



## First Kings - Chapter Twenty Two

### **V 1 Kings 17:1-22:40 - Elijah and Ahab (continues/concludes)**

#### Summary of Chapter Twenty Two

King Jehoshaphat of Judah joins Ahab in his campaign to restore Ramoth-gilead to Israel from the hands of the Aramæans. When Jehoshaphat first asks to hear what the Lord has to say of this campaign, Ahab has four hundred of his prophets prophesy good things about the outcome but Jehoshaphat wants to hear from a true prophet and so Micaiah is called. He reveals the truth that Ahab will not survive the battle and so Ahab has him put in prison.

The scheming Ahab dressed as an ordinary soldier but said that Jehoshaphat should go into battle in his royal robes. Therefore, it was Jehoshaphat that became the initial target for the Aramæans but they soon realised it was not Ahab and stopped pursuing him. Meanwhile, an archer fired his arrow into the midst of battle and managed to hit Ahab who died later that day from his wounds and was taken back to Samaria to be buried.

The chapter then turns to a fuller account of the reign of Jehoshaphat in Judah. He was a good king and overturned some of the apostate ways that still existed in his lands. He built a fleet of merchant ships but they never set sail, floundering in their home harbour. He did at least make peace with Israel.

The chapter concludes with a brief account of Ahab's son Ahaziah becoming king and how he continued in the wicked ways of his father and mother.

#### **V.f 1 Kings 22:1-40 - Ahab Killed in Battle**

Although the house of Ahab stands under a prophetic curse, the full outworking of God's wrath will be delayed until the reign of Ahab's son. Ahab's own death, however, has now been foretold by two different prophets, with apparently no delay in sight; the appearance of a third prophet now brings the reader to that

event. Ahab is joined by the king of Judah in a battle against the Aramæans. Despite Micaiah foretelling Ahab's fate, he goes into battle dressed as an ordinary soldier and is mortally wounded. His body is returned to Samaria to be buried there.

#### V.f.i 1 Kings 22:1-12 - Joint Campaign with Judah against Aram

In an attempt to restore Ramoth-gilead back to Israel Ahab is joined by Jehoshaphat, king of Judah. Ahab's false prophets all prophesy success in battle.

<sup>1</sup> For three years Aram and Israel continued without war. <sup>2</sup> But in the third year King Jehoshaphat of Judah came down to the king of Israel. <sup>3</sup> The king of Israel said to his servants, 'Do you know that Ramoth-gilead belongs to us, yet we are doing nothing to take it out of the hand of the king of Aram?' <sup>4</sup> He said to Jehoshaphat, 'Will you go with me to battle at Ramoth-gilead?' Jehoshaphat replied to the king of Israel, 'I am as you are; my people are your people, my horses are your horses.'

#### 1 Kings 22:1-4

The peace that followed the battle of Aphek (1 Kings 20:26-34) lasted for three years. Even after such a crushing defeat, the king of Aram was able to hold on to the strategically important city of Ramoth-gilead in Transjordan, which was situated on a major trade route running from the Red Sea to Damascus. Previously, the king of Aram promised to return certain cities to Israel in 1 Kings 20:34 in exchange for leniency after defeat in battle. Apparently this was a city that Benhadad never returned to Israel and it was in a strategically important location that Ahab desired to have returned to his dominion.

Will you go with me to battle at Ramoth-gilead? King Ahab of Israel asked King Jehoshaphat of Judah to help him in this dispute against the Aramæans. This made some sense, because Ramoth-gilead was only forty miles from Jerusalem.

<sup>5</sup> But Jehoshaphat also said to the king of Israel, 'Inquire first for the word of the Lord.'

#### 1 Kings 22:5

More about King Jehoshaphat of Judah will be revealed shortly in vv.41-50, but from these verses two things are already apparent: he is at peace with Ahab, confirmed in v.44 below, after the long war described in 1 Kings 14:30, 15:6-7, and 15:16-22; and he is a devout man (v.43 and v.46), content to go into battle at Ramoth-gilead with Ahab, but wishing to inquire first for the word of the Lord. Considering the generally adversarial relationship between Ahab and the prophets

of Yahweh, this was a bold request for Jehoshaphat to ask of Ahab. It was not surprising that Ahab picked prophets who would tell the two kings what they wanted to hear.

This is not the only time that Jehoshaphat wanted to inquire of the Lord through one of his prophets. He did so before setting out to fight the Moabites with King Jehoram of Israel: <<But Jehoshaphat said, 'Is there no prophet of the Lord here, through whom we may inquire of the Lord?' Then one of the servants of the king of Israel answered, 'Elisha son of Shaphat, who used to pour water on the hands of Elijah, is here'>> (2 Kings 3:11). David wrote down why it is always important to seek God before doing anything: <<I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you>> (Psalm 32:8).

<sup>6</sup> Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred of them, and said to them, 'Shall I go to battle against Ramoth-gilead, or shall I refrain?' They said, 'Go up; for the Lord will give it into the hand of the king.'<sup>7</sup> But Jehoshaphat said, 'Is there no other prophet of the Lord here of whom we may inquire?'

