



# 1-2 KINGS

## 1 KINGS

### Read 1 Kings 1:1–27

Once the monarchy has been established, the big question is who will succeed David. Factions are formed and claimants championed in an effort to take power.

**Reflect:** Consider the lengths to which people will go to become powerful. Are the strategies we use always worth their effect on others and ourselves?

**Pray:** Ask for the ability to remain calm in times of crisis and to accept God's decision on these critical matters.

**Act:** Seek out ways to participate in the establishment of a just society and encourage our leaders to work toward this goal.

### The Struggle for the Succession

**1** King David was old and advanced in years; and although they covered him with clothes, he could not get warm. <sup>2</sup> So his servants said to him, “Let a young virgin be sought for my lord the king, and let her wait on the king, and be his attendant; let her lie in your bosom, so that my lord the king may be warm.” <sup>3</sup> So they searched for a beautiful girl throughout all the territory of Israel, and found Abishag the Shunammite, and brought her to the king. <sup>4</sup> The girl was very beautiful. She became the king's attendant and served him, but the king did not know her sexually.

<sup>5</sup> Now Adonijah son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, “I will be king”; he prepared for himself chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him. <sup>6</sup> His father had never at any time displeased him by asking, “Why have you done thus and so?” He was also a very handsome man, and he was born next after Absalom. <sup>7</sup> He conferred with Joab son of Zeruiah and with the priest Abiathar, and they supported Adonijah. <sup>8</sup> But the priest Zadok, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada, and the prophet Nathan, and Shimei, and Rei, and David's own warriors did not side with Adonijah.

<sup>9</sup> Adonijah sacrificed sheep, oxen, and fatted cattle by the stone Zohelath, which is beside En-rogel, and he invited all his brothers, the king's sons, and all the royal officials of Judah, <sup>10</sup> but he did not invite the prophet Nathan or Benaiah or the warriors or his brother Solomon.

### Read 1 Kings 1:28–53

With the help of Nathan and Bathsheba, Solomon is acknowledged as David's successor and is anointed by the high priest Zadok. Adonijah is forced to accept this choice.

**Reflect:** In every political process there are winners and losers. The true test of a leader is to be able to accept defeat and work for the unification and benefit of the nation.

**Pray:** Ask for acceptance in the face of personal disappointment and pray for the success of those who are responsible for national leadership.

**Act:** Respect the process of succession and celebrate the inauguration of new leadership with its possibilities for renewal and change.

11 Then Nathan said to Bathsheba, Solomon's mother, "Have you not heard that Adonijah son of Haggith has become king and our lord David does not know it? 12 Now therefore come, let me give you advice, so that you may save your own life and the life of your son Solomon. 13 Go in at once to King David, and say to him, 'Did you not, my lord the king, swear to your servant, saying: Your son Solomon shall succeed me as king, and he shall sit on my throne? Why then is Adonijah king?' 14 Then while you are still there speaking with the king, I will come in after you and confirm your words."

15 So Bathsheba went to the king in his room. The king was very old; Abishag the Shunammite was attending the king. 16 Bathsheba bowed and did obeisance to the king, and the king said, "What do you wish?" 17 She said to him, "My lord, you swore to your servant by the LORD your God, saying: Your son Solomon shall succeed me as king, and he shall sit on my throne. 18 But now suddenly Adonijah has become king, though you, my lord the king, do not know it. 19 He has sacrificed oxen, fatted cattle, and sheep in abundance, and has invited all the children of the king, the priest Abiathar, and Joab the commander of the army; but your servant Solomon he has not invited. 20 But you, my lord the king—the eyes of all Israel are on you to tell them who shall sit on the throne of my lord the king after him. 21 Otherwise it will come to pass, when my lord the king sleeps with his ancestors, that my son Solomon and I will be counted offenders."

22 While she was still speaking with the king, the prophet Nathan came in. 23 The king was told, "Here is the prophet Nathan." When he came in before the king, he did obeisance to the king, with his face to the ground. 24 Nathan said, "My lord the king, have you said, 'Adonijah shall succeed me as king, and he shall sit on my throne'? 25 For today he has gone down and has sacrificed oxen, fatted cattle, and sheep in abundance, and has invited all the king's children, Joab the commander<sup>a</sup> of the army, and the priest Abiathar, who are now eating and drinking before him, and saying, 'Long live King Adonijah!' 26 But he did not invite me, your servant, and the priest Zadok, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada, and your servant Solomon. 27 Has this thing been brought about by my lord the king and you have not let your servants know who should sit on the throne of my lord the king after him?"

### The Accession of Solomon

28 King David answered, "Summon Bathsheba to me." So she came into the king's presence, and stood

<sup>a</sup> Gk: Heb *the commanders*

before the king. <sup>29</sup> The king swore, saying, "As the LORD lives, who has saved my life from every adversity, <sup>30</sup> as I swore to you by the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Your son Solomon shall succeed me as king, and he shall sit on my throne in my place,' so will I do this day." <sup>31</sup> Then Bathsheba bowed with her face to the ground, and did obeisance to the king, and said, "May my lord King David live forever!"

<sup>32</sup> King David said, "Summon to me the priest Zadok, the prophet Nathan, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada." When they came before the king, <sup>33</sup> the king said to them, "Take with you the servants of your lord, and have my son Solomon ride on my own mule, and bring him down to Gihon. <sup>34</sup> There let the priest Zadok and the prophet Nathan anoint him king over Israel; then blow the trumpet, and say, 'Long live King Solomon!' <sup>35</sup> You shall go up following him. Let him enter and sit on my throne; he shall be king in my place; for I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel and over Judah." <sup>36</sup> Benaiah son of Jehoiada answered the king, "Amen! May the LORD, the God of my lord the king, so ordain. <sup>37</sup> As the LORD has been with my lord the king, so may he be with Solomon, and make his throne greater than the throne of my lord King David."

<sup>38</sup> So the priest Zadok, the prophet Nathan, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites and the Pelethites, went down and had Solomon ride on King David's mule, and led him to Gihon. <sup>39</sup> There the priest Zadok took the horn of oil from the tent and anointed Solomon. Then they blew the trumpet, and all the people said, "Long live King Solomon!" <sup>40</sup> And all the people went up following him, playing on pipes and rejoicing with great joy, so that the earth quaked at their noise.

