

HISTORICAL BOOKS

Introduction

We now present the most interesting fragments from several books dealing on the history of Israel, from the occupation of Canaan until the return from the Babylonian Captivity.

In these books we find events, wars, reigns... but, once again, the intention of the authors is religious. The basic argument running through all these books is that Israel is safe as long as it follows the law of God, because God protects them. But when they go to other gods or trespass the laws of God, then ruin reigns and their enemies triumph over them. These are, therefore, historical books with a religious intention.

JOSHUA

Introduction

The book of Joshua tells us about the conquest of Canaan. It is a very theologized history: the events that really happened are presented wrapped in an interpretation full of miracles, showing the astonishing protection of Yahweh.

To enter the Land they have to go through the Jordan River (they are coming from the Western steppes). This passing through the River is presented as a second passing through the Sea, as fantastic as the famous epic.

The conquest of Jericho is also a ritual narration: a sacred procession along the city murals, as a symbolism of the power of God that gives them the Land.

Finally, at the great Assembly of Sichem, Joshua obtains the unity of all tribes. They all renew the Covenant; they all become protagonists of the great adventure of Exodus: the People of God in its entirety is finally rooted in The Promised Land, the Promise has been fulfilled.

3 14When the people set out from their camp to cross the Jordan, the priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant went before them. 15There was much water in the Jordan, for it was overflowing its banks at this time of the barley harvest. Nevertheless, when those who carried the Ark went down to the river and their feet touched the edge of the water, the water from upstream stopped flowing. 16The water stood still, forming something like a dam very far from that place, near Adam, the neighboring city of Zarethan. The water flowing down to the Dead Sea was completely cut off, and so the people could cross opposite Jericho.

17The priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant remained in the middle of the river which dried up, until all the Israelites had crossed the Jordan.

The conquest of Jericho

6 1The inhabitants of Jericho had closed the city and had fastened their bolts so that the Israelites could not enter. No one came in and no one went out.

2But Yahweh said to Joshua:

—I will give you the city, its king and all its men of war. 3For this, you shall have to go around the city once every day for six days. 4Seven priests shall go before the Ark bearing the seven trumpets used in the time of the Jubilee. On the seventh day, they shall march around the city seven times, 5and when they blow the horn, all the people shall come up to attack, shouting their battle cry. At that moment, the walls of the city will fall and everyone shall enter straight ahead of him.

6Joshua, son of Nun, called the priests and said to them:

—You shall carry the Ark of the Covenant; seven priests shall go ahead with the trumpets they use for the Jubilee.

7Then Joshua said to the people:

—You shall march around the city and the vanguard of the army shall go before the Ark of Yahweh.

10Joshua had given this order:

—Do not shout or utter anything, nor let even a single word be heard, until the day comes when I say: Shout and cry out!

11That day he had the Ark of Yahweh carried around the city once, then all returned to the camp where they spent the night. 12On the following day, Joshua rose early in the morning, 13and the priests took the Ark. 15On the seventh day, the Israelites rose early at dawn and marched around Jericho in the same way as on the previous days. But on that day, they did it seven times. 16At the seventh time, as the priests blew the trumpets, Joshua ordered the people:

—Shout your battle cry for Yahweh has given you the city.

17The city and all that is in it shall be given in anathema to Yahweh.

20The people shouted and the trumpets blew. At this precise moment, the walls of the city fell. Then everyone went straight into the city to the place before him.

27So Yahweh was with Joshua and made him famous in all the land.

11 23Joshua seized the whole land as Yahweh had directed Moses and gave it as an inheritance to the Israelites to be distributed among their tribes. With this, the land rested from war.

Renewal of the covenant

241Joshua summoned all the tribes of Israel in Shechem, and assembled the elders, leaders, judges and secretaries. And together they presented themselves before God.

2Addressing the people, Joshua said to them:

—Yahweh, the God of Israel, commands me to say to you: “Your ancestors lived beyond the Euphrates River—Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor—serving other gods. 3But I brought Abraham your father from beyond the Euphrates and led him through the whole land of Canaan. Then I gave him a son Isaac, that he might have numerous descendants. 4And to Isaac, I gave two sons: Esau and Jacob. Esau received the mountains of Seir as his inheritance, while Jacob and his sons went down to Egypt.

5“Then I sent Moses and Aaron to punish Egypt in the way that you know, that you might leave. 13I gave you lands which you have not tilled, cities which you did not build but in which you now live. I gave you vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant but from which you now eat.

14“So fear Yahweh, and be sincere and faithful in serving him. Set aside those gods your ancestors worshiped in Mesopotamia and Egypt. Serve only Yahweh. 15But if you do not want to serve Yahweh, make known this very day whom you shall serve—whether they be the gods your ancestors served in Mesopotamia or the gods of the Amorites who formerly occupied the land in which you now live. As for me, I and my household will serve Yahweh.”

16The people answered:

—May God not permit that we ever abandon Yahweh to serve other gods! 17For it was he who brought us and our ancestors out of Egypt, the house of slavery. It was he who did those great wonders that we have seen; he protected us on the way and through all the land where we passed.

24The people answered:

—We will serve Yahweh, our God, and obey his commands.

25On that day at Shechem, Joshua made a covenant with the people and fixed laws and ordinances. 26He also wrote down everything expressed in the book of the Law of God; he chose a great stone and put it under the oak tree in the sacred place of Yahweh. 27Then Joshua said to the people:

—This stone shall be a witness to all that Yahweh said to us, for it heard all these words. It shall be a witness against you, lest you deal falsely with Yahweh.

28Joshua immediately sent the people away and everyone returned to his land.

JUDGES

Introduction

Israel is established in Canaan, but they have powerful enemies as neighbors, especially the Philistines that are in what today is “the Gaza strip.” Israel is not a united people, they do not have a permanent ruler. When difficulties with their neighbors arrive, “Yahweh raises a saving ruler.” These ruler are “the Judges.”

Once again, what the writers are interested in is the history of the fidelity / infidelity of the people of Yahweh, and the protection / punishment of Yahweh to his people.

Penitential liturgy

2 6When Joshua dismissed the Israelites, each one of them went to his inheritance to occupy the land.

7The people served Yahweh during the lifetime of Joshua and of the leaders who outlived him, and who had witnessed all the great works of Yahweh for Israel. 8Joshua, son of Nun, the servant of Moses, died at the age of one hundred and ten years. 9They buried him at the boundary of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the mountains of Ephraim, north of the mountain of Gaash. 10That whole generation died and another one came, but they did not know Yahweh or what he had done for Israel.

Grand introduction

11The Israelites treated Yahweh badly for they served the Baals instead. 12They abandoned Yahweh, the God of their ancestors who had brought them out of Egypt, and served other gods, the gods of the neighboring peoples. They bowed before those gods and offended Yahweh.

13When Yahweh saw that they had abandoned him to serve Baal and Ashtaroth, 14he became angry with his people and gave them into the hands of plunderers who left them in misery. He himself sold them to their enemies who completely surrounded the Israelites, so that these Israelites could no longer withstand them.

16Yahweh raised up “judges” (or liberators) who saved the Israelites from their exploiters. 17But neither did they obey those “judges” for they still prostituted themselves to other gods and worshiped them. They soon left the way of their fathers who obeyed the commandments of Yahweh; they did not follow the way of their fathers.

Gideon

6 1The Israelites treated Yahweh badly, and Yahweh gave them into the hands of the Midianites for seven years.

11The Angel of Yahweh came and sat under the sacred tree at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash, of the family of Abiezer. Gideon, the son of Joash, was threshing the wheat in the winepress to hide it from the Midianites.

12The Angel of Yahweh said to him:

—Yahweh be with you, valiant warrior.

13Gideon answered:

—Please, my lord, if Yahweh is with us, why is all this happening to us? Where are the wonders which our fathers recounted to us? Did they not say that Yahweh led them up from Egypt? Why has he abandoned us now and given us into the hands of the Midianites?

14Yahweh then turned to him and said:

—Go, and with your courage, save Israel from the Midianites. It is I who send you.

15Gideon answered:

—Pardon me, Lord, but how can I save Israel? My family is the lowliest in my tribe and I am the least in the family of my father.

16Yahweh said to him:

—I will be with you and you shall defeat the people of Midian with one single stroke.

33All Midian, Amalek and the people of the East joined forces, crossed the Jordan and invaded the plains of Jezreel.

34Then the spirit of Yahweh clothed Gideon with strength; he blew the trumpet and summoned the men of Abiezer. 35He sent messengers throughout the whole territory of Manasseh and they joined him. The people of Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali also went out to meet them.

36Gideon said to God, “If indeed you will save Israel by my hand, as you have said, grant me this favor. 37I am going to spread this woolen fleece on the threshing ground. If the dew falls only on the fleece while all the ground remains dry, then I shall know that you are to save Israel by my hand, as you have promised.”

38So it was: Gideon rose at day-break, squeezed the fleece and wrung out the dew, filling a cup with water. 39Gideon again spoke to God and said to him:

—Don’t be angry with me if I dare to speak to you again. Allow me to make another test with the fleece: let it be dry only on the fleece and let dew come on all the ground.

40That night, Yahweh did so. The fleece remained dry and dew covered all the ground.

71Jerubaal, that is Gideon, rose early with all the people who were with him and they encamped beside the spring of Harod. The Midianite camp was farther north and extended from the hill of Moreb to the plains.

2Then Yahweh said to Gideon:

—There are too many people with you. If I give the Midianites into their hands, the Israelites might think that they won over the Midianites by their own strength. 3So summon your men and say to them that whoever is afraid may go home.

So twenty-two thousand men returned and only ten thousand remained.