#### 1 Kings 22:6-7

Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together. The Hebrew expression occurs in the OT only here along with its parallel in 2 Chronicles 18:5, and also in 1 Kings 18:20, where Ahab had previously gathered prophets together in response to Elijah's demand for the attendance of <<the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah>> (1 Kings 18:19) on Mount Carmel. As things turned out, only the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal actually turned up on that occasion according to 1 Kings 18:22-25, leaving the four hundred prophets of Asherah – precisely the number of men mentioned here – unaccounted for. It is already implied, therefore, that these prophets are not truly prophets of the Lord, but in fact prophets committed to the religion of Jezebel. This is probably further implied in Jehoshaphat's response to their advice, which indicates his suspicion of these prophets: Is there no other prophet of the Lord? Jehoshaphat has been seeking 'the word of the Lord.' Ahab summons just the prophets, and Jehoshaphat then subtly asks whether there is not a genuine prophet of the Lord who might now be consulted. Refer also to the comments made on vv.10-12 below.

Go up; for the Lord will give it into the hand of the king. When Ahab gathered the prophets they were not faithful prophets of the Lord. These were prophets happy to please their kings, and to tell them what they wanted to hear. Jehoshaphat still wanted to hear from a prophet of Yahweh, the Lord.

<sup>8</sup> The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, ‘There is still one other by whom we may inquire of the Lord, Micaiah son of Imlah; but I hate him, for he never prophesies anything favourable about me, but only disaster.’ Jehoshaphat said, ‘Let the king not say such a thing.’ <sup>9</sup> Then the king of Israel summoned an officer and said, ‘Bring quickly Micaiah son of Imlah.’

#### 1 Kings 22:8-9

Let the king not say such a thing. A prophet of the Lord should not be marginalised simply because of what has happened in the past. Also, even though they may not say what a person wants to hear, they should always be respected as servants of God and treated with the utmost respect. Above all, they should be listened to for they speak God’s words. As the Apostle Paul puts it: <<*Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil*>> (1 Thessalonians 5:19-22).

But I hate him, for he never prophesies anything favourable about me, but only disaster. Ahab hated the messenger because of the message. His real conflict was with God, but he focused his hatred against the prophet Micaiah. Yet he was willing to listen to the king of Judah when he advised that Ahab should listen to the prophet Micaiah.

<sup>10</sup> Now the king of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judah were sitting on their thrones, arrayed in their robes, at the threshing-floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets were prophesying before them. <sup>11</sup> Zedekiah son of Chenaanah made for himself horns of iron, and he said, ‘Thus says the Lord: With these you shall gore the Aramæans until they are destroyed.’ <sup>12</sup> All the prophets were prophesying the same and saying, ‘Go up to Ramoth-gilead and triumph; the Lord will give it into the hand of the king.’

#### 1 Kings 22:10-12

Now the king of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judah were sitting on their thrones, arrayed in their robes, at the threshing-floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria. This illustrates the ancient custom of holding court and making decisions at the gates of the city. There were even thrones for high officials to sit on at the gates of the city of Samaria, although these were most likely brought down from Ahab’s palace for the occasion.

The harvesting of cereal crops in Israel was followed by a threshing and winnowing process, in which the threshed material was thrown into the air with a fork or a shovel to allow the breeze to separate the grain, the straw, and the chaff. The grain would then be cleaned and stored in jars, grain pits, or storage houses. The location of this activity was the threshing-floor, an open area sufficiently large for the task, sometimes situated as in this case at the city gate, and useful for large gatherings of people. It is here that all the prophets were prophesying the same before the kings, and here that Zedekiah acted out his play with horns, a reminder once again of the worship of Baal and Asherah; refer to the comments made on 1 Kings 12:27-28 and 16:31-33.

Thus says the Lord. These unfaithful prophets, such as Zedekiah, prophesied in the name of the Lord, but they did not prophesy truthfully. Many commentators believe these prophets were pagan prophets, perhaps representatives of Asherah as already suggested or other pagan gods or goddesses. Yet they clearly prophesied in the name of the Lord. It is best to regard these not as pagan prophets, but unfaithful prophets to the true God. Perhaps these were true followers of Yahweh who were seduced by Ahab's sincere but shallow repentance three years before; refer to 1 Kings 21:27-29. After that, they began to align with Ahab uncritically. Three years later they were willing to prophesy lies to Ahab if that was what he wanted to hear.

With these you shall gore the Aramæans until they are destroyed. Zedekiah used a familiar tool of ancient prophets - the object lesson. He used horns of iron to illustrate the thrust of two powerful forces, armies that would rout the Aramæans. Zedekiah had the agreement of four hundred other prophets, i.e. all the prophets were prophesying the same. This must have been a vivid and entertaining presentation. The reader can be certain that every eye was on Zedekiah when he used the horns of iron to powerfully illustrate the point. It was certainly persuasive to have four hundred prophets speak in agreement on one issue. No matter how powerful and persuasive the presentation, their message was unfaithful to the Lord and, indeed, to their king although it did actually help to fulfil the will of God in getting Ahab killed.

