39 When they saw this, all the people flung themselves on their faces and cried out: “The Lord alone is God, The Lord alone is God!” 40 Then Eliyahu said to them, “Seize the prophets of Baal, let not a single one of them get away.” They seized them, and Eliyahu took them down to the Wadi Kishon and slaughtered them there. 41 Eliyahu said to Achav, “Go up, eat and drink, for there is a rumbling of [approaching] rain,” 42 and Achav went up to eat and drink. Eliyahu meanwhile climbed to the top of Mount Carmel, crouched on the ground, and put his face between his knees. 43 And he said to his servant, “Go up and look toward the Sea.” He went up and looked and reported, “There is nothing.” Seven times [Eliyahu] said, “Go back,” 44 and the seventh time, [the servant] reported, “A cloud as small as a man’s hand is rising in the west.” Then [Eliyahu] said, “Go say to Achav, ‘Hitch up [your chariot] and go down before the rain stops you.’” 45 Meanwhile the sky grew black with clouds; there was wind, and a heavy downpour fell; Achav mounted his chariot and drove off to Yizrael [Jezreel]. 46 The hand of the Lord had come upon Eliyahu. He tied up his skirts [literally “He bound up his loins”] and ran in front of Achav all the way to Yizrael.

Chapter 19

When Achav told Ee-zevel all that Eliyahu had done and how he had put all the prophets [of Baal] to the sword, 2 Ee-zevel sent a messenger to Eliyahu, saying, “Thus and more may the gods do [to me] if by this time tomorrow I have not made you like one of them.” 3 Frightened, he fled at once for his life. He came to B’er-sheva, which is in Judah, and left his servant there; 4 he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush and sat down under it, and prayed that he might die. “Enough!” he cried. “Now, O Lord, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers.”

5 He lay down and fell asleep under a broom bush. Suddenly an angel touched him and said to him, “Arise and eat.” 6 He looked about; and there, beside his head, was a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water! He ate and drank, and lay down again. 7 The angel of the Lord came a second time and touched him and said, “Arise and eat, or the journey will be too much for you.”

8 He arose and ate and drank; and with the strength from that meal he walked 40 days and 40 nights as far as the mountain of God at Khorev. 9 There he went into a cave, and there he spent the night. Then the word of the Lord came to him. He said to him, “Why are you here, Eliyahu?” 10 He replied, “I am moved by zeal for the Lord, the God of Hosts, for the Israelites have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and put Your prophets to the sword. I alone am left, and they are out to take my life.”

11 “Come out,” He called, “and stand on the mountain before the Lord.” And lo, the Lord passed by. There was a great and mighty wind, splitting mountains and shattering rocks by the power of the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind—an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake. 12 After the earthquake—fire; but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire—a soft murmuring sound [others “a still, small voice”]. 13 When Eliyahu heard it, he wrapped his mantle about his face and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then a voice addressed him: “Why are you here, Eliyahu?”

14 He answered, “I am moved by zeal for the Lord, the God of Hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and have put Your prophets to the sword. I alone am left, and they are out to take my life.” 15 The Lord said to him, “Go back by the way you came, [and] on to the wilderness of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Chazael as king of Aram. 16 Also anoint Yehu ben Nimshi as king of Israel, and anoint Elisha ben Shafat of Avel-m’cholah to succeed you as prophet. 17 Whoever escapes the sword of Chazael shall be slain by Yehu, and whoever escapes the sword of Yehu shall be slain by Elisha. 18 I will leave in Israel only 7,000— every knee that has not knelt to Baal and every mouth that has not kissed him.”

19 He set out from there and came upon Elisha ben Shafat as he was plowing. There were 12 yoke of oxen ahead of him, and he was with the 12th. Eliyahu came over to him and threw his mantle over him. 20 He left the oxen and ran after Eliyahu, saying: “Let me kiss my father and mother good-by, and I will follow you.” And he answered him, “Go back. What have I done to you?” 21 He turned back from him and took the yoke of oxen and slaughtered them; he boiled their meat with the gear of the oxen and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he arose and followed Eliyahu and became his attendant.

Chapter 20

Throughout the following chapters, the chronological notices and narratives present the Arameans, mainly from Damascus, as the major enemies of Israel, while the Trans-Jordanian Moabites and Edomites appear mainly as troublers and irritants of lsrael and Judah. The author of Kings and the authors of his sources appear to have been unaware that much of the military maneuvering and intrigue from the middle of the 9th through the mid-8th chapter was strongly influenced by the military prowess and political strategizing of more distant Assyria, the empire that eventually conquered most of the Levant.