4Yahweh said to Gideon:

—There are still too many people. Take them down to the water and I myself will test them for you. If I say: This one shall go with you, he will go. And if I say: Not this one, he shall not go.

5So Gideon brought them down to the water and Yahweh told him:

—Those who lap the water like a dog, you shall place on one side. And those who kneel down to drink, you shall place on the other side.

6Three hundred men lapped the water, and the rest knelt down to drink.

7Then Yahweh said to Gideon:

—I will help these three hundred men who lapped the water and give the Midianites into your hands. Let the rest return to their homes.

8The three hundred men took the pitchers and the horns of whom Gideon dismissed. Finally, Gideon and his three hundred men faced the Midianites who were encamped below the valley.

9That night Yahweh said to him:

—Rise and go down to the camp, because I have given it into your hands.

15When Gideon heard the dream and its interpretation, he bowed, returned to the camp of Israel and said:

—Arise, for Yahweh has given the camp of Midian into your hands!

16Gideon divided the three hundred men into three groups. Then he handed the trumpets to all and the empty pitchers with lighted torches inside. 17He said to them:

—Look at me, and do what I do. When I come to the outskirts of the camp, do as I do. 18When I and those who are with me blow the trumpets then blow yours all around the camp and shout: For Yahweh and for Gideon!

19With the hundred men with him, Gideon came to the Midianite camp just as the guards were changing shift at the beginning of the midnight watch.

20Then the Israelites smashed the jars, took the torches in one hand, and blew the trumpets they were holding in the other hand. After blowing the trumpets, the three groups shouted:

—For Yahweh and for Gideon!

21Everyone stood in his place around the camp while the Midianites ran, shouting as they fled. 22As the three hundred Israelites went on blowing the trumpets, Yahweh made the Midianites in the camp kill one another. Those who managed to escape went as far as Beth-shittah toward Zererah, and as far as the border of Abel-meholah opposite Tabbath.

813After the battle, Gideon, the son of Joash, returned through the slope of Heres.

22The Israelites said to Gideon:

—Since you have saved us from the Midianites, you shall be our king, and after you, your son and the descendants of your son.

23But Gideon answered:

—I will not rule over Israel, nor my son, for Yahweh is our king!

32Gideon the son of Joash died at a happy old age, and he was buried in the tomb of Joash his father, in Ophrah of Abiezer.

33After the death of Gideon, the Israelites again prostituted themselves to the Baals and took Baal-Berith as god. 34The Israelites no longer remembered Yahweh, their God, who had freed them from the hands of all the enemies who surrounded them. 35Neither were they grateful to the family of Jerubaal-Gideon for all the good things he had done to Israel.

Samson

131The Israelites again treated Yahweh badly so he gave them into the hands of the Philistines for forty years.

2There was a man of Zorah of the tribe of Dan, called Manoah. His wife could not bear children.

3The Angel of Yahweh appeared to this woman and said to her:

—You have not borne children and have not given birth, but see, you are to conceive and give birth to a son. 4Because of this, take care not to take wine or any alcoholic drink, nor to eat unclean foods from now on, 5for you shall bear a son who shall be a Nazirite of Yahweh from the womb of his mother. Never shall his hair be cut for he is consecrated to Yahweh. He shall begin the liberation of the Israelites from the Philistine oppression.

24The woman gave birth to a son and named him Samson. The boy grew and Yahweh blessed him. 25Then the Spirit of Yahweh began to move him when he was in Mahane Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.

14 5Samson then went down to Timnah, and when he reached the vineyards at Timnah, a young lion came up roaring toward him. 6The Spirit of Yahweh then seized Samson. With bare hands he tore the lion to pieces as he would have done with a young goat.

151After some time, during wheat harvest, Samson went to visit his wife, bringing a young goat with him, and he said:

—I want to be with my wife in our room.

But her father would not let him in, 2saying:

—I thought that you did not like her anymore, so I gave her to your companion. Is not her younger sister still better? Why don't you take her instead?

3Samson replied:

—This time I owe nothing to the Philistines even if I do them harm.

4Samson went out and caught three hundred foxes, took some torches and tied the animals tail to tail. He then placed a torch in between every two tails, 5set fire to the torches and turned the foxes loose in the grain fields of the Philistines. In this way, he burned the sheaves and the standing grain, together with the vineyards and olive groves.

6The Philistines asked:

—Who did this?

And they answered:

—Samson, the son-in-law of the man from Timnah, because this man took his wife and gave her to his companion.

So they went up and burned her and her family. 7Samson said to them:

—Since you did this, I will not rest until I have had my revenge on you.

8So he caused a great havoc upon them.

Samson and Delilah

164After this, Samson fell in love with a woman in the valley of Sorek; she was called Delilah. 5The Philistine chiefs said to this woman:

—Charm him and find out where he gets such strength and how we can defeat and tie him up. Each of us shall give you eleven hundred pieces of silver.

6So Delilah asked Samson:

—Tell me, please, where do you get such strength and how can others tie you up to subdue you?

7Samson answered her:

—If they bind me with seven new and moist bowstrings, then I shall lose my strength and be as any other man.

8The Philistine chiefs sent seven new bowstrings that had not been dried to Delilah, and she tied Samson with them. 9With men hidden in her dwelling, she shouted:

—Samson, here come the Philistines!

Samson broke the bowstrings as if they were burned flax. So they did not find out where his great strength came from.

10Then Delilah said to Samson:

—You made a fool of me, and you lied to me. Tell me, how can they subdue you?

11Samson answered her:

—If they bind me this time with seven newly-braided ropes which have never been used, then I shall lose my strength and be like any other man.

12So Delilah bound him with seven newly-braided ropes. But when she shouted:

—Here come the Philistines!

He again snapped the ropes round his arms like thread. 13So Delilah said to him:

—How long will you deceive me and lie to me? Tell me how they can subdue you.

He answered her:

—If you braid the seven locks of my hair in the warp of the loom and tighten it with a pin, then I shall lose my strength.

14She lulled him to sleep, and then braided the seven locks of his hair in the warp of the loom and tightened it with a pin. Then she cried:

—Here come the Philistines!

Samson woke up and pulled the warp with the locks of his hair. And so, Delilah did not find out where his great strength came from.

15Then Delilah said to him:

—You say that you love me, but your heart is not with me. Three times, you have deceived me and have not told me from whence your great strength comes.

16And as Delilah insisted and bothered him day after day with her questions, the time came when Samson felt he would die in disgust. 17So he told her the truth:

—Never has my hair been cut for I am a Nazirite, consecrated to God from the womb of my mother. If my hair is cut, then I shall lose my strength and be like any other man.

18Delilah understood that he had told her the truth this time, so she called the Philistine chiefs and said:

—Come, because Samson has revealed his secret to me.

They took the money and came to her. 19Delilah lulled Samson to sleep upon her knees and called a man to cut the seven locks of his hair. And she could immediately subdue him for his strength had left him.

20When Delilah shouted:

—Samson, the Philistines!

He awoke and thought that he could still save himself as on other occasions. But he did not know that Yahweh was no longer with him.

21So the Philistines seized him, gouged out his eyes, and brought him to Gaza. There they bound him with two bronze chains and made him turn the mill in the prison. 22The hair on Samson's head, however, began to grow as soon as it was cut.

23The Philistine chiefs assembled to offer a great sacrifice to their god Dagon and had a great feast, saying:

—Our god has given Samson, our enemy, into our hands!

25As they were very happy, they said:

—Bring out Samson that he may amuse us.

They brought him out of prison and he amused them. Then they had him placed between the columns 24and on seeing him the people praised their god saying:

—Our god has put our enemy into our hands,

Samson who has destroyed our country and killed our men.

26Samson then said to the boy who held him by the hand: —Lead me where I can touch the pillars on which this house rests, so that I may lean on them.

27The house was full of men and women, all the Philistine chiefs were also there, and on the roof were about three thousand men and women watching Samson for amusement.

28Samson called on Yahweh and exclaimed:

—Lord, Yahweh, please remember me and restore my strength only this once, so that I may avenge myself against the Philistines for my eyes.

29Samson grasped the two middle pillars on which the house rested, leaned on them with his right arm on one pillar and his left on the other, 30and cried out, "Let me die with the Philistines!" He pushed with all his strength and the house fell upon the chiefs and the people gathered there. Those who joined him in his own death were more than those he had killed during his lifetime.

31His brothers and the whole family of his father went down to get him. They buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol, in the tomb of his father Manoah.

He had judged Israel for twenty years.

1 SAMUEL

Introduction

The book of Samuel is artificially divided into two parts: 1Samuel and 2Samuel. It is called that way because its main protagonist is Samuel, a mixture of judge and prophet, a “man of God” that rules the destiny of Israel by his prestige and his contact with God. His main function will be to give Israel a king, Saul, and when this king becomes incompetent, substitute him by the one who will be Israel’s “king of kings,” David who is so important and definitive that he will become the image of the future Messiah, the Savior of the people.

Vocation of Samuel

3 1The boy Samuel ministered to Yahweh under Eli’s care in a time in which the word of Yahweh was rarely heard; visions were not seen.

2One night Eli was lying down in his room, half blind as he was. 3The lamp of God was still lighted and Samuel also lay in the house of Yahweh near the ark of God. 4Then Yahweh called:

—Samuel! Samuel!

Samuel answered:

—I am here!

5and ran to Eli saying:

—I am here, did you not call me?

But Eli said:

—I did not call, go back to sleep.

So he went and lay down.

6Then Yahweh called again:

—Samuel!

And Samuel stood up and went to Eli saying:

—You called me; I am here.

But Eli answered:

—I did not call you, my son. Go back to sleep.

7Samuel did not yet know Yahweh and the word of Yahweh had not yet been revealed to him.