**Those who choose to listen to the words of false prophets pay the price for doing so:** <<*Your prophets have seen for you false and deceptive visions; they have not exposed your iniquity to restore your fortunes, but have seen oracles for you that are false and misleading. All who pass along the way clap their hands at you; they hiss and wag their heads at daughter Jerusalem; 'Is this the city that was called the perfection of beauty, the joy of all the earth?'*>> (Lamentations 2:14-15).

## V.f.ii 1 Kings 22:13-28 - Micaiah Predicts Failure

Despite the favourable forecasts from Ahab's prophets, King Jehoshaphat wants to hear the genuine word of the Lord and so Micaiah is summoned. Eventually, he clearly states that Ahab will die and that Israel will fail in battle. For his faithful prophecy Micaiah is slapped in the face by a false prophet and then put in prison.

<sup>13</sup> The messenger who had gone to summon Micaiah said to him, 'Look, the words of the prophets with one accord are favourable to the king; let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak favourably.'

<sup>14</sup> But Micaiah said, 'As the Lord lives, whatever the Lord says to me, that I will speak.'

### 1 Kings 22:13-14

As the Lord lives, whatever the Lord says to me, that I will speak. The assistants of King Ahab tried to persuade Micaiah to speak in agreement with the four hundred other prophets. Micaiah assured him that he would simply repeat what God had said to him. This was a dramatic scene. Micaiah was brought out from prison for v.26 indicates that he came from prison. The image is therefore of a prophet in rags and chains standing before two kings, ready to speak faithfully on behalf of the Lord, knowing that his message will not be well received.

**Even Balaam knew he could only say and do as the Lord commanded him: <<But Balaam replied to the servants of Balak, 'Although Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not go beyond the command of the Lord my God, to do less or more'>> (Numbers 22:18).**

<sup>15</sup> When he had come to the king, the king said to him, 'Micaiah, shall we go to Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall we refrain?' He answered him, 'Go up and triumph; the Lord will give it into the hand of the king.'<sup>16</sup> But the king said to him, 'How many times must I make you swear to tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the Lord?'

### 1 Kings 22:15-16

Go up and triumph; the Lord will give it into the hand of the king. Surprisingly, Micaiah's first words to Ahab are exactly those of the other prophets, but Ahab sees that his words are a mere mocking imitation of these court prophets who tell him only what he wants to hear. He said similar words to the four hundred unfaithful prophets, but delivered a completely different message.

How many times must I make you swear to tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the Lord? King Ahab recognised the mocking tone of Micaiah's prophecy and knew it contradicted the message of the four hundred prophets. He demanded

that Micaiah tell nothing but the truth, which Ahab believed and hoped would be similar to the message of the four hundred other prophets.

<sup>17</sup> Then Micaiah said, ‘I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, like sheep that have no shepherd; and the Lord said, “These have no master; let each one go home in peace.”’ <sup>18</sup> The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, ‘Did I not tell you that he would not prophesy anything favourable about me, but only disaster?’

### 1 Kings 22:17-18

I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, like sheep that have no shepherd. Micaiah was challenged to tell the truth, and now he changed his tone from mocking to serious. He said that not only would Israel be defeated, but also that their leader or shepherd would perish. Quoting Zechariah 13:7 Jesus perfectly illustrated this concept: <<*And Jesus said to them, ‘You will all become deserters; for it is written, “I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered”*>> (Mark 14:27).

A similar statement was made to the King of Nineveh after the city was destroyed: <<*Your shepherds are asleep, O king of Assyria; your nobles slumber. Your people are scattered on the mountains with no one to gather them*>> (Nahum 3:18).

Did I not tell you that he would not prophesy anything favourable about me, but only disaster? King Ahab said that he wanted the truth, but he could not handle the truth. What he did not consider was that although Micaiah prophesied evil towards Ahab, he prophesied the truth. Ahab knew in his heart that Micaiah would not fear or flatter him, but only declare the word of the Lord. This he construed into personal hatred. Hatred of the messenger of God is clear evidence of wilful wickedness.

<sup>19</sup> Then Micaiah said, ‘Therefore hear the word of the Lord: I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, with all the host of heaven standing beside him to the right and to the left of him.’ <sup>20</sup> And the Lord said, “Who will entice Ahab, so that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?” Then one said one thing, and another said another, <sup>21</sup> until a spirit came forward and stood before the Lord, saying, “I will entice him.” <sup>22</sup> “How?” the Lord asked him. He replied, “I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.” Then the Lord said, “You are to entice him, and you shall succeed; go out and do it.” <sup>23</sup> So you see, the Lord has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets; the Lord has decreed disaster for you.’