<sup>41</sup> Adonijah and all the guests who were with him heard it as they finished

feasting. When Joab heard the sound of the trumpet, he said, "Why is the city in an uproar?" <sup>42</sup> While he was still speaking, Jonathan son of the priest Abiathar arrived. Adonijah said, "Come in, for you are a worthy man and surely you bring good news." <sup>43</sup> Jonathan answered Adonijah, "No, for our lord King David has made Solomon king; <sup>44</sup> the king has sent with him the priest Zadok, the prophet Nathan, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and they had him ride on the king's mule; <sup>45</sup> the priest Zadok and the prophet Nathan have anointed him king at Gihon; and they have gone up from there rejoicing, so that the city is in an uproar. This is the noise that you heard. <sup>46</sup> Solomon now sits on the royal throne. <sup>47</sup> Moreover the king's servants came to congratulate our lord King David, saying, 'May God make the name of Solomon more famous than yours, and make his throne greater than your throne.' The king bowed in worship on the bed <sup>48</sup> and went on to pray thus, 'Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who today has granted one of my offspring<sup>a</sup> to sit on my throne and permitted me to witness it.'"

<sup>49</sup> Then all the guests of Adonijah got up trembling and went their own ways. <sup>50</sup> Adonijah, fearing Solomon, got up and went to grasp the horns of the altar. <sup>51</sup> Solomon was informed, "Adonijah is afraid of King Solomon; see, he has laid hold of the horns of the altar, saying, 'Let King Solomon swear to me first that he will not kill his servant with the sword.'" <sup>52</sup> So Solomon responded, "If he proves to be a worthy man, not one of his hairs shall fall to the ground; but if wickedness is found in him, he shall die." <sup>53</sup> Then King Solomon sent to have him brought down from the altar. He came to do obeisance to King Solomon; and Solomon said to him, "Go home."

### David's Instruction to Solomon

**2** When David's time to die drew near, he charged his son Solomon, saying: <sup>2</sup> "I am about to go the way of all the earth. Be strong, be courageous, <sup>3</sup> and keep the charge of the LORD your God, walking in his ways and

<sup>a</sup> Gk: Heb one

### Read 1 Kings 2:1–11

In what functions as a last will and testament, David instructs Solomon to be faithful to the covenant, reiterates the promise of the everlasting covenant to the Davidic house (2 Sam 7:10–16), and provides a checklist of persons to be punished or rewarded after his death.

**Reflect:** As death approaches, we often relive aspects of our life and wish to pass on a legacy to our family. Most important, we look for closure on unfinished business and hope for a bright future for those we cherish.

**Pray:** Ask for a charitable heart in dealing with those who may have wronged you. Pray that your family may remain faithful to the promises of God.

**Act:** Work with the members of your family to prepare them to eventually become leaders and role models for the next generation.

### Read 1 Kings 2:12–46

New regimes often face challenges from those who wish to take power from them and this can lead to a purge of potential enemies and their supporters. Solomon eliminates his competition and fulfills David's instructions to deal harshly with Joab and Shimei.

**Reflect:** While the Christian ideal is to forgive, governments and their leaders fear above all things those who can bring them down. Consider how this attitude could be changed and conflict set aside.

**Pray:** Ask for the ability to mediate disputes. Pray for those who use force instead of persuasion to solve problems.

**Act:** Work for a just society. Treat others in a fair and consistent manner, and avoid the desire to take revenge.

keeping his statutes, his commandments, his ordinances, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, so that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn. <sup>4</sup>Then the LORD will establish his word that he spoke concerning me: 'If your heirs take heed to their way, to walk before me in faithfulness with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail you a successor on the throne of Israel.'

<sup>5</sup>"Moreover you know also what Joab son of Zeruiah did to me, how he dealt with the two commanders of the armies of Israel, Abner son of Ner, and Amasa son of Jether, whom he murdered, retaliating in time of peace for blood that had been shed in war, and putting the blood of war on the belt around his waist, and on the sandals on his feet. <sup>6</sup>Act therefore according to your wisdom, but do not let his gray head go down to Sheol in peace. <sup>7</sup>Deal loyally, however, with the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be among those who eat at your table; for with such loyalty they met me when I fled from your brother Absalom. <sup>8</sup>There is also with you Shimei son of Gera, the Benjaminite from Bahurim, who cursed me with a terrible curse on the day when I went to Mahanaim; but when he came down to meet me at the Jordan, I swore to him by the LORD, 'I will not put you to death with the sword.' <sup>9</sup>Therefore do not hold him guiltless, for you are a wise man; you will know what you ought to do to him, and you must bring his gray head down with blood to Sheol."

### Death of David

<sup>10</sup>Then David slept with his ancestors, and was buried in the city of David. <sup>11</sup>The time that David reigned over Israel was forty years; he reigned seven years in Hebron, and thirty-three years in Jerusalem. <sup>12</sup>So Solomon sat on the throne of his father David; and his kingdom was firmly established.

### Solomon Consolidates His Reign

<sup>13</sup>Then Adonijah son of Haggith came to Bathsheba, Solomon's mother. She asked, "Do you come peaceably?" He said, "Peaceably." <sup>14</sup>Then he said, "May I have a word with you?" She said, "Go on." <sup>15</sup>He said, "You know that the kingdom was mine, and that all Israel expected me to reign; however, the kingdom has turned about and become my brother's, for it was his from the LORD. <sup>16</sup>And now I have one request to make of you; do not refuse me." She said to him, "Go on." <sup>17</sup>He said, "Please ask King Solomon—he will not refuse you—to give me Abishag the Shunammite as my wife." <sup>18</sup>Bathsheba said, "Very well; I will speak to the king on your behalf."



19 So Bathsheba went to King Solomon, to speak to him on behalf of Adonijah. The king rose to meet her, and bowed down to her; then he sat on his throne, and had a throne brought for the king's mother, and she sat on his right. <sup>20</sup> Then she said, "I have one small request to make of you; do not refuse me." And the king said to her, "Make your request, my mother; for I will not refuse you." <sup>21</sup> She said, "Let Abishag the Shunammite be given to your brother Adonijah as his wife." <sup>22</sup> King Solomon answered his mother, "And why do you ask Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? Ask for him the kingdom as well! For he is my elder brother; ask not only for him but also for the priest Abiathar and for Joab son of Zeruah!" <sup>23</sup> Then King Solomon swore by the LORD, "So may God do to me, and more also, for Adonijah has devised this scheme at the risk of his life! <sup>24</sup> Now therefore as the LORD lives, who has established me and placed me on the throne of my father David, and who has made me a house as he promised, today Adonijah shall be put to death." <sup>25</sup> So King Solomon sent Benaiah son of Jehoiada; he struck him down, and he died.