King Ben-hadad of Aram gathered his whole army; 32 kings accompanied him with horses and chariots. He advanced against Samaria, laid siege to it, and attacked it. 2 And he sent messengers to Achav inside the city 3to say to him, “Thus said Ben-hadad: Your silver and gold are mine, and your beautiful wives and children are mine.” 4 The king of Israel replied, “As you say, my lord king: I and all I have are yours.” 5 Then the messengers came again and said, “Thus said Ben-hadad: When I sent you the order to give me your silver and gold, and your wives and children, 6 I meant that tomorrow at this time I will send my servants to you and they will search your house and the houses of your courtiers and seize everything you prize and take it away.”

7 Then the king of Israel summoned all the elders of the land, and he said, “See for yourselves how that man is bent on evil! For when he demanded my wives and my children, my silver and my gold, I did not refuse him.” 8 All the elders and all the people said, “Do not obey and do not submit!” 9 So he said to Ben-hadad’s messengers, “Tell my lord the king: All that you first demanded of your servant I shall do, but this thing I cannot do.” The messengers went and reported this to him. 10 Thereupon Ben-hadad sent him this message: “May the gods do thus to me and even more, if the dust of Samaria will provide even a handful for each of the men who follow me!” 11 The king of Israel replied, “Tell him: Let not him who girds on his sword boast like him who ungirds it!” 12 On hearing this reply—while he and the other kings were drinking together at Sukkot—he [Ben-hadad] commanded his followers, “Advance!” And they advanced against the city.

13 Then a certain prophet went up to King Achav of Israel and said, “Thus said the Lord: Do you see that great host? I will deliver it into your hands today, and you shall know that I am the Lord.” 14 “Through whom?” asked Achav. He answered, “Thus said the Lord: Through the aides of the provincial governors.” He asked, “Who shall begin the battle?” And he answered, “You.”

15 So he mustered the aides of the provincial governors, 232 strong, and then he mustered all the troops—all the Israelites—7,000 strong. 16 They marched out at noon, while Ben-hadad was drinking himself drunk at Sukkot together with the 32 kings allied with him. 17 The aides of the provincial governors rushed out first. Ben-hadad sent [scouts], who told him, “Some men have come out from Samaria.” 18 He said, “If they have come out to surrender, take them alive; and if they have come out for battle, take them alive anyhow.” 19 But the others—the aides of the provincial governors, with the army behind them—had already rushed out of the city, 20 and each of them struck down his opponent. The Arami fled, and Israel pursued them; but King Ben-hadad of Aram escaped on a horse with other horsemen.

21 The king of Israel came out and attacked the horses and chariots, and inflicted a great defeat on the Arami. 22 Then the prophet approached the king of Israel and said to him, “Go, keep up your efforts, and consider well what you must do; for the king of Aram will attack you at the turn of the year.”

23 Now the ministers of the king of Aram said to him, “Their God is a God of mountains; that is why they got the better of us. But if we fight them in the plain, we will surely get the better of them. 24 Do this: Remove all the kings from their posts and appoint governors in their place. 25 Then muster for yourself an army equal to the army you lost, horse for horse and chariot for chariot. And let us fight them in the plain, and we will surely get the better of them.” He took their advice and acted accordingly.

26 At the turn of the year, Ben-hadad mustered the Arami and advanced on Afek to fight Israel. 27 Now the Israelites had been mustered and provisioned, and they went out against them; but when the Israelites encamped against them, they looked like two flocks [meaning of Hebrew uncertain] of goats, while the Arami covered the land. 28 Then the man of God approached and spoke to the king of Israel, “Thus said the Lord: Because the Arami have said, ‘The Lord is a God of mountains, but He is not a God of lowlands,’ I will deliver that great host into your hands; and you shall know that I am the Lord.”

29 For seven days they were encamped opposite each other. On the seventh day, the battle was joined and the Israelites struck down 100,000 Arami foot soldiers in one day. 30 The survivors fled to Afek, inside the town, and the wall fell on the 27,000 survivors. Ben-hadad also fled and took refuge inside the town, in an inner chamber. 31 His ministers said to him, “We have heard that the kings of the House of Israel are magnanimous kings. Let us put sackcloth on our loins and ropes on our heads, and surrender to the king of Israel; perhaps he will spare your life.”