## 1 Kings 22:19-23

I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, with all the host of heaven standing beside him. King Ahab and others at the court found it hard to explain how one prophet could be right and four hundred prophets could be wrong. Here, Micaiah explained the message of the four hundred prophets. It is possible that this was just a parable, but it is more likely that Micaiah had an accurate prophetic glimpse into the heavenly drama behind these events. Having seen such a vision gave Micaiah the courage to confront the wicked Ahab in this way. He knew that he was being faithful to the Lord and had nothing to fear from any man, no matter what might be done to him in the body; as Jesus puts it: *<<I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that can do nothing more. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him!>>* (Luke 12:4-5).

**Micaiah was not the only prophet to have such visions of God in heaven:** *<<In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And one called to another and said: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory'>>* (Isaiah 6:1-3), *<<And above the dome over their heads there was something like a throne, in appearance like sapphire; and seated above the likeness of a throne was something that seemed like a human form. Upwards from what appeared like the loins I saw something like gleaming amber, something that looked like fire enclosed all round; and downwards from what looked like the loins I saw something that looked like fire, and there was a splendour all round. Like the bow in a cloud on a rainy day, such was the appearance of the splendour all round. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. When I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard the voice of someone speaking>>* (Ezekiel 1:26-28), **and:** *<<As I watched, thrones were set in place, and an Ancient One took his throne; his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, and its wheels were burning fire. A stream of fire issued and flowed out from his presence. A thousand thousand served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood attending him. The court sat in judgement, and the books were opened>>* (Daniel 7:9-10). **The Apostle John was also granted this privilege:** *<<At once I was in the spirit, and there in heaven stood a throne, with one seated on the throne! And the one seated there looks like jasper and cornelian, and around the throne is a rainbow that looks like an emerald. Around the throne are twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones are twenty-four elders, dressed in white robes, with golden crowns on their heads. Coming from the throne are flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and in front of the throne burn seven flaming torches,*

*which are the seven spirits of God; and in front of the throne there is something like a sea of glass, like crystal>> (Revelation 4:2-6a).*

To the right and to the left of him. Since the right hand was the place of favour, this may indicate that God spoke to the combined host of heaven, both faithful and fallen angelic beings. However, there is favour with God to sit on either side of him: <<*And they said to him, 'Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory'*>> (Mark 10:37). The parable separating the nations demonstrates the order of favour: <<*All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left*>> (Matthew 25:32-33).

Some people forget that Satan and his fellow fallen angels have controlled access to heaven: <<*One day the heavenly beings came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them*>> (Job 1:6), and: <<*Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, proclaiming, 'Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Messiah, for the accuser of our comrades has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God'*>> (Revelation 12:10). There is a well-intentioned but mistaken teaching that God can allow no evil in his presence, meaning that Satan and other fallen angels could not be in his presence. These passages show that God can allow evil in his presence, although he can have no fellowship with evil and one day all evil will be removed from his presence: <<*Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire; and anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire*>> (Revelation 20:14-15).

Who will entice Ahab, so that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? God wanted to bring judgement against Ahab, so he asked this group of the host of heaven for a volunteer to lead Ahab into battle.

A spirit came forward and stood before the Lord. The imagery is that of a council of war, with the heavenly King sitting on his throne surrounded by his army, making plans to defeat Ahab in battle.

I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. Apparently, one of the fallen angels volunteered for this task, for surely a faithful angel would not consider becoming a lying spirit. Since Ahab wanted to be deceived, God would give him what he wanted, using a willing fallen angel who worked through willing unfaithful prophets.

*It is rather a personified spirit of prophecy: <<On that day, says the Lord of hosts, I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, so that they shall be remembered no more; and also I will remove from the land the prophets and*

*the unclean spirit*>> (Zechariah 13:2), and: <<*We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognise the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood*>> (1 John 4:6 NIVUK), for even the false prophets may be governed by supernatural or spiritual forces rather than merely human reason. It represents the power of a lie in the mouth of someone opposed to the truth and speaking for their own ends.

The Lord has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets. Although God himself does not do evil, he sometimes uses evil agents to accomplish his purposes; refer also to the comment made on 1 Samuel 16:14 where an evil spirit from the Lord tormented Saul because of his sin.

The sense here is that, as a follower of false gods, Ahab is fittingly deceived by their spokesmen, his prophets, although not deliberately: <<*For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion, leading them to believe what is false*>> (2 Thessalonians 2:11). God's action has the nature of a test. The irony of the situation is that Ahab is told the truth but does not recognise it as such, even though he had insisted that Micaiah tell him the truth. His repudiation of Micaiah's message and his treatment of the prophet indicate his contempt for the truth. The teachings of Jesus are the truth and it is this that will lead to spiritual and moral freedom: <<*Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, 'If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free'*>> (John 8:31-32), and: <<*So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed*>> (John 8:36).

<sup>24</sup> Then Zedekiah son of Chenaanah came up to Micaiah, slapped him on the cheek, and said, 'Which way did the spirit of the Lord pass from me to speak to you?'