8But Yahweh called Samuel for the third time and, as he went again to Eli saying:

—I am here for you have called me.

Eli realized that it was Yahweh calling the boy. 9So he said to Samuel:

—Go, lie down, and if he calls you again, answer: “Speak, Yahweh, your servant listens.”

10Then Yahweh came and stood there calling as he did before:

—Samuel! Samuel!

And Samuel answered:

—Speak, for your servant listens.

11Then Yahweh spoke to Samuel:

—Look, I am about to do something in Israel which will scare everyone who hears about it. 12On that day I will carry out what I told Eli regarding his family. All will be fulfilled from beginning to end. 13For I told him that I was about to sentence his family forever. He himself knew that his sons were blaspheming God, but he did not stop them. 14This is why I have cursed the family of Eli. Their sin shall never be atoned for by sacrifice or by any offering.

15Samuel lay down until morning and rose up early. Then he opened the doors of Yahweh's house. Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli, 16but Eli called him and said:

—Samuel, my son.

Samuel answered:

—I am here.

17Eli asked:

—What did Yahweh tell you? Do not hide it from me. Fear the punishment of God if you hide from me even one thing he told you.

18So Samuel told him everything to the end and Eli said:

—He is Yahweh. Let him do what seems good to him.

19Samuel grew; Yahweh was with him and made all his words become true. 20All Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, knew that Samuel was really Yahweh's prophet. 21Yahweh would appear at Shiloh; there he revealed himself to Samuel by giving him his word.

The Israelites asks for a king. The Monarchy

81When Samuel grew old, he made his sons judges over Israel. 2His elder son was Joel and the second was Abijah, and both of them were judges in Beersheba. 3But they were not like their father; they had their vested interests, taking bribes and perverting justice.

4Because of this, all the chiefs of Israel gathered together and went to Samuel in Ramah. 5They said to him:

—You are already old and your sons are not following your ways. Give us a king to rule over us as in all the other nations.

6Samuel was very displeased with what they said:

—Give us a king to rule us.

And he prayed to Yahweh. 7And Yahweh told him:

—Give to this people all that they ask for. 8They are not rejecting you but they have rejected me as their king. They are now doing to you what they did to me from the day I brought them out of Egypt until now, forsaking me and serving other gods. 9Nevertheless, listen to them, and give them a serious warning. Tell them how they will be treated by their king.

10So Samuel answered those who were asking him for a king, 11and he told them all that Yahweh said to him:

—Look, these will be the demands of your king: he will take your sons and assign them to his chariot and his horses and have them run before his chariot. 12Some he will assign as commanders over a thousand men and commanders over fifty. Others will till his ground and reap his harvest, make his implements of war and the equipment for his chariots. 13He will take your daughters as well to prepare perfumes, to cook and to bake for him. 14He will take the best of your fields, your vineyards and your olive orchards and give them to his officials. 15He will take a tenth portion of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and to his servants. 16He will take your menservants and maidservants, the best of your cattle and your asses for his own work. 17He will take the tenth of your flocks and you yourselves will become his slaves. 18When these things happen, you will cry out because of the king whom you have chosen for yourselves. But by then, Yahweh will not answer you.

19The people paid no attention to all that Samuel said. They insisted:

—No! We want a king to govern us as in all the other nations. 20Our king shall govern us, lead us and go ahead of us in our battles.

21Upon hearing all that his people said, Samuel repeated it to Yahweh. 22But Yahweh said to him:

—Listen to them and give them a king.

Samuel then said to the Israelites:

—Go back, all of you, to your own cities.

SAMUEL AND SAUL

9There was a man from the tribe of Benjamin whose name was Kish. He was the son of Abiel, son of Zeror, son of Becorath, son of Aphiah, a valiant Benjaminite. 2Kish had a son named Saul, a handsome young man who had no equal among the Israelites, for he was a head taller than any of them.

3It happened that the asses of Kish were lost. So he said to his son Saul:

—Take one of the boys with you and go look for the asses.

4They went all over the hill country of Ephraim and the land of Shalishah but did not find them. They passed through the land of Shaalim and the land of Benjamin, but the asses were nowhere to be found.

5When they reached the land of Zuph, Saul said to his boy:

—Let us go back, lest my father be more worried about us than about the asses.

6But his servant said to him:

—Look, there is a man of God in this city. He is a highly respected man. All that he says comes true. Let us see him for he may be able to help us find what we are looking for.

10And Saul said to his boy:

—Well said! Come, let us go.

14So they went up to the city and entered it, and saw Samuel coming out towards them on his way up to the high place.

15The day before Saul came, Yahweh had already disclosed this to Samuel:

16—Tomorrow, about this time, I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin and you shall anoint him to rule over my people Israel. He shall save my people from the hand of the Philistines for I have seen the affliction of my people and their cry has come to me.

17So, when Samuel saw Saul, Yahweh told him:

—Here is the man I spoke to you about! He shall rule over my people.

18Saul approached Samuel in the gateway and said:

—Tell me, where is the house of the seer?

19Samuel answered Saul:

—I am the seer. Go up ahead of me to the high place, for today you shall eat with me. In the morning, before you leave, I will tell you all that is in your heart. 20As for your asses that were lost three days ago, do not worry about them for they have been found.

Samuel added:

—For whom is the first place in Israel? Isn't it for you and for all your father's kin?

21Saul answered:

—I am a Benjaminite, from the least of the tribes of Israel, and my family is the lowliest of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin. Why do you speak to me in this way?

22Samuel took Saul and his boy, brought them into the hall and gave them a place at the head of the table, before some thirty guests. 23Then Samuel told the cook:

—Bring in the portion which I asked you to put aside. 24The cook brought in the leg with the tail portion and set it before Saul, saying to him:

—This has been set aside for you. Please eat.

So Saul ate with Samuel that day.

25Then they went down from the high place and entered the city. On the terrace they prepared a bed for Saul where he lay down to sleep.

Saul's anointing

26Early the next morning, Samuel called to Saul:

—Get up, for I must send you on your way.

Saul got up and began to walk down the street with Samuel.

27As they were going down to the outskirts of the city, Samuel said to Saul:

—Tell your servant to walk ahead. You stay here for a while and I shall give you a message from God.

101Then Samuel took a vial of oil and poured it on Saul's head. And kissing Saul, Samuel said:

—Yahweh has anointed you to rule over and to lead his people Israel!

Election of the king by lots

17After that, Samuel called the people together before Yahweh at Mizpah. **18**He then spoke to the Israelites:

—Thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel: I brought Israel out of Egypt and I delivered you from the hands of the Egyptians and from all the kingdoms oppressing you. **19**But you have this day rejected your God who saves you from all your calamities and your distress. You have said, 'No! Give us a king to rule over us.' So now present yourselves before Yahweh, grouping yourselves into tribes and clans.

25Samuel then told the people the rights and duties of the king. He wrote all these in a book and presented it before Yahweh. Then Samuel sent all the people home. **26**Saul himself went home to Gibeah with these valiant men whose hearts God had touched.

1115So all the people went to Gilgal and there they proclaimed Saul king before Yahweh. They sacrificed peace offerings and Saul and all Israel celebrated.

131Saul became king and he ruled over Israel for twenty-two years.

14⁴⁷When Saul felt secure as king of Israel, he began to fight against all his surrounding enemies: Moab, the Ammonites, Edom, the kings of Zobah and the Philistines, routing his enemies wherever he went.

Saul is rejected

15 ¹⁰Then Yahweh spoke to Samuel:

¹¹—I feel sorry that I made Saul king because he has turned his back on me and has not kept my command. Samuel was troubled and cried to Yahweh all night.

¹²Early next morning, he went looking for Saul, but was told that Saul had set off for Carmel to erect a monument to himself and then had gone on his way to Gilgal.

¹³When finally they met, Saul greeted Samuel:

—May Yahweh bless you,

²²Samuel then said:

—Does Yahweh take as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obedience to his command? Obedience is better than sacrifice, and submission better than the fat of rams. ²³Rebellion is like the sin of divination, and stubbornness like holding onto idols. Since you have rejected the word of Yahweh, he too has rejected you as king.

³⁵From that day Samuel did not see Saul again until he died, but he was grieving over Saul because Yahweh regretted having made him king over Israel.

SAUL AND DAVID

Introduction to David

David is one of the great figures in the history of Israel: a military, political and religious figure. It is the beginning of a new election, of a stable saving institution. To remember him will be an occasion for discovering and maturing the messianic hope.

For this reason David is an exalted and idealized figure, formed by history and legend, by memory and fantasy, making it impossible for us today to separate its components. Most probably right from the beginning diverse traditions about his life and deeds were formed, making it difficult for the author of this book to put them aside or harmonize them.

New variations were added to these loosed or braided narrative threads.

A hazardous life can be depicted under a lyric or epic presentation leading towards the throne and to a stable dynasty.

David anointed king

16 ¹Yahweh asked Samuel:

—How long will you be grieving over Saul whom I have rejected as king of Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way to Jesse the Bethlehemite for I have chosen my king from among his sons.

4Samuel did what Yahweh commanded and left for Bethlehem. When he appeared, the elders of the city came to him asking, fearfully:

—Do you bring us peace?

5Samuel replied:

—I come in peace; I am here to sacrifice to Yahweh. Cleanse yourselves and join me in the sacrifice.

He also had Jesse and his sons cleansed and invited them to the sacrifice.

6As they came, Samuel looked at Eliab the older and thought:

—This must be Yahweh's anointed.

7But Yahweh told Samuel:

—Do not judge by his looks or his stature for I have rejected him. Yahweh does not judge as man judges; humans see with the eyes; Yahweh sees the heart.