32 So they girded sackcloth on their loins and wound ropes around their heads, and came to the king of Israel and said, “Your servant Ben-hadad says, ‘I beg you, spare my life.’” He replied, “Is he still alive? He is my brother.” 33 The men divined his meaning and quickly caught the word from him [literally, divined his meaning], saying, “Yes, Ben-hadad is your brother.” “Go, bring him,” he said. Ben-hadad came out to him, and he invited him into his chariot. 34 Ben-hadad said to him, “I will give back the towns that my father took from your father, and you may set up bazaars for yourself in Damascus as my father did in Samaria.” “And I, for my part,” [said Achav,] “will let you go home under these terms.” So he made a treaty with him and dismissed him.

35 A certain man, a disciple of the prophets, said to another, at the word of the Lord, “Strike me”; but the man refused to strike him. 36 He said to him, “Because you have not obeyed the Lord, a lion will strike you dead as soon as you leave me.” And when he left, a lion came upon him and killed him. 37 Then he met another man and said, “Come, strike me.” So the man struck him and wounded him.

38 Then the prophet, disguised by a cloth over his eyes, went and waited for the king by the road. 39 As the king passed by, he cried out to the king and said, “Your servant went out into the thick of the battle. Suddenly a man came over and brought a man to me, saying, ‘Guard this man! If he is missing, it will be your life for his, or you will have to pay a talent of silver.’ 40 While your servant was busy here and there, [the man] got away.” The king of Israel responded, “You have your verdict; you pronounced it yourself.” 41 Quickly he removed the cloth from his eyes, and the king recognized him as one of the prophets. 42 He said to him, “Thus said the Lord: Because you have set free the man whom I doomed, your life shall be forfeit for his life and your people for his people.” 43 Dispirited and sullen, the king left for home and came to Samaria.

Chapter 21

1 [The following events] occurred sometime afterward: Navot the Yizraeli owned a vineyard in Yizrael, adjoining the palace of King Achav of Samaria. 2 Achav said to Navot, “Give me your vineyard, so that I may have it as a vegetable garden, since it is right next to my palace. I will give you a better vineyard in exchange; or, if you prefer, I will pay you the price in money.” 3 But Navot replied, “The Lord forbid that I should give up to you what I have inherited from my fathers!” 4 Achav went home dispirited and sullen because of the answer that Navot the Yizraeli had given him: “I will not give up to you what I have inherited from my fathers!” He lay down on his bed and turned away his face, and he would not eat. 5 His wife Ee-zevel came to him and asked him, “Why are you so dispirited that you won’t eat?” 6 So he told her, “I spoke to Navot the Yizraeli and proposed to him, ‘Sell me your vineyard for money, or if you prefer, I’ll give you another vineyard in exchange’; but he answered, ‘I will not give my vineyard to you.’” 7 His wife Ee-zevel said to him, “Now is the time to show yourself king over Israel. Rise and eat something, and be cheerful; I will get the vineyard of Navot the Yizraeli for you.”

8 So she wrote letters in Achav’s name and sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters to the elders and the nobles who lived in the same town with Navot. 9 In the letters she wrote as follows: “Proclaim a fast and seat Navot at the front of the assembly. 10 And seat two scoundrels opposite him, and let them testify against him: ‘You have reviled God and king!’ Then take him out and stone him to death.”

11 His townsmen—the elders and nobles who lived in his town—did as Ee-zevel had instructed them, just as was written in the letters she had sent them: 12 They proclaimed a fast and seated Navot at the front of the assembly. 13 Then the two scoundrels came and sat down opposite him; and the scoundrels testified against Navot publicly as follows: “Navot has reviled God and king.” Then they took him outside the town and stoned him to death. 14 Word was sent to Ee-zevel: “Navot has been stoned to death.” 15 As soon as Ee-zevel heard that Navot had been stoned to death, she said to Achav, “Go and take possession of the vineyard which Navot the Yizraeli refused to sell you for money; for Navot is no longer alive, he is dead.”

16 When Achav heard that Navot was dead, Achav set out for the vineyard of Navot the Yizraeli to take possession of it. 17 Then the word of the Lord came to Eliyahu the Tishbi: 18 “Go down and confront King Achav of Israel who [resides] in Samaria. He is now in Navot’s vineyard; he has gone down there to take possession of it. 19 Say to him, ‘Thus said the Lord: Would you murder and take possession? Thus said the Lord: In the very place where the dogs lapped up Navot’s blood, the dogs will lap up your blood too.’”