<sup>26</sup> The king said to the priest Abiathar, "Go to Anathoth, to your estate; for you deserve death. But I will not at this time put you to death, because you carried the ark of the Lord GOD before my father David, and because you shared in all the hardships my father endured." <sup>27</sup> So Solomon banished Abiathar from being priest to the LORD, thus fulfilling the word of the LORD that he had spoken concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh.

<sup>28</sup> When the news came to Joab—for Joab had supported Adonijah though he had not supported Absalom—Joab fled to the tent of the LORD and grasped the horns of the altar. <sup>29</sup> When it was told King Solomon, "Joab has fled to the tent of the LORD and now is beside the altar," Solomon sent Benaiah son of Jehoiada, saying, "Go, strike him down." <sup>30</sup> So Benaiah came to the tent of the LORD and said to him, "The king commands, 'Come out.'" But he said, "No, I will die here." Then Benaiah brought

the king word again, saying, "Thus said Joab, and thus he answered me." <sup>31</sup> The king replied to him, "Do as he has said, strike him down and bury him; and thus take away from me and from my father's house the guilt for the blood that Joab shed without cause. <sup>32</sup> The LORD will bring back his bloody deeds on his own head, because, without the knowledge of my father David, he attacked and killed with the sword two men more righteous and better than himself, Abner son of Ner, commander of the army of Israel, and Amasa son of Jether, commander of the army of Judah. <sup>33</sup> So shall their blood come back on the head of Joab and on the head of his descendants forever; but to David, and to his descendants, and to his house, and to his throne, there shall be peace from the LORD forevermore." <sup>34</sup> Then Benaiah son of Jehoiada went up and struck him down and killed him; and he was buried at his own house near the wilderness. <sup>35</sup> The king put Benaiah son of Jehoiada over the army in his place, and the king put the priest Zadok in the place of Abiathar.

<sup>36</sup> Then the king sent and summoned Shimei, and said to him, "Build yourself a house in Jerusalem, and live there, and do not go out from there to any place whatever. <sup>37</sup> For on the day you go out, and cross the Wadi Kidron, know for certain that you shall die; your blood shall be on your own head." <sup>38</sup> And Shimei said to the king, "The sentence is fair; as my lord the king has said, so will your servant do." So Shimei lived in Jerusalem many days.

<sup>39</sup> But it happened at the end of three years that two of Shimei's slaves ran away to King Achish son of Maacah of Gath. When it was told Shimei, "Your slaves are in Gath," <sup>40</sup> Shimei arose and saddled a donkey, and went to Achish in Gath, to search for his slaves; Shimei went and brought his slaves from Gath. <sup>41</sup> When Solomon was told that Shimei had gone from Jerusalem to Gath and returned, <sup>42</sup> the king sent and summoned Shimei, and said to him, "Did I not make you swear by the LORD, and solemnly adjure you, saying, 'Know for certain that on the day you go

out and go to any place whatever, you shall die'? And you said to me, 'The sentence is fair; I accept.' <sup>43</sup> Why then have you not kept your oath to the LORD and the commandment with which I charged you?" <sup>44</sup> The king also said to Shimei, "You know in your own heart all the evil that you did to my father David; so the LORD will bring

back your evil on your own head. <sup>45</sup> But King Solomon shall be blessed, and the throne of David shall be established before the LORD forever." <sup>46</sup> Then the king commanded Benaiah son of Jehoiada; and he went out and struck him down, and he died.

So the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon.

### Read 1 Kings 3:1–15

Solomon is given the opportunity to ask for a divine gift and he chooses an "understanding mind" so that he can rule his people more effectively. His request sets up a series of episodes displaying his wisdom.

**Reflect:** What would we request if given a chance to ask something of God?

**Pray:** Pray for the understanding to make good choices that help others.

**Act:** Learn from Solomon's choice that riches, a long life, and revenge are short-term gifts, but wisdom is a lifelong treasure. Make choices based on wise counsel and the desire to work for the benefit of all.

### Solomon's Prayer for Wisdom

**3** Solomon made a marriage alliance with Pharaoh king of Egypt; he took Pharaoh's daughter and brought her into the city of David, until he had finished building his own house and the house of the LORD and the wall around Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup> The people were sacrificing at the high places, however, because no house had yet been built for the name of the LORD.

<sup>3</sup> Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of his father David; only, he sacrificed and offered incense at the high places. <sup>4</sup> The king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the principal high place; Solomon used to offer a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. <sup>5</sup> At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, "Ask what I should give you." <sup>6</sup> And Solomon said, "You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant my father David, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you; and you have kept for him this great and steadfast love, and have given him a son to sit on his throne today. <sup>7</sup> And now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David, although I am only a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. <sup>8</sup> And your servant is in the midst of the people whom you have chosen, a great people, so numerous they cannot be numbered or counted. <sup>9</sup> Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil; for who can govern this your great people?"

<sup>10</sup> It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. <sup>11</sup> God said to him, "Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches, or for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, <sup>12</sup> I now do according to your word. Indeed I give you a wise and discerning mind; no one like you has been before you and no one like you shall arise after you. <sup>13</sup> I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor all your life; no other king shall compare with you. <sup>14</sup> If you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my command-

### Read 1 Kings 3:16–28

Solomon's wisdom is demonstrated by his judgment in the case of the two prostitutes. He determines the true mother and shows himself willing to provide justice to all classes of people.

**Reflect:** Consider the rival claims of the two women and the use of basic psychology to reveal the truth. Note that contention can often be resolved through simple questioning.

**Pray:** Ask for the patience to hear others' concerns and the understanding needed to help bring an end to disputes.

**Act:** Strive to treat all people with equal concern and provide them with your best judgment when asked to do so.

### Read 1 Kings 4:1–20

In organizing his kingdom Solomon identifies and appoints individuals to oversee the various lands and departments of the national government. This first attempt at creating a working bureaucracy provides a model for future rulers and strengthens governmental efficiency.