8Jesse called his son Abinadab and presented him to Samuel who said:

—Yahweh has not chosen this one either.

9Jesse presented Shammah and Samuel said:

—Nor has Yahweh chosen this one.

10Jesse presented seven of his sons to Samuel who said:

—Yahweh has chosen none of them. 11But are all your sons here?

Jesse replied:

—There is still the youngest, tending the flock just now.

Samuel said to him:

—Send for him and bring him to me; we shall not sit down to eat until he arrives.

12So Jesse sent for his youngest son and brought him to Samuel. He was a handsome lad with ruddy complexion and beautiful eyes. And Yahweh spoke:

—Go, anoint him for he is the one.

13Samuel then took the horn of oil and anointed him in his brothers' presence. From that day onwards, Yahweh's Spirit took hold of David. Then Samuel left for Ramah.

David, in the court of Saul

14The spirit of Yahweh had left Saul and an evil spirit sent by Yahweh tormented him. 15Saul's servants said to him:

—We know that an evil spirit sent by God is tormenting you. 16If you so wish, your servants who stand before you will look for someone who can play the lyre so when the evil spirit from God comes over you, he will play and you will feel better.

17So Saul answered them:

—Get someone who can play the lyre well.

18One of them said:

—A son of Jesse, the Bethlehemite, plays very well. He is, moreover, a courageous man, intelligent and pleasant to talk with and Yahweh is with him.

19So Saul sent messengers to Jesse and asked for his son David who tended the sheep.

20Jesse loaded an ass with bread, a wineskin and a kid and had David take all these to Saul. 21David then left and entered Saul's service. Saul grew very fond of David and made him his armor-bearer. 22Then he sent word to Jesse, saying:

—Let David remain in my service for I am very pleased with him.

23So, whenever the evil spirit from God overpowered Saul, David would play on the lyre and Saul would feel better for the evil spirit would leave him.

David and Goliath

17 1The Philistines prepared their forces for battle and gathered together at Socoh, a territory of Judah. They encamped between Socoh and Azekah in Ephesdammim. 2Saul and the Israelites, meantime, assembled and pitched camp in the valley of Elah, ready for their encounter with the Philistines. 3The Philistines took their position on one hill while the Israelites took theirs on another hill, with a valley separating the two forces.

4Then a champion named Goliath came out from the Philistine camp. He was from Gath and was about three meters tall. 5He wore a helmet of bronze, and a coat covered with bronze scales. His armor weighed sixty kilos. 6He had bronze greaves strapped on his legs and a bronze spear slung between his shoulders. 7The shaft of his spear was the size of a weaver's rod; its head weighed seven kilos. His shield-bearer went before him.

8He stood in front of the Israelite ranks and shouted:

—Why have you come out in battle array? I am a Philistine and you are Saul's men! Choose a man from among yourselves who can challenge me. 9If he fights better and kills me, we shall be subject to you; but if I overpower him and kill him, you shall be subject to us.

10The Philistine added:

—This is my challenge to the Israelite troops this day. Give me a man who can fight with me alone!

11When they heard this challenge of the Philistine, Saul and his men were afraid and greatly terrified.

32David said to Saul:

—Let no one be discouraged on account of this Philistine, for your servant will engage him in battle. 33Saul told David:

—You cannot fight with this Philistine for you are still young, whereas this man has been a warrior from his youth.

34But David said:

—When I was tending my father's sheep, whenever a lion or bear came to snatch a lamb from the flock, 35I would run after it, kill it and rescue the victim from its mouth. If it attacked me, I would hold it by its beard and slay it. 36I have killed lions and bears and will do the same with this uncircumcised Philistine, for he has defied the armies of the living God.

37David continued:

—Yahweh, who delivered me from the paws of lions and bears, will deliver me from the hands of the Philistine.

Saul then told David:

—Go and may Yahweh be with you!

38Saul fitted his armor on David, put a bronze helmet on his head, and clothed him with a coat of mail. 39David secured his sword over the armor but could not walk because it was his first time. So he said to Saul:

—I cannot move with all these trappings on me because I am not accustomed to wearing them.

David got rid of all this armor, 40took his staff, picked up five smooth stones from the brook and dropped them inside his shepherd's bag. And with his sling in hand, he drew near to the Philistine.

41The Philistine moved forward, closing in on David, his shield-bearer in front of him. 42When he saw that David was only a lad, (he was of fresh complexion and handsome) he despised him 43and said:

—Am I a dog that you should approach me with a stick? Cursing David by his gods, 44he continued:

—Come and I will give your flesh to the birds of the sky and the beasts of the field!

45David answered the Philistine:

—You have come against me with sword, spear and javelin, but I come against you with Yahweh, the God of the armies of Israel whom you have defied. 46Yahweh will deliver you this day into my hands and I will strike you down and cut off your head. I will give the corpses of the Philistine army today to the birds of the sky and the wild beasts of the earth, and all the earth shall know that there is a God of Israel. 47All the people gathered here shall know that Yahweh saves not by sword or spear; the battle belongs to Yahweh, and he will deliver you into our hands.

48No sooner had the Philistine moved to attack him, than David rushed to the battleground. 49Putting his hand into his bag, he took out a stone, slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead; it penetrated his forehead and he fell on his face to the ground. 50David triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, felling him without using a sword. 51He rushed forward, stood over him, took the Philistine's sword and slew him by cutting off his head.

25 1The day Samuel died, all Israel gathered together to mourn him; after which they buried him at his home in Ramah.

Then David went down to the desert of Maon.

Death of Saul

31 1Now the Philistines fought against the Israelites who, in their flight, fell mortally wounded on Mount Gilboa. 2The Philistines surrounded Saul and his sons and killed Jonathan, Abinadab and Malchishua, Saul's sons. 3The battle raged around Saul, and he was afraid when he saw that the archers had found him.

4Then Saul commanded his armor-bearer:

—Draw your sword and run me through lest these uncircumcised men come and stab me themselves, making fun of me.

But his armor-bearer did not move because he was greatly terrified. So Saul drew his own sword and fell upon it. 5Seeing that Saul was dead, the armor-bearer also fell upon his sword and died with him. 6Thus, Saul, his three sons, his armor-bearer and all his men died together on the same day.

2 SAMUEL

Introduction

The division of the one book of Samuel in two parts is completely artificial; it seems that its purpose was to dedicate to David an entire book.

For the Israelites, David is the greatest king, a figure that places behind Moses and Elijah. Historically, David is a very important king: he receives a nation in disarray and in a few years he makes it the main kingdom on the strip shore; he receives a divided kingdom, and he established a unified monarchy. He gives his kingdom an administrative and religious capital of great influence and attraction; he begins a stable dynasty.

Theologically, he is the beneficiary of a new election and a promise. His election becomes a new article in the Israelite faith; together with his election is Jerusalem, as dwelling place of God; another foundational religious article. As beneficiary of the promise is almost a new patriarch, father of a dynasty, as Abraham was of a numerous people.

Through this promise David pierces the future. On this axle the messianic hope develops and grows. David was an apex, and what followed, even the salomonic splendor; resembles decadence.

David cries over the death of Saul and Jonathan

1 17David sang a song of lamentation for Saul and his son Jonathan.

David, anointed king at Hebron

2 1After this, David consulted Yahweh:

—Shall I go up to one of the cities of Judah?

Yahweh answered him:

—Go!

Then David asked:

—Where shall I go?

He answered:

—To Hebron.

2So David went up to Hebron with his two wives, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel. 3David also brought up his men with their families and they settled in the towns of Hebron.

4Then the men of Judah came and there they anointed David king over the nation of Judah.

David learned that the men of Jabesh-Gilead had buried Saul, 5so he sent messengers to them with these words:

—May Yahweh bless you for you have dealt kindly with Saul, your master, and have buried him. 6May Yahweh show his love and fidelity to you! I, in turn, will be kind to you for having done this. 7Now be brave and strong for although your master Saul is dead, the people of Judah have anointed me their king.

Abner and Joab

11David was their king in Hebron and he ruled over them for seven years and six months.

12Abner, son of Ner, and the menservants of Ishbaal, Saul's son, left Mahanaim for Gibeon.

3 1There was a long war between Saul's party and that of David, but David grew stronger while Saul's party grew weaker.

David, king of Israel

5 1All the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said:

—We are your bone and flesh. 2In the past, when Saul was king over us, it was you who led Israel. And Yahweh said to you, ‘You shall be the shepherd of my people Israel and you shall be commander over Israel.’

Conquest of Jerusalem

6The king and his men set out for Jerusalem to fight the Jebusites who lived there. They said to David:

—If you try to break in here, the blind and the lame will drive you away.

(Which meant that David could not get in).

7Yet David captured the fortress of Zion that became the “city of David.”

9David lived in the fortress, calling it the City of David, and proceeded to build the city around it, from the Millo and inside as well.

10And David grew more powerful, for Yahweh, the God of hosts, was with him. 11Hiram, king of Tyre, sent messengers to David with cedar trees, carpenters and masons to build a house for David. 12David then understood that Yahweh had made him king over Israel and had exalted his reign for the sake of his people Israel.

The ark, carried to Jerusalem

6 1David gathered together once more all the picked men of Israel, numbering thirty thousand in all. 2Then he and all the people with him in Baala-Judah set forth to bring up from there the ark of God on which Yahweh of hosts pronounced and put his Name, he who rests on the cherubim.

14David whirled round dancing with all his heart before Yahweh, 15shouting joyfully and sounding the horn.

16As the ark of Yahweh entered the city of David, Michal, Saul’s daughter, looked out of the window; and when she saw King David leaping and whirling round before Yahweh, she despised him in her heart. 17They brought in the ark of Yahweh and laid it in its place in the tent which David had pitched for it. Then David offered burnt and peace offerings before Yahweh. 18Once the offerings had been made, David blessed the people in the name of Yahweh of hosts.