#### 1 Kings 22:24

Then Zedekiah son of Chenaanah came up to Micaiah, slapped him on the cheek. Zedekiah responded the way many do when they are defeated in argument - he responded with violence. Others, too, are recorded as responding in this way: <<*Jesus answered, 'If I have spoken wrongly, testify to the wrong. But if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?'*>> (John 18:23), and: <<*While Paul was looking intently at the council he said, 'Brothers, up to this day I have lived my life with a clear conscience before God.' Then the high priest Ananias ordered those standing near him to strike him on the mouth. At this Paul said to him, 'God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! Are you sitting there to judge me according to the law, and yet in violation of the law you order me to be struck?'*>> (Acts 23:1-3).

Which way did the spirit of the Lord pass from me to speak to you? Micaiah's claim in v.23 was that Zedekiah and his colleagues had a lying spirit. Zedekiah's response is that he himself has been influenced by 'the spirit of the Lord' who cannot have been speaking to both him and Micaiah, otherwise the messages would have been the same and not a complete contrast. Job gave a similar answer to Bildad the Shuhite: <<*With whose help have you uttered words, and whose spirit has come forth from you?*>> (Job 26:4).

<sup>25</sup> Micaiah replied, 'You will find out on that day when you go in to hide in an inner chamber.'

### 1 Kings 22:25

All will become clear, Micaiah claims, when the disaster that he is predicting eventually falls and Zedekiah is forced to hide away in the city inside someone's home; the inner chamber was also Ben-hadad's hiding place after the disaster at Aphek: <<*The rest of them escaped to the city of Aphek, where the wall collapsed on twenty-seven thousand of them. And Ben-Hadad fled to the city and hid in an inner room*>> (1 Kings 20:30 NIV).

<sup>26</sup> The king of Israel then ordered, 'Take Micaiah, and return him to Amon the governor of the city and to Joash the king's son,<sup>27</sup> and say, "Thus says the king: Put this fellow in prison, and feed him on reduced rations of bread and water until I come in peace.'" <sup>28</sup> Micaiah said, 'If you return in peace, the Lord has not spoken by me.' And he said, 'Hear, you peoples, all of you!'

### 1 Kings 22:26-28

Take Micaiah, and return him to Amon seems to suggest that they had taken Micaiah from the prison to speak to these kings.

Amon is evidently one of Ahab's high officials, entrusted with control of city affairs in Samaria, while Joash the king's son is responsible for the confinement of prisoners; refer also to Jeremiah 36:26 and 38:6. It is not clear whether this office requires that its holder literally be the son of the king.

Put this fellow in prison. King Ahab responded the way many tyrants do when they are confronted with the truth. Ahab wanted Micaiah imprisoned and deprived, i.e. feed him on reduced rations of bread and water until I come in peace.

If you return in peace, the Lord has not spoken by me. The prophet Micaiah made one final and ultimate appeal. He was willing to be judged by whether his prophecy came to pass or not. He knew that if his prophecy proved false then he might be executed for taking the Lord's name in vain. However, he was clearly

confident that the vision and word he had was from the Lord and therefore he spoke boldly into the situation.

**The Lord has no place in his kingdom for false prophets: <<My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions and utter lying divinations; they shall not be in the council of my people, nor be enrolled in the register of the house of Israel, nor shall they enter the land of Israel; and you shall know that I am the Lord God>> (Ezekiel 13:9).**

#### V.f.iii 1 Kings 22:29-40 - Defeat and Death of Ahab

Ahab goes into battle dressed as an ordinary soldier but he persuades Jehoshaphat to go to war in his king's robes. Initially, the Aramæans pursue the king of Judah but they soon realise that he is not Ahab, the man they have been charged to kill. A stray arrow finds Ahab in battle and he is mortally wounded. He is taken away in his chariot to Samaria, where he is buried.

<sup>29</sup> So the king of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judah went up to Ramoth-gilead. <sup>30</sup> The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, 'I will disguise myself and go into battle, but you wear your robes.' So the king of Israel disguised himself and went into battle.

#### 1 Kings 22:29-30

So the king of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judah went up to Ramoth-gilead. It is easy to understand why King Ahab of Israel went to this battle; he did not want to believe that Micaiah's prophecy was true and wanted to courageously oppose it. It is less easy to understand why King Jehoshaphat of Judah went to this battle with Ahab. He should have believed the prophecy of Micaiah and known that the battle would end in disaster and the death of at least Ahab. It may be that Jehoshaphat had a fatalistic attitude towards the will of God, figuring that if it was all God's will then there was nothing he or anyone else could do about it.

The king of Israel disguised himself. Going into the battle, Ahab did not want to be identified as a king and therefore become a special target. He thought this would help protect him against Micaiah's prophecy of doom. Ahab's disguise is evidence of unclear thinking, for if Micaiah has truly been lying, there was no danger, and if he has been telling the truth, Ahab would die, whatever he does. The disguise is also a harbinger of disaster; it recalls the actions of both Saul and Jeroboam just before their deaths; refer to 1 Samuel 28:8 and 1 Kings 14:1-18 respectively. It is foolish to think that a mere disguise will hide someone from the Lord's purposes.