**Reflect:** Consider how the operations of large and small organizations are built on the foundation of its leaders and their representatives. The process of choosing qualified and loyal employees is often the key to success.

**Pray:** Ask for the ability to discern talent and potential when working in a group.

**Act:** Be willing to offer guidance when in charge of a group project and your best efforts when you are a member of an organization. Learn to make your own ambitions subsidiary or complementary to the welfare of your workplace.

ments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your life."

15 Then Solomon awoke; it had been a dream. He came to Jerusalem where he stood before the ark of the covenant of the LORD. He offered up burnt offerings and offerings of well-being, and provided a feast for all his servants.

### Solomon's Wisdom in Judgment

16 Later, two women who were prostitutes came to the king and stood before him. <sup>17</sup> The one woman said, "Please, my lord, this woman and I live in the same house; and I gave birth while she was in the house. <sup>18</sup> Then on the third day after I gave birth, this woman also gave birth. We were together; there was no one else with us in the house, only the two of us were in the house. <sup>19</sup> Then this woman's son died in the night, because she lay on him. <sup>20</sup> She got up in the middle of the night and took my son from beside me while your servant slept. She laid him at her breast, and laid her dead son at my breast. <sup>21</sup> When I rose in the morning to nurse my son, I saw that he was dead; but when I looked at him closely in the morning, clearly it was not the son I had borne." <sup>22</sup> But the other woman said, "No, the living son is mine, and the dead son is yours." The first said, "No, the dead son is yours, and the living son is mine." So they argued before the king.

<sup>23</sup> Then the king said, "The one says, 'This is my son that is alive, and your son is dead'; while the other says, 'Not so! Your son is dead, and my son is the living one.'" <sup>24</sup> So the king said, "Bring me a sword," and they brought a sword before the king. <sup>25</sup> The king said, "Divide the living boy in two; then give half to the one, and half to the other." <sup>26</sup> But the woman whose son was alive said to the king—because compassion for her son burned within her—"Please, my lord, give her the living boy; certainly do not kill him!" The other said, "It shall be neither mine nor yours; divide it." <sup>27</sup> Then the king responded: "Give the first woman the living boy; do not kill him. She is his mother." <sup>28</sup> All Israel heard of the judgment that the king had rendered; and they stood in awe of the king, because they perceived that the wisdom of God was in him, to execute justice.

### Solomon's Administrative Officers

**4** King Solomon was king over all Israel, <sup>2</sup> and these were his high officials: Azariah son of Zadok was the priest; <sup>3</sup> Elihoreph and Ahijah sons of Shisha were secretaries; Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was recorder; <sup>4</sup> Benaiah son of Jehoiada was in command of the army; Zadok and Abiathar were priests; <sup>5</sup> Azariah son of

### Read 1 Kings 4:21–34

This passage gives further evidence of Solomon's wisdom by describing his well-planned provisioning of the palace, his benevolent rule over surrounding territories that brought peace to his people, and his remarkable knowledge of the natural world.

**Reflect:** It is interesting to consider Solomon's areas of expertise in relation to those usually found in national leaders. The vast range of interests and abilities speak to the complexity of ruling a nation either through one's own knowledge or with the aid of advisers.

**Pray:** Like Solomon, we should ask for the understanding necessary to provide aid to others and to contribute to an era of peace and security.

**Act:** Given the multiple issues we face in coping with environmental, political, and social change, we should work to be good stewards of the resources we have been given.

Nathan was over the officials; Zabud son of Nathan was priest and king's friend; <sup>6</sup> Ahishar was in charge of the palace; and Adoniram son of Abda was in charge of the forced labor.

<sup>7</sup> Solomon had twelve officials over all Israel, who provided food for the king and his household; each one had to make provision for one month in the year. <sup>8</sup> These were their names: Ben-hur, in the hill country of Ephraim; <sup>9</sup> Ben-deker, in Makaz, Shaalbim, Beth-she-mesh, and Elon-beth-hanan; <sup>10</sup> Ben-hesed, in Arubboth (to him belonged Socoh and all the land of Hephher); <sup>11</sup> Ben-abinadab, in all Naphath-dor (he had Taphath, Solomon's daughter, as his wife); <sup>12</sup> Baana son of Ahilud, in Taanach, Megiddo, and all Beth-shean, which is beside Zarethan below Jezreel, and from Beth-shean to Abel-meholah, as far as the other side of Jokmeam; <sup>13</sup> Ben-geber, in Ramoth-gilead (he had the villages of Jair son of Manasseh, which are in Gilead, and he had the region of Argob, which is in Bashan, sixty great cities with walls and bronze bars); <sup>14</sup> Ahinadab son of Iddo, in Mahanaim; <sup>15</sup> Ahimaaz, in Naphtali (he had taken Basemath, Solomon's daughter, as his wife); <sup>16</sup> Baana son of Hushai, in Asher and Bealoth; <sup>17</sup> Jehoshaphat son of Paruah, in Issachar; <sup>18</sup> Shimei son of Ela, in Benjamin; <sup>19</sup> Geber son of Uri, in the land of Gilead, the country of King Sihon of the Amorites and of King Og of Bashan. And there was one official in the land of Judah.

### Magnificence of Solomon's Rule

<sup>20</sup> Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand by the sea; they ate and drank and were happy. <sup>21a</sup> Solomon was sovereign over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates to the land of the Philistines, even to the border of Egypt; they brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life.

<sup>22</sup> Solomon's provision for one day was thirty cors of choice flour, and sixty cors of meal, <sup>23</sup> ten fat oxen, and twenty pasture-fed cattle, one hundred sheep, besides deer, gazelles, roebucks, and fatted fowl. <sup>24</sup> For he had dominion over all the region west of the Euphrates from Tiphseh to Gaza, over all the kings west of the Euphrates; and he had peace on all sides. <sup>25</sup> During Solomon's lifetime Judah and Israel lived in safety, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, all of them under their vines and fig trees. <sup>26</sup> Solomon also had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen. <sup>27</sup> Those officials supplied provisions for King Solomon and for all who came to King Solomon's table, each one in his month; they let nothing be lacking. <sup>28</sup> They also brought to the required place barley and straw for the horses and swift steeds, each according to his charge.