20When David returned to bless his household, Michal, Saul’s daughter, met him and said:

—How the king of Israel honored himself today, exposing himself before his servants’ maids as uncouth men do! 21But David said to Michal:

—I did that before Yahweh who chose me instead of your father and his family, making me commander over Israel, Yahweh’s people. By Yahweh’s life I swear that I will dance and whirl again before him. 22I will humble myself still more and you may look at me, but I will not be rejected by the maids you spoke about.

PROMISE AND SIN

Dynastic promise and prayer of David

7 1When the king had settled in his palace and Yahweh had rid him of all his surrounding enemies, 2he said to Nathan the prophet:

—Look, I live in a house of cedar but the ark of God is housed in a tent.

3Nathan replied:

—Do as it seems fit to you for Yahweh is with you.

4But that very night, Yahweh's word came to Nathan:

8Now you will tell my servant David, this is what Yahweh of hosts says:

—I took you from the pasture, from tending the sheep, to make you commander of my people Israel. 9I have been with you wherever you went, cutting down all your enemies before you. Now I will make your name great as the name of the great ones on earth. 10I will provide a place for my people Israel and plant them that they may live there in peace. They shall no longer be harassed, nor shall wicked men oppress them as before. 11From the time when I appointed judges over my people Israel it is only to you that I have given rest from all your enemies. Yahweh also tells you that he will build you a house.

12When the time comes for you to rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your son after you, the one born of you and I will make his reign secure. 13He shall build a house for my name and I will firmly establish his kingship forever. 14I will be a father to him and he shall be my son. If he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod, as men do. 15But I will not withdraw my kindness from him as I did from Saul when I removed him out of your way. 16Your house and your reign shall last forever before me, and your throne shall be forever firm.

Mepibaal, received by David

91David asked:

—Is there anyone left of the house of Saul to whom I can show kindness for the sake of Jonathan?

2So they called a servant of Saul, named Ziba, and brought him to David who asked:

—So you are Ziba?

He replied:

—I am your servant.

3Then the king asked him:

—Is there still someone of the house of Saul to whom I can give God's favor?

Ziba answered the king:

—A son of Jonathan whose feet are crippled still lives. 4The king asked him:

—Where is he?

And Ziba replied:

—He is in the house of Machir, son of Ammiel, at Lodebar. 5So King David sent for him and had him brought from the house of Machir, son of Ammiel, at Lodebar.

6When Mepibaal, son of Jonathan, son of Saul arrived, he fell on the ground and paid homage to David who said:

—Mepibaal!

He replied:

—Your servant listens.

7David then told him:

—Do not be afraid. I will do you a favor for the sake of your father Jonathan and give you back all the land of Saul your father. Besides, you shall always eat at my table. 8He bowed down and said:

—What is your servant that you should show concern for a dead dog like myself?

9The king called Ziba, Saul's servant, and said to him:

—I have turned over to your master's son everything that Saul and his family possessed. 10You yourself, your sons and servants shall till the land for him and carry in the harvest so that your master's family may have food, although your master's son Mepibaal shall always eat at my table.

Ziba, who had fifteen sons and twenty servants 11said to the king:

—Your servant will do whatever my lord the king commands. Yet Mepibaal ate at my table like a king's son.

12Mepibaal had a young son named Mica; and all who lived in Ziba's house became Mepibaal's servants. 13But Mepibaal lived in Jerusalem for he always ate at the king's table. He was lame in both feet.

David and Bathsheba

11 1In the spring of that year, when kings usually set out to fight, David sent out Joab, his officers and all the Israelite troops. They slaughtered the Ammonites and attacked Rabbah, while David remained in Jerusalem.

2One afternoon, David got up from his siesta and took a walk on the roof of the royal house. From the rooftop, he saw a woman bathing, and the woman was very beautiful. 3David sent to inquire about the woman, and was told:

—She is Bathsheba, daughter of Eliam and wife of Uriah, the Hittite.

4So David sent messengers to have her brought to him; and he had intercourse with her after she had cleansed herself after her monthly period. Then she returned to her house.

5As the woman saw she was with child, she sent word to David:

—I am with child.

6David then sent a message to Joab:

—Send me Uriah the Hittite.

So Joab sent Uriah to David. 7When Uriah came, David asked him about Joab, how the people were and how the war was proceeding; 8then he told Uriah:

—Go down to your house and wash your feet.

Uriah left the palace and the king had a portion from his table sent to him. 9Uriah, however, did not go down to his house but slept by the door of the king's palace with all the servants of his lord. 10David was told that Uriah did not go down to his house, and he said to him:

—Have you not come from a journey? Why did you not go down to your house?

11Uriah replied:

—The ark, the men of Israel and Judah are housed in tents while my lord Joab and his servants are encamped in the open country. Shall I go to my house to eat and drink there and sleep with my wife? As you live, I will not do this!

12So David said to Uriah:

—Remain here today also and I will dismiss you tomorrow.

Uriah therefore stayed in Jerusalem that day and the day after. 13David invited him to table and he ate and drank until he was drunk. When evening fell, however, he went to lie down on his couch with the guards of his lord instead of going down to his house.

14The next morning, David wrote Joab a letter to be taken by hand by Uriah, 15in which he said, “Place Uriah in the front row where the fighting is very fierce and then withdraw from him so that he may be struck down and die.” 16When Joab was attacking the city, he assigned Uriah to a place which he knew was being defended by strong warriors. 17And the defenders attacked the men of Joab. Some of David’s soldiers and officers were killed; Uriah the Hittite also died.

18Then Joab sent a messenger to tell David everything that had happened during the battle. 19And he said to him:

—When you have finished recounting the outcome of the battle to the king, 20perhaps he will get angry and ask you, ‘Why did you go so near the city to fight? Did you not know they would shoot from the wall? 21Who killed Abimelech, son of Jerubbesheth? Was it not a woman who dropped a millstone on him from the wall so that he died at Thebez? Why did you go so close to the wall?’; then you shall say: Your servant Uriah the Hittite is also dead.

22So the messenger went to tell David all that Joab instructed him. 23So he answered the king and explained:

—These men had overcome us and pushed us in the field; then we drove them back to the entrance gate. 24But the archers aimed at your guard from the top of the wall, killing some of them. Your servant Uriah the Hittite has also been killed.

25David said to the messenger:

—Try to encourage Joab with this message: Do not let this thing disturb you, for the sword devours one this time and another at another time. Intensify your attacks against the city and overthrow it.

26When Uriah’s wife heard of the death of her husband, she mourned for him. 27After her mourning was over, David had her brought to his house. She became his wife and bore him a son. But Yahweh was displeased with what David had done.

David’s penance

12 1So Yahweh sent the prophet Nathan to David. Nathan went to the king and said to him:

—There were two men in a city: one was rich; the other, poor. 2The rich man had many sheep and cattle, 3but the poor man had only one little ewe lamb he had bought. He himself fed it and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and slept on his lap. It was like a daughter to him. 4Now a traveler came to the rich man, but he would not take from his own flock or herd to prepare food for the traveler. Instead, he took the poor man’s lamb and prepared that for his visitor.

5David was furious because of this man and told Nathan:

—As Yahweh lives, the man who has done this deserves death! 6He must return the lamb fourfold for acting like this and showing no compassion.

7Nathan said to David:

—You are this man! It is Yahweh, God of Israel, who speaks: ‘I anointed you king over Israel and saved you from Saul’s hands; 8I gave you your master’s house and your master’s wives; I also gave you the nation of Israel and Judah. But if this were not enough, I would have given you even more. 9Why did you despise Yahweh by doing what displeases him? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife for yourself. Yes, you killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. 10Now the sword will never be far from your family because you have despised me and taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite for yourself.’

13David said to Nathan:

—I have sinned against Yahweh.

Nathan answered him:

—Yahweh has forgiven your sin; you shall not die.

You can read:

The repentance of King David will be portrayed in Psalm 51, attributed to David himself.

In Israel there were other Psalms composed in the style of Psalm 51, to express repentance, for example Psalm 32.

KINGS

Introduction

The two books of Kings narrate the history of the People from David's death till the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile to Babylon. It is a sad history, a history of infidelity and decadence.

David is followed by one of his sons, Solomon. Splendid and full of wisdom he builds the fabulous Temple of Jerusalem. But his alliances with other countries and his marriages with foreign princesses introduce in his court corruption and the cult to foreign gods. From here on, the books narrate the infidelities of Israel along with the misfortunes that follow. The kingdom is divided into two: Israel on the North and Judah on the South. Both kingdom carry out an agitated and vulgar existence, until finally they are destroyed by the great powers of Mesopotamia: Assyria and Babylon.

This history is reflected in the books of the Prophets, who are constantly advising Israel about the danger of their infidelity to Yahweh and the terrible consequences that awaits them unless they convert and fulfill the Covenant

1 KINGS

David's testament

2 1When David was about to die, he gave his son Solomon this instruction:

2—I am about to go the way of all creatures. Be strong and show yourself a man! 3Keep the commandments of Yahweh your God and walk in his ways. Keep his statutes, his commands, his ordinances and declarations written in the law of Moses, that you may succeed in whatever you do and wherever you go. 4If you do so, Yahweh will fulfill the promise he made to me: 'If your sons take care to walk before me faithfully with their whole heart and their whole soul, you shall always have one of your descendants on the throne of Israel.'

10Then David rested with his ancestors and was buried in the city of David. 11David reigned over Israel for forty years: seven years in Hebron and thirty-three years in Jerusalem. 12So Solomon sat on the throne of David his father and his reign was firmly established.