**King Saul once disguised himself although on that occasion he tried to fool a medium whom he wished to consult against his own laws: <<So Saul disguised himself and put on other clothes and went there, he and two men with him.**

*They came to the woman by night. And he said, 'Consult a spirit for me, and bring up for me the one whom I name to you'>> (1 Samuel 28:8).*

It is more difficult to explain why Jehoshaphat agreed to go into the battle as the only clearly identified king. Perhaps he was either not very smart or he had very great faith. What it did show was great leadership on the part of Jehoshaphat for his men would have expected their king to lead them in this way, unlike the actions of King Ahab. He was following in the traditions of his ancestor David: <<*For some time, while Saul was king over us, it was you who led out Israel and brought it in. The Lord said to you: It is you who shall be shepherd of my people Israel, you who shall be ruler over Israel*>> (2 Samuel 5:2).

<sup>31</sup> Now the king of Aram had commanded the thirty-two captains of his chariots, 'Fight with no one small or great, but only with the king of Israel.' <sup>32</sup> When the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, they said, 'It is surely the king of Israel.' So they turned to fight against him; and Jehoshaphat cried out. <sup>33</sup> When the captains of the chariots saw that it was not the king of Israel, they turned back from pursuing him.

### 1 Kings 22:31-33

Fight with no one small or great, but only with the king of Israel. Ahab's previous mercy to Ben-hadad did not win any lasting favour with the rulers of Aram. This strategy of the Aramæan army made Ahab's counter-strategy of disguising himself in battle seem very wise.

Jehoshaphat cried out. When the captains of the chariots saw that it was not the king of Israel, they turned back from pursuing him. Although Jehoshaphat alone is wearing royal robes, some commentators believe he was saved from death because his Judæan shout, either its form or its content, reveals that he is not the man whom Ben-hadad was determined to kill. It was of course to the Lord that he cried out, who answered his prayer by turning back his pursuers: <<*When the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, they said, 'It is the king of Israel.' So they turned to fight against him; and Jehoshaphat cried out, and the Lord helped him. God drew them away from him, for when the captains of the chariots saw that it was not the king of Israel, they turned back from pursuing him*>> (2 Chronicles 18:31-32).

After the close escape at Ramoth-gilead, Jehoshaphat rededicated himself to the spiritual reform of Judah: <<*Jehoshaphat resided at Jerusalem; then he went out again among the people, from Beer-sheba to the hill country of*

*Ephraim, and brought them back to the Lord, the God of their ancestors>> (2 Chronicles 19:4).*

<sup>34</sup> But a certain man drew his bow and unknowingly struck the king of Israel between the scale-armor and the breastplate; so he said to the driver of his chariot, 'Turn around, and carry me out of the battle, for I am wounded.'

#### 1 Kings 22:34

But a certain man drew his bow and unknowingly struck the king of Israel. This seemed to be pure chance. It was a certain man, and he pulled his bow at random, but it struck as if it were a sin-seeking missile. God orchestrated the unintended actions of a man to result in an exercise of his judgement.

Between the scale-armor and the breastplate. The arrow shot at random flies unerringly to one of the few undefended spots on Ahab's body, and thus fulfils what Micaiah had warned of in vv.20-23.

*Other kings would die in similar fashion: <<Jehu drew his bow with all his strength, and shot Joram between the shoulders, so that the arrow pierced his heart; and he sank in his chariot>> (2 Kings 9:24), and: <<The archers shot King Josiah; and the king said to his servants, 'Take me away, for I am badly wounded'>> (2 Chronicles 35:23).*

<sup>35</sup> The battle grew hot that day, and the king was propped up in his chariot facing the Aramæans, until at evening he died; the blood from the wound had flowed into the bottom of the chariot. <sup>36</sup> Then about sunset a shout went through the army, 'Every man to his city, and every man to his country!'

#### 1 Kings 22:35-36

The king was propped up in his chariot. To his credit Ahab stays on the battlefield all day long, presumably to encourage his troops; but at sunset he dies. Ahab faced the end of his life bravely, dying propped up in his chariot to inspire his troops. When his death became known the battle was over. It appears that the Israelites and men of Judah maintained the fight the whole of the day; but when at evening the king died, and this was known, there was a proclamation made: 'Every man to his city, and every man to his country!', probably with the consent of both Aramæans and Hebrews, that the war was over.

<sup>37</sup> So the king died, and was brought to Samaria; they buried the king in Samaria. <sup>38</sup> They washed the chariot by the pool of Samaria; the dogs

licked up his blood, and the prostitutes washed themselves in it, according to the word of the Lord that he had spoken.

### 1 Kings 22:37-38

So the king died. The word through the Prophet Micaiah proved true. King Ahab never returned to Samaria or Israel in peace.