## Fame of Solomon's Wisdom

29 God gave Solomon very great wisdom, discernment, and breadth of understanding as vast as the sand on the seashore, <sup>30</sup> so that Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east, and all the wisdom of Egypt. <sup>31</sup> He was wiser than anyone else, wiser than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Calcol, and Darda, children of Mahol; his fame spread

throughout all the surrounding nations. <sup>32</sup> He composed three thousand proverbs, and his songs numbered a thousand and five. <sup>33</sup> He would speak of trees, from the cedar that is in the Lebanon to the hyssop that grows in the wall; he would speak of animals, and birds, and reptiles, and fish. <sup>34</sup> People came from all the nations to hear the wisdom of Solomon; they came from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom.

### Read 1 Kings 5

Lacking the skilled workers or stands of forests in Israel to construct the Jerusalem temple, Solomon negotiates a treaty with King Hiram of Tyre in Phoenicia to fill this need.

**Reflect:** Major projects require careful planning. Consider all of the details that must have gone into gathering the raw materials, recruiting the skilled artisans, and developing a logistical plan for constructing the temple.

**Pray:** Ask for the vision to see the “big picture” when planning events or buildings. Pray for the ability to work cooperatively with others.

**Act:** Learn to recognize that longed-for goals can be achieved through careful planning. Recognize that great things can be accomplished by developing a system of complementary bargaining, trading what you have in abundance for what you lack.

## Preparations and Materials for the Temple

**5**<sup>a</sup> Now King Hiram of Tyre sent his servants to Solomon, when he heard that they had anointed him king in place of his father; for Hiram had always been a friend to David. <sup>2</sup> Solomon sent word to Hiram, saying, <sup>3</sup> “You know that my father David could not build a house for the name of the LORD his God because of the warfare with which his enemies surrounded him, until the LORD put them under the soles of his feet.<sup>b</sup> <sup>4</sup> But now the LORD my God has given me rest on every side; there is neither adversary nor misfortune. <sup>5</sup> So I intend to build a house for the name of the LORD my God, as the LORD said to my father David, ‘Your son, whom I will set on your throne in your place, shall build the house for my name.’ <sup>6</sup> Therefore command that cedars from the Lebanon be cut for me. My servants will join your servants, and I will give you whatever wages you set for your servants; for you know that there is no one among us who knows how to cut timber like the Sidonians.”

<sup>7</sup> When Hiram heard the words of Solomon, he rejoiced greatly, and said, “Blessed be the LORD today, who has given to David a wise son to be over this great people.” <sup>8</sup> Hiram sent word to Solomon, “I have heard the message that you have sent to me; I will fulfill all your needs in the matter of cedar and cypress timber. <sup>9</sup> My servants shall bring it down to the sea from the Lebanon; I will make it into rafts to go by sea to the place you indicate. I will have them broken up there for you to take away. And you shall meet my needs by providing food for my household.” <sup>10</sup> So Hiram supplied Solomon's every need for timber of cedar and cypress. <sup>11</sup> Solomon in turn gave Hiram twenty thousand cors of wheat as food for his household, and twenty cors of fine oil. Solomon gave this to Hiram year by year. <sup>12</sup> So the LORD gave Solomon wisdom, as he promised him. There was peace between Hiram and Solomon; and the two of them made a treaty.

<sup>13</sup> King Solomon conscripted forced labor out of all Israel; the levy numbered thirty thousand men. <sup>14</sup> He

<sup>a</sup> Ch 5.15 in Heb

<sup>b</sup> Gk Tg Vg: Heb *my feet or his feet*

sent them to the Lebanon, ten thousand a month in shifts; they would be a month in the Lebanon and two months at home; Adoniram was in charge of the forced labor. <sup>15</sup> Solomon also had seventy thousand laborers and eighty thousand stonecutters in the hill country, <sup>16</sup> besides Solomon's three thousand three hundred supervisors who

were over the work, having charge of the people who did the work. <sup>17</sup> At the king's command, they quarried out great, costly stones in order to lay the foundation of the house with dressed stones. <sup>18</sup> So Solomon's builders and Hiram's builders and the Gebalites did the stonecutting and prepared the timber and the stone to build the house.

### Read 1 Kings 6

The seven-year construction process for the Jerusalem temple is recounted and its rich materials and furnishings are described. Solomon is reminded that this is a monument not to his power but to the covenant with Yahweh.

**Reflect:** The resources and effort that go into church construction should be an expression of the devotion of the people to their relationship with God. Note that the desire to create a rich background for worship can become an obsession that obstructs our view of God's gifts.

**Pray:** Ask for a humble spirit when glorifying God's creation through the building or renovation of worship space.

**Act:** Make it clear to others that sacred space facilitates worship, but does not exclude the possibilities of worshipping God anywhere and at any time.

### Solomon Builds the Temple

**6** In the four hundred eightieth year after the Israelites came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, which is the second month, he began to build the house of the LORD. <sup>2</sup> The house that King Solomon built for the LORD was sixty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and thirty cubits high. <sup>3</sup> The vestibule in front of the nave of the house was twenty cubits wide, across the width of the house. Its depth was ten cubits in front of the house. <sup>4</sup> For the house he made windows with recessed frames.<sup>a</sup> <sup>5</sup> He also built a structure against the wall of the house, running around the walls of the house, both the nave and the inner sanctuary; and he made side chambers all around. <sup>6</sup> The lowest story<sup>b</sup> was five cubits wide, the middle one was six cubits wide, and the third was seven cubits wide; for around the outside of the house he made offsets on the wall in order that the supporting beams should not be inserted into the walls of the house.

<sup>7</sup> The house was built with stone finished at the quarry, so that neither hammer nor ax nor any tool of iron was heard in the temple while it was being built.

<sup>8</sup> The entrance for the middle story was on the south side of the house: one went up by winding stairs to the middle story, and from the middle story to the third. <sup>9</sup> So he built the house, and finished it; he roofed the house with beams and planks of cedar. <sup>10</sup> He built the structure against the whole house, each story<sup>c</sup> five cubits high, and it was joined to the house with timbers of cedar.

<sup>11</sup> Now the word of the LORD came to Solomon, <sup>12</sup> "Concerning this house that you are building, if you will walk in my statutes, obey my ordinances, and keep all my commandments by walking in them, then I will establish my promise with you, which I made to your father David. <sup>13</sup> I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will not forsake my people Israel."