After Moses, David will be the most famous personage in the history of Israel. He will be the symbol of God's fidelity as it is expressed in the book of Psalms. You can read from Psalms 16 to 50, 67 to 72, 78 and 89.

Vision of Solomon

3 1Solomon entered into a marriage alliance with Pharaoh, king of Egypt. He took Pharaoh's daughter and brought her to the city of David until he had finished building his own palace, Yahweh's House and the wall around Jerusalem.

4The king used to sacrifice at Gibeon, the great high place; on the altar there he had offered a thousand burnt offerings. 5It was in Gibeon, during the night, that Yahweh appeared to Solomon in a dream and said:

—Ask what you want me to give you.

6Solomon answered:

—You have shown your servant David my father a great and steadfast love because he served you faithfully and was righteous and sincere towards you. You have given him proof of your steadfast love in making a son of his sit on his throne this day. 7And now, O Yahweh my God, you have made your servant king in place of David my father, although I am but a young boy who does not know how to undertake anything. 8Meantime, your servant is in the midst of your people whom you have chosen—a people so great that they can neither be numbered nor counted.

9Give me, therefore, an understanding mind in governing your people that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to govern this multitude of people of yours?

10Yahweh was pleased that Solomon had made this request. 11And he told him:

12—I shall grant you your request. I now give you a wise and discerning mind such as no one has had before you nor anyone after you shall ever have.

13I will also give you what you have not asked for, both wealth and fame; and no king shall be your equal during your lifetime. 14Moreover, if you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and commands, as your father David did, I shall give you long life.

15Solomon awoke and knew that this was a dream. So he went to Jerusalem and, standing before the ark of the covenant of Yahweh, he offered up burnt offerings and peace offerings, and gave a feast for all his servants.

The judgment of Solomon

16Then two harlots came to the king and stood before him. 17One of the two women said:

—Oh, my lord, this woman and I live in the same house, and I gave birth to a child while she was there with me. 18Three days after my child was born, this woman also gave birth. We were alone, and there was no one in the house but the two of us. 19Then this woman's son died during the night because she lay on him. 20So during the night, she got up, took my son from my side while I slept, laid it beside her and her dead son beside me. 21When I got up in the morning to nurse my child, I saw it was dead. But when I looked at it closely in the morning, I saw that it was not my child.

22The other woman said:

—No, the living child is mine; the dead child is yours. To this, the first replied:

—Not so, the dead child is yours; the living child is mine.

And they quarreled this way in the king's presence.

23Then the king said:

—One says: 'This is my son who is alive; your son is dead'; the other says: 'That is not so, your son is dead; my son is the live one.'

24And the king said:

—Bring me a sword.

When they brought the king a sword, ²⁵he gave this order:

—Divide the child in two and give half to one, half to the other.

²⁶Then the woman whose son was alive said to the king out of pity for her son:

—Oh, my lord, give her the living child but spare its life.

The other woman, however, said:

—It shall be neither mine nor yours. Divide it!

²⁷Then the king spoke:

—Give the living child to the first woman and spare its life. She is its mother.

²⁸When all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had given, they revered at him, seeing that God's wisdom was in him to render justice.

Riches and wisdom

4 ²¹Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates to the land of the Philistines and on to the frontiers of Egypt.

²⁹God gave Solomon great wisdom and understanding, and knowledge as vast as the sand on the shore, ³⁰so that his wisdom surpassed that of all the people of the east and of the Egyptians. ³¹He was wiser than any man; wiser than Ethan, the Ezrahite, and Heman, Calcol and Darda, sons of Mahol; and his fame spread among all the surrounding nations.

Covenant with Hiram of Tyre

5 ¹Now, Hiram King of Tyre sent his servants to Solomon when he heard that he had been anointed king in place of his father. For David had always been Hiram's friend. ²Solomon then sent this message to Hiram:

³—You know that David my father could not build a temple for Yahweh his God because his enemies were at war with him until the time when Yahweh gave him victory over them. ⁴But now Yahweh my God has given me peace on all sides and there is no enemy or calamity that afflicts us. ⁵And so I intend to build a temple for Yahweh my God as Yahweh told David my father, 'Your son, whom I will set upon your throne, shall build the House for my Name.' ⁶Now, therefore, give orders to have cedars of Lebanon cut for me. My servants will join yours and I will pay your servants the wages you set, for you know that none of us can cut timber like the Sidonians.

Construction of the temple

6 ¹In the four hundred and eightieth year after the Israelites left the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, which is the second month, Solomon began to build the temple of Yahweh. ²The House which King Solomon built for Yahweh was sixty cubits long, twenty wide, and thirty high. ³The vestibule fronting the Sanctuary was twenty cubits long from side to side, the width of the temple, and ten cubits deep in front of the House.

³⁷In the month of Ziv of the fourth year, the foundation of Yahweh's House was laid. ³⁸In the month of Bul, the eighth month of the eleventh year, the House was finished, complete and according to all specifications. It took Solomon seven years to build it.

Dedication of the temple

8 1Then Solomon assembled before him in Jerusalem the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, as well as the leaders of the ancestral houses of the Israelites, to bring up the ark of the covenant of Yahweh from the city of David, which is Zion.

2All the Israelites assembled near King Solomon in the month of Ethanim, the seventh month. 3When all the elders of Israel arrived, the priests carried the ark of Yahweh 4and brought it up together with the Tent of Meeting and all the holy vessels that were in the tent.

After the priests and Levites had brought them up, 5King Solomon with the entire congregation of Israel that had assembled before him and were with him before the Ark, sacrificed so many sheep and oxen that they could neither be counted nor numbered.

6Then the priests laid the ark of the covenant of Yahweh in its place in the inner sanctuary of the House—the Most Holy Place—underneath the wings of the cherubim. 7The cherubim had their wings spread out over the place of the ark, providing a covering above the ark and its poles. 8The poles were so long that their ends were seen from the Holy Place in front of the inner sanctuary but not from the outside. 9There was nothing in the ark except the two tables of stone which Moses placed there at Horeb, where Yahweh made a covenant with the Israelites when they came out of the land of Egypt.

10And when the priests came out of the Holy Place, such a cloud filled Yahweh's House 11that the priests could not continue to minister. Indeed, the glory of Yahweh filled his House.

New apparition and oracle

9 1After Solomon had finished building Yahweh's House, the royal palace, and everything he wanted to build, 2Yahweh appeared to him a second time, as he had appeared to him at Gibeon. 3Yahweh said to him:

—I have heard the prayer and supplication you made before me. I have consecrated this House you have built, that my Name may be there forever. My eyes and my heart will be there forever. 4As for you, if you will live in my presence, the way your father David did, with sincerity and uprightness, doing all that I have commanded you and keeping my decrees and laws, 5I will affirm your kingship in Israel forever, as I promised your father David when I said, 'You shall always have someone from your family on the throne of Israel.'

6But if you or your children refuse to follow me, and disobey my commands and laws which I have set before you; if they serve and worship other gods, 7then I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them and I will remove from my sight this House I have consecrated for my Name. Israel will become a proverb and a byword among all peoples. 8This House will be reduced to a heap of stones and everyone passing by will be astonished and jeer: 'Why has Yahweh done such a thing to this land and to this House?' 9Then people will answer: 'Because they abandoned Yahweh their God who brought their ancestors out of the land of Egypt, and they followed other gods, worshipping and serving them. That is why Yahweh has brought all this evil on them.'

Visit of the queen of Sheba

10 1The queen of Sheba heard about Solomon's fame, and came to test him with difficult questions. 2She arrived in Jerusalem with a vast retinue and with camels loaded with spices, an abundance of gold and precious stones. When she came to Solomon, she told him all that she had on her mind 3and Solomon answered all her questions. There was nothing that the king could not explain to her.

4And when the queen of Sheba had seen all the wisdom of Solomon, the palace he had built, 6she said to the king:

—All that I heard in my own land concerning you and your wisdom was true. 7But I did not believe the reports until I came and saw with my own eyes. And what did I see! I was told only half the story; for your wisdom and wealth surpass the report I heard.

8Fortunate are your wives! Fortunate are your servants who are ever in your presence and hear your wisdom! 9Blessed be Yahweh your God, who has looked kindly on you and has put you on the throne of Israel! Because of Yahweh's eternal love for Israel, he has made you king so that you may dispense justice and righteousness.

10Then she gave the king a hundred and twenty talents of gold, spices in abundance, and precious stones. Such an abundance of spices as those which the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon was never again seen. 13King Solomon, in turn, gave the queen of Sheba all that she desired and all that he in his generosity wanted to give her. Then she went back to her own land together with her servants.

Idolatry of Solomon

11 1King Solomon loved many foreign women besides the daughter of Pharaoh. There were Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian and Hittite women 2from nations about which Yahweh had commanded the Israelites, "You shall not marry them; nor shall they marry you, lest they win over your heart to their gods." Solomon, however, imitated these peoples because of his love. 4In Solomon's old age, his wives led him astray to serve other gods and, unlike his father David, his heart was no longer wholly given to Yahweh his God.

5For he served Astarte the goddess of the Sidonians, and Milcom, the idol of the Ammonites. 6He did what displeased Yahweh and, unlike his father David, was unfaithful to him. 7Solomon even built a high place for Chemosh, the idol of Moab, on the mountain east of Jerusalem and also for Molech, the idol of the Ammonites. 8He did the same for all his foreign wives who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.

9Yahweh became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from Yahweh, the God of Israel. 10Yahweh appeared to him twice and commanded him not to follow other gods. But he did not obey Yahweh's command. 11Therefore, Yahweh said to Solomon:

—Since this has been your choice and you have kept neither my Covenant nor the statutes I commanded you, I will take the kingdom from you and give it to your servant. 12Nevertheless, I will not do this during your lifetime for the sake of your father David; I will take it from your son. 13But I will not take it all; I will reserve one tribe for your son for the sake of David my servant, and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen.