20 Achav said to Eliyahu, “So you have found me, my enemy?” “Yes, I have found you,” he replied. “Because you have committed yourself to doing what is evil in the sight of the Lord, 21 I will bring disaster upon you. I will make a clean sweep of you, I will cut off from Israel every male belonging to Achav, bond and free [meaning of Hebrew uncertain; possibly “kinsman and friend”]. 22 And I will make your house like the House of Y’rovam ben N’vat and like the House of Ba-asha ben Achiyah, because of the provocation you have caused by leading Israel to sin. 23 And the Lord has also spoken concerning Ee-zevel: ‘The dogs shall devour Ee-zevel in the field [rampart?] of Yizrael. 24 All of Achav’s line who die in the town shall be devoured by dogs, and all who die in the open country shall be devoured by the birds of the sky.’”

(25 Indeed, there never was anyone like Achav, who committed himself to doing what was displeasing to the Lord, at the instigation of his wife Ee-zevel. 26 He acted most abominably, straying after the fetishes just like the Amori, whom the Lord had dispossessed before the Israelites.)

27 When Achav heard these words, he rent his clothes and put sackcloth on his body. He fasted and lay in sackcloth and walked about subdued. 28 Then the word of the Lord came to Eliyahu the Tishbi: 29 “Have you seen how Achav has humbled himself before Me? Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not bring the disaster in his lifetime; I will bring the disaster upon his house in his son’s time.”

Chapter 22

1 There was a lull of [literally “They remained”] three years, with no war between Aram and Israel. 2 In the third year, King Y’hoshafat of Judah came to visit the king of Israel. 3 The king of Israel said to his courtiers, “You know that Ramot-gil’ad belongs to us, and yet we do nothing to recover it from the hands of the king of Aram.” 4 And he said to Y’hoshafat, “Will you come with me to battle at Ramot-gil’ad?” Y’hoshafat answered the king of Israel, “I will do what you do; my troops shall be your troops, my horses shall be your horses.” 5 But Y’hoshafat said further to the king of Israel, “Please, first inquire of the Lord.”

6 So the king of Israel gathered the prophets, about 400 men, and asked them, “Shall I march upon Ramot-gil’ad for battle, or shall I not?” “March,” they said, “and the Lord will deliver [it] into Your Majesty’s hands.” 7 Then Y’hoshafat asked, “Isn’t there another prophet of the Lord here through whom we can inquire?” 8 And the king of Israel answered Y’hoshafat, “There is one more man through whom we can inquire of the Lord; but I hate him, because he never prophesies anything good for me, but only misfortune—Michayehu ben Yimlah.” But King Y’hoshafat said, “Don’t say that, Your Majesty.” 9 So the king of Israel summoned an officer and said, “Bring Michayehu ben Yimlah at once.”

10 The king of Israel and King Y’hoshafat of Judah were seated on their thrones, arrayed in their robes, on the threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets were prophesying before them. 11 Tzidkyah ben Chena-anah had provided himself with iron horns; and he said, “Thus said the Lord: With these you shall gore the Arami till you make an end of them.” 12 And all the other prophets were prophesying similarly, “March upon Ramot-gil’ad and triumph! The Lord will deliver it into Your Majesty’s hands.”

13 The messenger who had gone to summon Micaiah said to him: “Look, the words of the prophets are with one accord favorable to the king. Let your word be like that of the rest of them; speak a favorable word.” 14 “As the Lord lives,” Michayehu answered, “I will speak only what the Lord tells me.”

15 When he came before the king, the king said to him, “Michayehu, shall we march upon Ramot-gil’ad for battle, or shall we not?” He answered him, “March and triumph! The Lord will deliver [it] into Your Majesty’s hands.” 16 The king said to him, “How many times must I adjure you to tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the Lord?” 17 Then he said, “I saw all Israel scattered over the hills like sheep without a shepherd; and the Lord said, ‘These have no master; let everyone return to his home in safety.’”

18 “Didn’t I tell you,” said the king of Israel to Y’hoshafat, “that he would not prophesy good fortune for me, but only misfortune?” 19 But [Michayehu] said, “I call upon you to hear the word of the Lord! I saw the Lord seated upon His throne, with all the host of heaven standing in attendance to the right and to the left of Him. 20 The Lord asked, ‘Who will entice Achav so that he will march and fall at Ramot-gil’ad?’ Then one said thus and another said thus, 21 until a certain spirit came forward and stood before the Lord and said, ‘I will entice him.’ ‘How?’ the Lord asked him. 22 And he replied, ‘I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.’ Then He said, ‘You will entice and you will prevail. Go out and do it.’ 23 So the Lord has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these prophets of yours; for the Lord has decreed disaster upon you.”