They washed the chariot by the pool of Samaria; the dogs licked up his blood, and the prostitutes washed themselves in it. This was an almost fulfilment of God's word through Elijah in 1 Kings 21:19, where Elijah prophesied that dogs would lick the blood of Ahab. This proved true, but not in the place Elijah said it would happen. God relented from his original judgement against Ahab announced in 1 Kings Chapter 21, but because of Ahab's false repentance and continued sin a very similar judgement came upon him. Elijah's prophecy may not mention prostitutes, but only dogs, however, there is already a close association between the two in Deuteronomy 23:17-18, which enjoins the Israelite never to become a cult prostitute, Hebrew *qedeshah* for a woman or *qedesh* for a man, or to bring into the temple the earnings of a female prostitute, Hebrew *zonah*, or a male prostitute, Hebrew *keleb*, which is literally 'dog'. This association reminds the reader of the idolatrous career that has brought Ahab to this ignominious end.

According to the word of the Lord. There was another prophecy fulfilled in the death of Ahab. It was the word from the anonymous prophet of 1 Kings 20:42, that Ahab spared Ben-hadad's life at the expense of his own.

<sup>39</sup> Now the rest of the acts of Ahab, and all that he did, and the ivory house that he built, and all the cities that he built, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel? <sup>40</sup> So Ahab slept with his ancestors; and his son Ahaziah succeeded him.

### 1 Kings 22:39-40

The ivory house that he built. By materialist standards the reign of Ahab was a success. He was generally militarily successful and enjoyed a prosperous economy. Yet spiritually his reign was a disaster, one of the worst ever for Israel. Archæologists have uncovered a palace reminiscent of Ahab's ivory house at Samaria. Numerous costly ivory articles were found in the debris of the building.

**Ivory decor was known as a luxury item in palaces:** <<*The king also made a great ivory throne, and overlaid it with pure gold*>> (2 Chronicles 9:17), <<*From ivory palaces stringed instruments make you glad*>> (Psalm 45:8b), **and:** <<*I will tear down the winter house as well as the summer house; and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall come to an end, says the Lord*>> (Amos 3:15).

The Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel was a separate record from Kings and Chronicles to which the authors had access that recorded everything of significance that occurred during the reign of the kings.

## **VI 1 Kings 22:41-53 - Jehoshaphat and Ahaziah**

**Both Jehoshaphat of Judah and Ahaziah of Israel have already entered the narrative of First Kings as characters in Ahab's story as comrade-in-arms and successor respectively. Now they are given a place of their own.**

### **VI.a 1 Kings 22:41-50 - Jehoshaphat Reigns over Judah**

Jehoshaphat was a good king over Judah taking over from his father Asa. He established peace with the northern kingdom of Israel and removed the remaining male prostitutes from the land but some of the high places of worship still remained. He had merchant ships built to transport gold from Ophir just as Solomon had done but they were wrecked in port at Ezion-geber.

<sup>41</sup> Jehoshaphat son of Asa began to reign over Judah in the fourth year of King Ahab of Israel. <sup>42</sup> Jehoshaphat was thirty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned for twenty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Azubah daughter of Shilhi. <sup>43</sup> He walked in all the way of his father Asa; he did not turn aside from it, doing what was right in the sight of the Lord; yet the high places were not taken away, and the people still sacrificed and offered incense on the high places. <sup>44</sup> Jehoshaphat also made peace with the king of Israel.

#### **1 Kings 22:41-44**

He walked in all the way of his father Asa. Jehoshaphat's religious policy is the same as Asa's. He did what was right in the sight of the Lord (1 Kings 15:11), and he will have nothing to do with male temple prostitutes, even if the high places have still not been taken away; refer to 1 Kings 15:14 and the associated comments.

Jehoshaphat was a good king, and he is even at peace with the king of Israel, which his father Asa had achieved; refer to 1 Kings 15:16 and 15:32.

<sup>45</sup> Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, and his power that he showed, and how he waged war, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah? <sup>46</sup> The remnant of the male temple prostitutes who were still in the land from the days of his father Asa, he exterminated.

## 1 Kings 22:45-46

Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, and his power that he showed, and how he waged war, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah. The writer of First Kings actually summarised many of the remarkable accomplishments of Jehoshaphat, who was one of the better kings of Judah. Many of Jehoshaphat's other accomplishments are listed in Second Chronicles:

- He sent teachers of God's Word throughout his entire kingdom; refer to 2 Chronicles 17:7-10. By this little band of princes, Levites and priests, sixteen in all, Jehoshaphat did more toward impressing the surrounding nations with a sense of his power than the largest and best-equipped standing army could have secured for him.
- He established a permanent military garrison along the northern frontier (2 Chronicles 17:1-2, and 17:12).
- He trained and equipped a sizeable army (2 Chronicles 17:14-19) that was able to quell a Transjordan invasion (2 Chronicles 20:1-30).
- He placed Edom under Judæan authority, controlling an important caravan route to the south (2 Kings 3:8-27 and 2 Chronicles 20:36).
- God blessed his reign so much that the fear of the Lord came upon neighbouring nations so that they did not make war against Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 17:10).
- Jehoshaphat was also an able administrator, implementing judicial reforms (2 Chronicles 19:5-11) and religious reforms (2 Chronicles 17:3-9).
- Jehoshaphat was also the king connected to the famous incident when the army of Judah saw a great victory won as the Levites led the battle with praise (2 Chronicles 20:15-23).

The Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah was a separate record from Kings and Chronicles to which the authors had access that recorded everything of significance that occurred during the reign of the kings.

The remnant of the male temple prostitutes who were still in the land from the days of his father Asa, he exterminated. Jehoshaphat did not do everything he should have as a king. Yet he reformed Israel even more deeply than Asa had managed to do. In 2 Chronicles 17:6, it is expressly said that he did take away the high places. Allowing that the text is right in Second Chronicles the two places may be easily recognised. There were two kinds of high places in the land:

1. Those used for idolatrous purposes.
2. Those that were consecrated to God, and were used before the temple was built.

The former he did take away, the latter he did not.

<sup>47</sup> There was no king in Edom; a deputy was king. <sup>48</sup> Jehoshaphat made ships of the Tarshish type to go to Ophir for gold; but they did not go, for the ships were wrecked at Ezion-geber. <sup>49</sup> Then Ahaziah son of Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, 'Let my servants go with your servants in the ships', but Jehoshaphat was not willing. <sup>50</sup> Jehoshaphat slept with his ancestors and was buried with his ancestors in the city of his father David; his son Jehoram succeeded him.

### 1 Kings 22:47-50

There was no king in Edom; a deputy was king. The Hebrew for 'deputy' is otherwise used in 1-2 Kings only of Solomon's various officials; Jehoshaphat controls Edom as Solomon had controlled his various districts, which is why the king of Edom turns up in alliance with Judah in 2 Kings Chapter 3 in a noticeably supporting role. Judah's control of Edom was not challenged until the reign of Jehoshaphat's son Jehoram; refer to 2 Kings 8:20-22.

The ships were wrecked at Ezion-geber. Because Jehoshaphat rules over Edom, just as Solomon had, he is able like Solomon to build a fleet of ships at Ezion-geber near Elath in Edom (1 Kings 9:26-28), but he does not benefit from them. These turn out to be not days of glory for the house of David but days of humbling, just as God had said to Jeroboam: *<<If you will listen to all that I command you, walk in my ways, and do what is right in my sight by keeping my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did, I will be with you, and will build you an enduring house, as I built for David, and I will give Israel to you. For this reason I will punish the descendants of David, but not for ever>>* (1 Kings 11:38-39).

Jehoshaphat was not willing. Solomon's Israel was truly unified, but the current peace between Israel and Judah (v.44) is little more than the absence of hostility. Whereas Solomon took Sidonians on board his ships in 1 Kings 9:27, Jehoshaphat refuses even to have Israelites along. As 2 Chronicles 20:35 tells it, Jehoshaphat was originally willing to cooperate with Ahaziah to build the merchant ships. However, after Eliezer prophesied against Jehoshaphat's alliance with Ahaziah in 2 Chronicles 20:37, Jehoshaphat changed his mind, which is the situation described here in First Kings.

Jehoshaphat slept with his ancestors and was buried with his ancestors in the city of his father David. The Davidic kings were buried in a complex of tombs in Jerusalem. Jehoshaphat will reappear in 2 Kings Chapter 3, in what must be regarded as a 'flashback' to the earlier part, i.e. the first seven years of Jehoram of Israel's reign, when Jehoshaphat was still on the throne of Judah.

His son Jehoram succeeded him. Jehoram actually co-reigned with his father from 853-848 BC. Jehoshaphat gave his son Jehoram to Athaliah in marriage, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel; refer to 2 Chronicles 18:1. This was a serious error because the reign of Ahaziah was a spiritual and national disaster for Judah as Jehoram walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, just as the house of Ahab had done, due to the influence of his wife. The ill effects of this were felt even to the next generation, because Ahaziah the son of Jehoram was also a bad king for Judah; refer to 2 Chronicles 22:2-4.

#### VI.b 1 Kings 22:51-53 - Ahaziah Reigns over Israel

Ahaziah became king of Israel following the death of Ahab but he continued to rule wickedly and was also a Baal worshipper like his parents.

<sup>51</sup> Ahaziah son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria in the seventeenth year of King Jehoshaphat of Judah; he reigned for two years over Israel. <sup>52</sup> He did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of his father and mother, and in the way of Jeroboam son of Nebat, who caused Israel to sin. <sup>53</sup> He served Baal and worshipped him; he provoked the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger, just as his father had done.

#### 1 Kings 22:51-53

He reigned for two years over Israel. Ahab reigned for twenty two years, but his son only reigned two years. Although his repentance was shallow, when Ahab repented after an announcement of judgement in 1 Kings Chapter 21, God relented from the immediate judgement and promised to bring judgement in the days of Ahab's son. Ahaziah's short reign was a fulfilment of this prophecy.

He did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of his father and mother, and in the way of Jeroboam son of Nebat. Considering the sinful ways of Jeroboam, Ahab and Jezebel, there is hardly anything worse that could be said of a king. With this, the Book of First Kings ends on a low note. It began with the promise of the twilight of Israel's greatest king, David. It ends with the sad reign of one of the most wicked kings ever to rule over one of the kingdoms that came about due to the division of the tribes of Israel.