42Solomon reigned over all Israel in Jerusalem for forty years. 43Then he rested with his fathers and was buried in the city of David; Rehoboam his son reigned in his place.

THE SCHISM: THE TWO KINGDOMS

The schism

12 1Rehoboam went to Shechem because all Israel had gathered there to make him king.

16All Israel realized that the king refused to listen to them, and they answered the same way:

—What have we to do with David?

Is the son of Jesse from our tribes?

Let the son of David deal with his own and you, people of Israel, go back to your homes!

And so the Israelites left for their homes. 17Only the Israelites who dwelt in the cities of Judah let Rehoboam reign over them.

20As Jeroboam had returned and was with them at the assembly, having been called by them, they made him king of Israel. And so, with the exception of the tribe of Judah, no one followed the house of David.

21When Rehoboam came to Jerusalem, he called together all the people of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin, numbering a hundred and eighty thousand select warriors, to fight against the people of Israel in a bid to restore the kingship of Rehoboam, son of Solomon. 22But the word of God was directed to Shemaiah, the man of God:

23—Give Rehoboam, son of Solomon, king of Judah, and all the people of Judah and Benjamin, and the rest of the people, this message from Yahweh: 24‘You shall not go up to fight against your kinsmen, the Israelites. Let everyone return to his home for I am the author of this.’

When they heard this word they went back home according to what Yahweh had ordered.

The schismatic cult

25Jeroboam fortified Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim and lived there. Then, he set out to fortify Penuel.

26Jeroboam thought, “The kingdom could return to the house of David. 27Should this people go up to offer sacrifices in Yahweh’s House in Jerusalem, their heart would turn again to their master, Rehoboam king of Judah. They would kill me and go back to him.”

28And so the king sought advice and made two golden calves. Then he said to the people:

—You have been going up to Jerusalem long enough. Here are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.

29He put one of these in Bethel, the other in Dan.

Ahab of Israel (874–852)

16 29Ahab, son of Omri became king in the thirty-eighth year of Asa, king of Judah, and he reigned over Israel in Samaria for twenty-two years.

30Ahab did what displeased Yahweh, even more than all those who preceded him. 31Apparently the example and the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat were not enough for him; he even married Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians. So he served Baal and worshiped him. 32He set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal which he built in Samaria 33and proceeded to make an Asherah. So Ahab did everything that could make Yahweh angry, even more than any of the kings of Israel who ruled before him.

34During his reign, Hiel of Bethel rebuilt Jericho. On laying its foundation he sacrificed Abirma, his firstborn. And when he set up the gates of the city, he sacrificed his youngest son, Segub, in accordance with the word of Yahweh spoken through Joshua, son of Nun.

ELIJAH'S CYCLE

Elijah exiled. First miracles

Here begins the cycle of the Prophets. Even though the kings and their reign provide the frame of the events, it is the figure of the prophets the one that guide the selection of the narrative material.

Elijah's cycle. After the introduction about the reign of Ahab, it is Elijah the protagonist. He leaves the stage to other prophets and reappears; he leaves his post to the prophet Micah but reappears again to confront the new king; he disappears completely after naming a successor.

Elijah: the drought

17 1Now Elijah, the prophet from Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab:

—As Yahweh, the God of Israel whom I serve lives, neither dew shall drop nor rain fall except at my command.

2Then the word of Yahweh came to Elijah:

3—Leave this place and go eastward. Hide yourself by the brook Cherith, east of the Jordan. 4You shall drink from the brook and, for your food, I have commanded the ravens to feed you there.

5So Elijah obeyed the word of Yahweh and went to live by the brook Cherith, east of the Jordan. 6There the ravens brought him bread in the morning and meat in the evening; and he drank from the brook. 7After a while, the brook dried up because no rain had fallen in the land. 8Then Yahweh spoke to Elijah:

9—Go to Zarephath of the Sidonites and stay there. I have given word to a widow there to give you food.

10So Elijah went to Zarephath. On reaching the gate of the town, he saw a widow gathering sticks. He called to her and said:

—Bring me a little water in a vessel that I may drink.

11As she was going to bring it, he called after her and said:

—Bring me also a piece of bread.

12But she answered:

—As Yahweh your God lives, I have no bread left but only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. I am just now gathering some sticks so that I may go in and prepare something for myself and my son to eat – and die.

13Elijah then said to her:

—Do not be afraid. Go and do as you have said, but first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me; then make some for yourself and your son. 14For this is the word of Yahweh, the God of Israel, ‘The jar of meal shall not be emptied nor shall the jug of oil fail, until the day when Yahweh sends rain to the earth.’

15So she went and did as Elijah told her; and she had food for herself, Elijah and her son from that day on. 16The jar of flour was not emptied nor did the jug of oil fail, in accordance with what Yahweh had said through Elijah.

17After this, the son of this housewife became ill. And such was his illness that he stopped breathing. 18She then said to Elijah:

—What did you do, O man of God? Have you come to uncover past sins and cause my son's death?

19He answered:

—Give me your son.

Taking him from her lap, he carried him up to the upper room where he was staying and laid him on his own bed. 20Then he called on Yahweh:

—O Yahweh, my God, will you afflict even the widow with whom I am residing by letting her son die?

21Then he stretched himself on the child three times and called on Yahweh:

—O Yahweh, my God, let this child's breath return to him.

22Yahweh listened to the pleading of Elijah and the child's breath returned to him, and he lived. 23Elijah then took the child and brought him down from the upper room. He gave him to his mother and said:

—See, your son is alive.

24Then the woman said to Elijah:

—Now I am certain that you are a man of God, and that your words really came from Yahweh!

Judgment of God at Carmel

18 1After several days (in the third year) Yahweh spoke to Elijah and said:

—Go, show yourself to Ahab that I may let it rain on the earth.

2So Elijah went to show himself to Ahab.

17On seeing Elijah, Ahab said to him:

—Is it you, the plague of Israel?

18Elijah replied:

—Who is troubling Israel? Isn't it you and your family who have disobeyed the commands of Yahweh and followed instead the Baals? 19Now, therefore, give an order for the Israelites to gather before me at Mount Carmel, together with the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal who are sustained by Jezebel.

20So Ahab sent for all the people of Israel and gathered the prophets at Mount Carmel. 21Then Elijah addressed the people and asked:

—How long will you follow two ways at the same time? If Yahweh is God, follow him; but if Baal is God then follow him.

The people remained silent. 22So Elijah continued:

—I am the only prophet of Yahweh left here to face Baal's four hundred and fifty prophets. 23Get us two bulls. Let them choose one bull for themselves, cut it into pieces and lay it on the wood and I will do the same with the other bull. But we will not set it on fire. 24Then you shall call on the name of your gods while I shall call on the name of Yahweh. The God who answers with fire is the true one.

Then the people answered:

—That is right.

25Then Elijah told the prophets of Baal:

—Choose for yourselves one bull and prepare it first, for you are many. Then call on the name of your god lest you are left without fire!

26So they took the bull and prepared it, and they called on the name of Baal:

—Baal, answer us!

But there was no voice and no one answered them while they went on dancing on one foot around the altar they had built.

27By noontime, Elijah began to mock them:

—Shout out louder. Baal is a busy god; or he may have gone out or perhaps he has gone on a trip, or he is sleeping and must be wakened!

28So they shouted louder gashing their skin with knives, as they are used to doing, until they bled. 29It was already past noon and they were still raving on until the time of the evening offering. But still there was no voice; no one answered or gave a sign of life.

30Then Elijah said to the people:

—Draw closer to me.

And the people drew closer to him. He then repaired the altar of Yahweh which had been thrown down. 31He took twelve stones corresponding to the number of tribes of the sons of Jacob whom Yahweh had addressed saying, “Israel shall be your name.” 32With these stones, he built an altar to the Name of Yahweh and dug a trench around it that would contain about thirty liters. 33He then arranged the firewood, cut the bull in pieces and laid them on the wood. Then, he said:

—Fill four jars with water and pour it on the burnt offering and on the firewood.

34He said:

—Do it again.

And they did it again.

—One more time.

And they did it a third time. 35The water ran around the altar and filled the trench.

36When the time of the evening offering came, Elijah the prophet came near and said:

—O Yahweh, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant, doing all these things at your command. 37Answer me, O Yahweh, answer me so that this people may know that you, O Yahweh, are God and that you are turning back their hearts to you.

38Then the fire of Yahweh fell and consumed the burnt offering, together with the wood, the stones also, and the dust; the water also dried up in the trench.

39All the people witnessed this. Then they fell on their faces and said:

—Yahweh is God! Yahweh is God!

40Then Elijah commanded them:

—Seize the prophets of Baal and let none of them escape.

And so they seized them. Then Elijah brought them down to the brook Kidron and had them slaughtered there.

41Elijah then said to Ahab:

—Go up, eat and drink, for the sound of rain is rushing in.

42So Ahab went up to eat and drink. Elijah, in the meantime, went to the top of Carmel, bowed to the ground and put his face between his knees. 43Then he said to his servant:

—Go up and look in the direction of the sea.

The man went up, looked, and said:

—There is nothing.

Then Elijah said:

—Go again!

And seven times he went.

44At the seventh time, he perceived a little cloud, the size of a man's hand, rising out of the sea. Elijah told him:

—Go, tell Ahab: Prepare your chariot and go down before the rain stops you.

45A little later the sky grew dark with clouds and wind and a strong rain fell. Ahab was riding on his way to Jezreel; 46as for Elijah, the hand of Yahweh was on him, and tucking his cloak in his belt, he ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.