24 Thereupon Tzidkiyah ben Chena-anah stepped up and struck Michayehu on the cheek, and demanded, “Which way did the spirit of the Lord pass from me to speak with you?” 25 And Michayehu replied, “You’ll find out on the day when you try to hide in the innermost room.”

26 Then the king of Israel said, “Take Michayehu and turn him over to Amon, the city’s governor, and to Prince Yoash, 27 and say, ‘The king’s orders are: Put this fellow in prison, and let his fare be scant bread and scant water until I come home safe.’” 28 To which Michayehu retorted, “If you ever come home safe, the Lord has not spoken through me.” He said further, “Listen, all you peoples [perhaps a notation suggesting that Micaiah was identical with Micah, whose prophecies begin, “Listen, all you peoples,” Micah 1.2]!”

29 So the king of Israel and King Y’hoshafat of Judah marched upon Ramot-gil’ad. 30 The king of Israel said to Y’hoshafat, “Disguise yourself and go [Targum and Septuagint read, “I will disguise myself and go”] into the battle; but you, wear your robes.” So the king of Israel went into the battle disguised. 31 Now the king of Aram had instructed his 32 chariot officers: “Don’t attack anyone, small or great, except the king of Israel.” 32 So when the chariot officers saw Y’hoshafat, whom they took for the king of Israel, they turned upon him to attack him, and Y’hoshafat cried out. 33 And when the chariot officers became aware that he was not the king of Israel, they turned back from pursuing him. 34 Then a man drew his bow at random and he hit the king of Israel between the plates of the armor [meaning of Hebrew uncertain]; and he said to his charioteer, “Turn the horses [literally “your hand,” because horses are guided by a pull on the appropriate rein] around and get me behind the lines [literally “outside the camp”]; I’m wounded.”

35 The battle raged all day long, and the king remained propped up in the chariot facing Aram; the blood from the wound ran down into the hollow of the chariot, and at dusk he died. 36 As the sun was going down, a shout went through the army: “Every man to his own town! Every man to his own district.”

37 So the king died and was brought [literally “he came”] to Samaria. They buried the king in Samaria, 38 and they flushed out the chariot at the pool of Samaria. Thus the dogs lapped up his blood and the whores bathed [in it], in accordance with the word that the Lord had spoken.

39 The other events of Achav’s reign, and all his actions—the ivory palace that he built and all the towns that he fortified—are all recorded in the Annals of the Kings of Israel. 40 Achav slept with his fathers, and his son Achazyahu succeeded him as king.

41 Y’hoshafat ben Ahsa had become king of Judah in the fourth year of King Achav of Israel. 42 Y’hoshafat was 35 years old when he became king, and he reigned in Y’rushalayim for 25 years. His mother’s name was Azuvah daughter of Shilchi. 43 He followed closely the course of his father Ahsa and did not deviate from it, doing what was pleasing to the Lord. 44 However, the shrines did not cease to function; the people still sacrificed and offered at the shrines. 45 And further, Y’hoshafat submitted to the king of Israel. 46 As for the other events of Y’hoshafat’s reign and the valor he displayed in battle, they are recorded in the Annals of the Kings of Judah. (47 He also stamped out the remaining male prostitutes who had survived in the land from the time of his father Ahsa.)

48 There was no king in Edom; a viceroy acted as king. 49 Y’hoshafat constructed Tarshish ships [probably a fleet of large ships] to sail to Ofir for gold. But he did not sail because the ships were wrecked at Etzion-gever. 50 Then Achazyahu ben Achav proposed to Y’hoshafat, “Let my servants sail on the ships with your servants”; but Y’hoshafat would not agree. 51 Y’hoshafat slept with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the city of his father David, and his son Y’horam succeeded him as king.

52 [Meanwhile,] Ahaziah ben Achav had become king of Israel, in Samaria, in the 17th year of King Y’hoshafat of Judah; he reigned over Israel two years. 53 He did what was displeasing to the Lord, following in the footsteps of his father and his mother, and in those of Y’rovam ben N’vat who had caused Israel to sin. 54 He worshiped Baal and bowed down to him; he vexed the Lord, the God of Israel, just as his father had done.