<sup>14</sup> So Solomon built the house, and finished it. <sup>15</sup> He lined the walls of the house on the inside with boards of cedar; from the floor of the house to the rafters of the ceiling, he covered them on the inside with wood; and

<sup>a</sup> Gk: Meaning of Heb uncertain

<sup>b</sup> Gk: Heb *structure*

<sup>c</sup> Heb lacks *each story*



he covered the floor of the house with boards of cypress. <sup>16</sup> He built twenty cubits of the rear of the house with boards of cedar from the floor to the rafters, and he built this within as an inner sanctuary, as the most holy place. <sup>17</sup> The house, that is, the nave in front of the inner sanctuary, was forty cubits long. <sup>18</sup> The cedar within the house had carvings of gourds and open flowers; all was cedar, no stone was seen. <sup>19</sup> The inner sanctuary he prepared in the innermost part of the house, to set there the ark of the covenant of the LORD. <sup>20</sup> The interior of the inner sanctuary was twenty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and twenty cubits high; he overlaid it with pure gold. He also overlaid the altar with cedar.<sup>a</sup> <sup>21</sup> Solomon overlaid the inside of the house with pure gold, then he drew chains of gold across, in front of the inner sanctuary, and overlaid it with gold. <sup>22</sup> Next he overlaid the whole house with gold, in order that the whole house might be perfect; even the whole altar that belonged to the inner sanctuary he overlaid with gold.

### The Furnishings of the Temple

<sup>23</sup> In the inner sanctuary he made two cherubim of olivewood, each ten cubits high. <sup>24</sup> Five cubits was the length of one wing of the cherub, and five cubits the length of the other wing of the cherub; it was ten cubits from the tip of one wing to the tip of the other. <sup>25</sup> The other cherub also measured ten cubits; both cherubim had the same measure and the same form. <sup>26</sup> The height of one cherub was ten cubits, and so was that of the other cherub. <sup>27</sup> He put the cherubim in the innermost part of

the house; the wings of the cherubim were spread out so that a wing of one was touching the one wall, and a wing of the other cherub was touching the other wall; their other wings toward the center of the house were touching wing to wing. <sup>28</sup> He also overlaid the cherubim with gold.

<sup>29</sup> He carved the walls of the house all around about with carved engravings of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers, in the inner and outer rooms. <sup>30</sup> The floor of the house he overlaid with gold, in the inner and outer rooms.

<sup>31</sup> For the entrance to the inner sanctuary he made doors of olivewood; the lintel and the doorposts were five-sided.<sup>a</sup> <sup>32</sup> He covered the two doors of olivewood with carvings of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers; he overlaid them with gold, and spread gold on the cherubim and on the palm trees.

<sup>33</sup> So also he made for the entrance to the nave doorposts of olivewood, four-sided each, <sup>34</sup> and two doors of cypress wood; the two leaves of the one door were folding, and the two leaves of the other door were folding. <sup>35</sup> He carved cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers, overlaying them with gold evenly applied upon the carved work. <sup>36</sup> He built the inner court with three courses of dressed stone to one course of cedar beams.

<sup>37</sup> In the fourth year the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid, in the month of Ziv. <sup>38</sup> In the eleventh year, in the month of Bul, which is the eighth month, the house was finished in all its parts, and according to all its specifications. He was seven years in building it.

### Solomon's Palace and Other Buildings

**7** Solomon was building his own house thirteen years, and he finished his entire house.

<sup>2</sup> He built the House of the Forest of the Lebanon one hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide, and thirty cubits high, built on four rows of cedar pillars, with cedar beams on the pillars. <sup>3</sup> It was roofed with cedar on the forty-five rafters, fifteen in each row, which were on the pillars. <sup>4</sup> There were window frames in the three rows, facing each other in the three rows. <sup>5</sup> All the door-

<sup>a</sup> Meaning of Heb uncertain

### Read 1 Kings 7

Further details are provided on the construction and furnishing of both Solomon's palace and the temple in Jerusalem. Of particular interest are the molten sea, the carved wooden panels, and the various implements used for sacrifice and the burning of incense.

**Reflect:** The mechanical aspects of worship are sometimes taken for granted or little understood. Most traditions employ sacred objects or provide edifying decoration to both please the eye and relate the sacred story.

**Pray:** Ask for a keen eye to recognize the efforts of artisans to provide beauty and instruction in church buildings and for an inquiring mind to seek out explanations that will deepen understanding.

**Act:** Make an effort to thank those responsible for the construction and furnishing of sacred buildings and to learn more about the use of sacred objects in worship.

ways and doorposts had four-sided frames, opposite, facing each other in the three rows.

6 He made the Hall of Pillars fifty cubits long and thirty cubits wide. There was a porch in front with pillars, and a canopy in front of them.

7 He made the Hall of the Throne where he was to pronounce judgment, the Hall of Justice, covered with cedar from floor to floor.

8 His own house where he would reside, in the other court back of the hall, was of the same construction. Solomon also made a house like this hall for Pharaoh's daughter, whom he had taken in marriage.

9 All these were made of costly stones, cut according to measure, sawed with saws, back and front, from the foundation to the coping, and from outside to the great court. <sup>10</sup> The foundation was of costly stones, huge stones, stones of eight and ten cubits. <sup>11</sup> There were costly stones above, cut to measure, and cedarwood. <sup>12</sup> The great court had three courses of dressed stone to one layer of cedar beams all around; so had the inner court of the house of the LORD, and the vestibule of the house.

### Products of Hiram the Bronzeworker

13 Now King Solomon invited and received Hiram from Tyre. <sup>14</sup> He was the son of a widow of the tribe of Naphtali, whose father, a man of Tyre, had been an artisan in bronze; he was full of skill, intelligence, and knowledge in working bronze. He came to King Solomon, and did all his work.