Elijah at Horeb mountain

19 1Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. 2Jezebel then sent word to Elijah:

—May I be cursed if by this time tomorrow I have not dealt with you as you dealt with them.

3Elijah was scared and fled for his life. He reached Beer-sheba of Judah and left his servant there. 4He himself disappeared into the desert going on a day's journey. Then he sat down under a broom tree and prayed to die:

—That is enough, Yahweh, take away my life for I am dying!

5He lay down and went to sleep under the broom tree. Then an angel touched him and said:

—Get up and eat.

6Elijah looked and saw, at his head, a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water. He ate and drank and went back to sleep. 7The angel of Yahweh came a second time to him, saying:

—Get up and eat, for the journey is too long for you. 8He got up, ate and drank, and on the strength of that food, he traveled for forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mount of God. 9On reaching the place, he came to the cave and stayed in it. Then the word of Yahweh came to him:

—What are you doing here, Elijah?

10He answered:

—I am burning with jealous love for Yahweh, the God of Hosts, because the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and slain your prophets with the sword. No one is left but myself and they are still trying to kill me as well.

11Then Yahweh said:

—Go up and stand on the mount, waiting for Yahweh.

And Yahweh passed by.

There was first a windstorm, wild wind which rent the mountains and broke the rocks into pieces before Yahweh, but Yahweh was not in the wind. After the storm, an earthquake, but Yahweh was not in the earthquake. 12After the earthquake, a fire, but Yahweh was not in the fire. After the fire, the murmur of a gentle breeze. 13When Elijah perceived it, he covered his face with his cloak, went out and stood at the entrance of the cave.

Then he heard a voice addressing him again:

—What are you doing here, Elijah?

14He answered:

—I am burning with jealous love for Yahweh, the God of hosts, because the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars and slain your prophets with the sword. No one is left but myself, yet they still seek my life to take it away.

15Yahweh said to him:

—Take the road back through the desert and go to Damascus. 18Yet I will spare seven thousand in Israel who have not knelt before Baal and whose lips have not kissed him.

19So Elijah left. He found Elisha, son of Shaphat, who was plowing a field of twelve acres and was at the end of the twelfth acre. Elijah passed by him and cast his cloak over him. 20Elisha left the oxen, ran after Elijah and said:

—Let me say goodbye to my father and mother; then I will follow you.

Elijah said to him:

—Return if you want, don't worry about what I did. 21However, Elisha turned back, took the yoke of oxen and slew them. He roasted their meat on the pieces of the yoke and gave it to his people who ate of it. After this, he followed Elijah and began ministering to him.

2 KINGS

Miracles of Elisha

41The widow of one of the fellow prophets called Elisha saying:

—You know that my husband feared God. But now his creditor has come to collect payment. And as we could not pay, he wanted to take my two sons as slaves.

2Elisha said:

—What can I do for you? Tell me what you have in your house?

She answered:

—I have but a little oil for cleaning.

3Elisha said to her:

—Go and ask your neighbors for empty jars. 4Get as many as you can; then go into your house with your sons and close the door. Pour oil into the vessels. And when they are filled, set them aside.

5The woman went and locked herself in her house with her sons. They handed her the vessels and she filled them all. 6She said to one of her sons:

—Bring me another vessel.

And he answered:

—There are no more.

Then the oil stopped flowing. 7As she went back to tell this to the man of God, he said to her:

—Go and sell the oil to pay for your debts; you and your sons can live on the money that is left.

The Shunamite's son

8One day Elisha went to Shunem, and a rich woman invited him to eat. Afterwards, whenever he went to that town, he would go to her house to eat.

9The woman said to her husband:

—See, this man who constantly passes by our house is a holy man of God. 10If you want, we can make a small upper room for him, and place a bed, a table, a chair and a lamp in it. So when he comes, he may stay and rest.

11One day when Elisha came, he went to the upper room and lay down. 12Then he said to Gehazi, his manservant:

—Call this woman.

The young man called her and as the woman stood by the door, 16Elisha said:

—By this time next year, you will hold a son in your arms.

She answered:

—No, my lord, O man of God, you are deceiving your maidservant.

17But the woman gave birth to a son precisely at the time Elisha had told her.

18The boy grew. One day, when he had gone out to his father among the harvesters, he had a severe headache. 19So the father ordered his servant:

—Carry him to his mother.

20The servant brought him to his mother, and the boy sat on her lap till noon, when he died. 21Then the mother went up and laid him on Elisha's bed and she left, closing the door.

32Elisha came into the house, and found the dead boy lying on his bed. 33He entered, closed the door behind him, and prayed to Yahweh. 34Then he lay upon the boy, put his mouth upon the boy's mouth, his eyes upon his eyes, his hands upon the boy's hands, and warmth returned to the boy's body. 35Elisha came down and began walking to and fro. Then he went upstairs to stretch himself upon the boy, and the boy sneezed seven times and opened his eyes.

36Elisha then called Gehazi and said:

—Call the woman.

And when she came, Elisha told her:

—Take your son.

37She bowed at his feet, then she took her son and went out.

Naaman from Syria and Elisha

5 1Naaman was the army commander of the king of Aram. This man was highly regarded and enjoyed the king's favor, for Yahweh had helped him lead the army of the Arameans to victory. But this valiant man was sick with leprosy.

2One day some Aramean soldiers raided the land of Israel and took a young girl captive who became a servant to the wife of Naaman. She said to her mistress:

3—If my master would only present himself to the prophet in Samaria, he would surely cure him of his leprosy.

4Naaman went to tell the king what the young Israelite maidservant had said. 5The king of Aram said to him:

—Go to the prophet, and I shall also send a letter to the king of Israel.

So Naaman went and took with him ten gold bars, six thousand pieces of silver and ten festal garments. 6On his arrival, he delivered the letter to the king of Israel. It said, 'I present my servant Naaman to you that you may heal him of his leprosy.'

7When the king had read the letter, he tore his clothes to show his indignation, 'I am not God to give life or death. And the king of Aram sends me this man to be healed! You see he is just looking for an excuse for war.'

8Elisha, the man of God, came to know that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, so he sent this message to him:

—Why have you torn your clothes? Let the man come to me, that he may know that there is a prophet in Israel.

9So Naaman came with his horses and chariots, and stopped before the house of Elisha. 10Elisha then sent a messenger to tell him:

—Go to the river Jordan and wash seven times, and your flesh shall be as it was before, and you shall be cleansed.

11Naaman was angry, so he went away. He thought:

—On my arrival, he should have personally come out, and then paused and called on the name of Yahweh, his God. And he should have touched with his hand the infected part, and I would have been healed. 12Are the rivers of Damascus, Abana and Pharpar not better than all the rivers of the land of Israel? Could I not wash there to be healed?

13His servants approached him and said to him:

—Father, if the prophet had ordered you to do something difficult, would you not have done it? But how much easier when he said: Take a bath and you will be cleansed.

14So Naaman went down to the Jordan where he washed himself seven times as Elisha had ordered. His skin became soft like that of a child and he was cleansed.

15Then Naaman returned to the man of God with all his men. He entered and said to him:

—Now I know that there is no other God anywhere in the world but in Israel. I ask you to accept these gifts from your servant.

16But Elisha answered:

—I swear by Yahweh whom I serve, I will accept nothing.

And however much Naaman insisted, Elisha would not accept his gifts.

Death of Elisha

13 20Elisha died and they buried him.

A little later, a detachment of Moabites conducted a raid as they used to do at the beginning of every year. 21It happened that at that time some people were burying a dead man, when they saw the Moabites. So they quickly threw the body into the grave of Elisha, and then fled to safety. But as soon as the man's body touched the bones of Elisha, the man revived and stood on his feet.

22Hazeael, king of Aram, oppressed the Israelites throughout the reign of Jehoahaz. 23But Yahweh had pity and took compassion on them; he turned towards them because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and would not utterly destroy them, or cast them far from his face.

Azariah of Judah (796–767)

15 27In the fifty-second year of Azariah, king of Judah, Pekah, son of Remaliah, began to reign over Israel in Samaria, its capital. He reigned for twenty years, and he acted badly towards Yahweh, 28for he did not turn away from the sins which Jeroboam made Israel commit.

29In the time of Pekah, king of Israel, Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, came and seized Iyon, Abel-bethmaacah, Janoah, Kedesh, Hazor, the territory of Gilead and Galilee, and the whole land of Naphtali, and deported their inhabitants to Asshur.

Zedekiah of Judah (597–587)

24 18Zedekiah was twenty-one years old, and he reigned in Jerusalem for eleven years. His mother was Hamutal, daughter of Jeremiah. 19He did what displeased Yahweh, as Jehoiakim had done; 20so the punishment of Yahweh fell on Jerusalem and Judah, until he cast them far away from his presence. And Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

Fall of Jerusalem

25 1In the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, on the tenth day of the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon marched with his entire army and laid siege to Jerusalem. They camped outside the city and built siege works all around it. 2The city was under siege up to the eleventh year of Zedekiah.

3On the ninth day of the fourth month famine became a serious problem in the city, and throughout the land there was no bread for the people.

8On the seventh day of the fifth month in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, Nebuzaradan, commander of the bodyguard and servant of the king of Babylon, entered Jerusalem and 9set fire to the House of Yahweh and the royal palace as well as to all the houses in Jerusalem. 10The Chaldean army under the commander of the bodyguard completely demolished all the walls around Jerusalem.

11Nebuzaradan, commander of the bodyguard, carried off into exile the last of the Jews left in the city, those who had deserted to the king of Babylon and the remainder of the artisans. 12But he left those among the very poor who were capable of working in vineyards and cultivating the soil.