15 He cast two pillars of bronze. Eighteen cubits was the height of the one, and a cord of twelve cubits would encircle it; the second pillar was the same.<sup>a</sup> <sup>16</sup> He also made two capitals of molten bronze, to set on the tops of the pillars; the height of the one capital was five cubits, and the height of the other capital was five cubits. <sup>17</sup> There were nets of checker work with wreaths of chain work for the capitals on the tops of the pillars; seven<sup>b</sup> for the one capital, and seven<sup>b</sup> for the other capital. <sup>18</sup> He made the columns with two rows around each latticework to cover the capitals that were above the pomegranates; he did the same with the other capital. <sup>19</sup> Now the capitals that were on the tops of the pillars in the vestibule were of lily-work, four cubits high. <sup>20</sup> The capitals were on the two pillars and also above the rounded projection that was beside the latticework; there were two hundred pomegranates in rows all around; and so with the other capital. <sup>21</sup> He set up the pillars at the vestibule of the temple; he set up the pillar on the south and called it Jachin; and he set up the pillar on the north and called it Boaz. <sup>22</sup> On the tops of the

<sup>a</sup> Cn: Heb and a cord of twelve cubits encircled the second pillar; Compare Jer 52.21

<sup>b</sup> Heb: Gk a net

pillars was lily-work. Thus the work of the pillars was finished.

23 Then he made the molten sea; it was round, ten cubits from brim to brim, and five cubits high. A line of thirty cubits would encircle it completely. 24 Under its brim were panels all around it, each of ten cubits, surrounding the sea; there were two rows of panels, cast when it was cast. 25 It stood on twelve oxen, three facing north, three facing west, three facing south, and three facing east; the sea was set on them. The hindquarters of each were toward the inside. 26 Its thickness was a handbreadth; its brim was made like the brim of a cup, like the flower of a lily; it held two thousand baths.<sup>a</sup>

27 He also made the ten stands of bronze; each stand was four cubits long, four cubits wide, and three cubits high. 28 This was the construction of the stands: they had borders; the borders were within the frames; 29 on the borders that were set in the frames were lions, oxen, and cherubim. On the frames, both above and below the lions and oxen, there were wreaths of beveled work. 30 Each stand had four bronze wheels and axles of bronze; at the four corners were supports for a basin. The supports were cast with wreaths at the side of each. 31 Its opening was within the crown whose height was one cubit; its opening was round, as a pedestal is made; it was a cubit and a half wide. At its opening there were carvings; its borders were four-sided, not round. 32 The four wheels were underneath the borders; the axles of the wheels were in the stands; and the height of a wheel was a cubit and a half. 33 The wheels were made like a chariot wheel; their axles, their rims, their spokes, and their hubs were all cast. 34 There were four supports at the four corners of each stand; the supports were of one piece with the stands. 35 On the top of the stand there was a round band half a cubit high; on the top of the stand, its stays and its borders were of one piece with it. 36 On the surfaces of its stays and on its

borders he carved cherubim, lions, and palm trees, where each had space, with wreaths all around. 37 In this way he made the ten stands; all of them were cast alike, with the same size and the same form.

38 He made ten basins of bronze; each basin held forty baths,<sup>a</sup> each basin measured four cubits; there was a basin for each of the ten stands. 39 He set five of the stands on the south side of the house, and five on the north side of the house; he set the sea on the southeast corner of the house.

40 Hiram also made the pots, the shovels, and the basins. So Hiram finished all the work that he did for King Solomon on the house of the LORD: 41 the two pillars, the two bowls of the capitals that were on the tops of the pillars, the two latticeworks to cover the two bowls of the capitals that were on the tops of the pillars; 42 the four hundred pomegranates for the two latticeworks, two rows of pomegranates for each latticework, to cover the two bowls of the capitals that were on the pillars; 43 the ten stands, the ten basins on the stands; 44 the one sea, and the twelve oxen underneath the sea.

45 The pots, the shovels, and the basins, all these vessels that Hiram made for King Solomon for the house of the LORD were of burnished bronze. 46 In the plain of the Jordan the king cast them, in the clay ground between Succoth and Zarethan. 47 Solomon left all the vessels unweighed, because there were so many of them; the weight of the bronze was not determined.

48 So Solomon made all the vessels that were in the house of the LORD: the golden altar, the golden table for the bread of the Presence, 49 the lampstands of pure gold, five on the south side and five on the north, in front of the inner sanctuary; the flowers, the lamps, and the tongs, of gold; 50 the cups, snuffers, basins, dishes for incense, and firepans, of pure gold; the sockets for the doors of the innermost part of the house, the most holy place, and for the doors of the nave of the temple, of gold.

<sup>a</sup> A Heb measure of volume

51 Thus all the work that King Solomon did on the house of the LORD was finished. Solomon brought in the things that his father David had dedicated, the silver, the gold, and the vessels, and stored them in the treasuries of the house of the LORD.

### Read 1 Kings 8:1–21

The dedication of the Jerusalem temple takes place in three parts. In the first part, Solomon transports the ark of the covenant and the tent of meeting to his newly finished structure, placing them in the most holy place. God's acceptance of this comes with the manifestation of divine presence in a cloud that "filled the house of the LORD."

**Reflect:** Consider the implications and rituals involved in transferring sacred objects to newly created facilities. Note how Solomon takes on the mantle of authority from David.

**Pray:** Ask for a blessing from contact with objects or places associated with God's presence.

**Act:** Make an effort to learn more about the sacred objects housed in your own church or used by ministers in worship.

### Dedication of the Temple

**8** Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, the leaders of the ancestral houses of the Israelites, before King Solomon in Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the city of David, which is Zion. <sup>2</sup>All the people of Israel assembled to King Solomon at the festival in the month Ethanim, which is the seventh month. <sup>3</sup>And all the elders of Israel came, and the priests carried the ark. <sup>4</sup>So they brought up the ark of the LORD, the tent of meeting, and all the holy vessels that were in the tent; the priests and the Levites brought them up. <sup>5</sup>King Solomon and all the congregation of Israel, who had assembled before him, were with him before the ark, sacrificing so many sheep and oxen that they could not be counted or numbered. <sup>6</sup>Then the priests brought the ark of the covenant of the LORD to its place, in the inner sanctuary of the house, in the most holy place, underneath the wings of the cherubim. <sup>7</sup>For the cherubim spread out their wings over the place of the ark, so that the cherubim made a covering above the ark and its poles. <sup>8</sup>The poles were so long that the ends of the poles were seen from the holy place in front of the inner sanctuary; but they could not be seen from outside; they are there to this day. <sup>9</sup>There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets of stone that Moses had placed there at Horeb, where the LORD made a covenant with the Israelites, when they came out of the land of Egypt. <sup>10</sup>And when the priests came out of the holy place, a cloud filled the house of the LORD, <sup>11</sup>so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD.

<sup>12</sup>Then Solomon said,

"The LORD has said that he would dwell in thick darkness.

<sup>13</sup>I have built you an exalted house,  
a place for you to dwell in forever."

### Solomon's Speech

<sup>14</sup>Then the king turned around and blessed all the assembly of Israel, while all the assembly of Israel stood. <sup>15</sup>He said, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who with his hand has fulfilled what he promised with his mouth to my father David, saying, <sup>16</sup>'Since the day that I brought my people Israel out of Egypt, I have not chosen a city from any of the tribes of Israel in

### Read 1 Kings 8:22–53

In the second part of Solomon's dedication of the Jerusalem temple, he voices a detailed prayer acknowledging God's majesty and commitment to the Davidic dynasty. He also calls on God to listen to the people's prayers in time of need and to function as judge and protector of the faithful who will engage in various forms of worship or make use of the sacred precincts.

**Reflect:** Consider the various ways in which we use churches—their community functions as well as their serving as a setting for ritual and worship. Reflect on the inclusive and confident nature of Solomon's prayer.

**Pray:** Ask for a blessing on our worship, whether in church or in the world. Ask for a greater understanding of the power of prayer.

**Act:** Contribute your skills, your time, and your presence to the church community. Pray continually for direction and the forgiveness of failings.

which to build a house, that my name might be there; but I chose David to be over my people Israel.' <sup>17</sup> My father David had it in mind to build a house for the name of the LORD, the God of Israel. <sup>18</sup> But the LORD said to my father David, 'You did well to consider building a house for my name; <sup>19</sup> nevertheless you shall not build the house, but your son who shall be born to you shall build the house for my name.' <sup>20</sup> Now the LORD has upheld the promise that he made; for I have risen in the place of my father David; I sit on the throne of Israel, as the LORD promised, and have built the house for the name of the LORD, the God of Israel. <sup>21</sup> There I have provided a place for the ark, in which is the covenant of the LORD that he made with our ancestors when he brought them out of the land of Egypt."

### Solomon's Prayer of Dedication

<sup>22</sup> Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands to heaven. <sup>23</sup> He said, "O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and steadfast love for your servants who walk before you with all their heart, <sup>24</sup> the covenant that you kept for your servant my father David as you declared to him; you promised with your mouth and have this day fulfilled with your hand. <sup>25</sup> Therefore, O LORD, God of Israel, keep for your servant my father David that which you promised him, saying, 'There shall never fail you a successor before me to sit on the throne of Israel, if only your children look to their way, to walk before me as you have walked before me.' <sup>26</sup> Therefore, O God of Israel, let your word be confirmed, which you promised to your servant my father David.

<sup>27</sup> "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Even heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you, much less this house that I have built! <sup>28</sup> Regard your servant's prayer and his plea, O LORD my God, heeding the cry and the prayer that your servant prays to you today; <sup>29</sup> that your eyes may be open night and day toward this house, the place of which you said, 'My name shall be there,' that you may heed the prayer that your servant prays toward this place. <sup>30</sup> Hear the plea of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray toward this place; O hear in heaven your dwelling place; heed and forgive.

<sup>31</sup> "If someone sins against a neighbor and is given an oath to swear, and comes and swears before your altar in this house, <sup>32</sup> then hear in heaven, and act, and judge your servants, condemning the guilty by bringing their conduct on their own head, and vindicating the

### Read 1 Kings 8:54–66

In the third part of Solomon's dedication of the Jerusalem temple, the king exercises his role as public leader, admonishing the people to be faithful to the covenant and officiating over a massive sacrifice. This event compares to Moses' covenant renewal and sacrifice at Mt. Sinai in Exodus 24.

**Reflect:** Consider the ways in which various portions of our worship combine to draw together the faith community. Note how Solomon combines a blessing with a sacrifice that binds all together as members of the covenant fellowship.

**Pray:** Ask, as Solomon does, that our hearts may be drawn to God and that we may obey his statutes in everything we think or do.

**Act:** Take Solomon's petition and blessing as a challenge to our generation to devote ourselves to God's work and thus make known throughout the world the power of God.

righteous by rewarding them according to their righteousness.

33 "When your people Israel, having sinned against you, are defeated before an enemy but turn again to you, confess your name, pray and plead with you in this house, <sup>34</sup> then hear in heaven, forgive the sin of your people Israel, and bring them again to the land that you gave to their ancestors.

35 "When heaven is shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against you, and then they pray toward this place, confess your name, and turn from their sin, because you punish<sup>a</sup> them, <sup>36</sup> then hear in heaven, and forgive the sin of your servants, your people Israel, when you teach them the good way in which they should walk; and grant rain on your land, which you have given to your people as an inheritance.

37 "If there is famine in the land, if there is plague, blight, mildew, locust, or caterpillar; if their enemy besieges them in any<sup>b</sup> of their cities; whatever plague, whatever sickness there is; <sup>38</sup> whatever prayer, whatever plea there is from any individual or from all your people Israel, all knowing the afflictions of their own hearts so that they stretch out their hands toward this house; <sup>39</sup> then hear in heaven your dwelling place, forgive, act, and render to all whose hearts you know—according to all their ways, for only you know what is in every human heart—<sup>40</sup> so that they may fear you all the days that they live in the land that you gave to our ancestors.

41 "Likewise when a foreigner, who is not of your people Israel, comes from a distant land because of your name <sup>42</sup>—for they shall hear of your great name, your mighty hand, and your outstretched arm—when a foreigner comes and prays toward this house, <sup>43</sup> then hear in heaven your dwelling place, and do according to all that the foreigner calls to you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your people Israel, and so that they may know that your name has been invoked on this house that I have built.

44 "If your people go out to battle against their enemy, by whatever way you shall send them, and they pray to the LORD toward the city that you have chosen and the house that I have built for your name, <sup>45</sup> then hear in heaven their prayer and their plea, and maintain their cause.

46 "If they sin against you—for there is no one who does not sin—and you are angry with them and give them to an enemy, so that they are carried away captive to the land of the enemy, far off or near; <sup>47</sup> yet if they come to their senses in the land to which they have been taken captive, and repent, and plead with you in the land of their captors, saying, 'We have sinned, and

<sup>a</sup> Or when you answer

<sup>b</sup> Gk Syr: Heb in the land



have done wrong; we have acted wickedly';<sup>48</sup> if they repent with all their heart and soul in the land of their enemies, who took them captive, and pray to you toward their land, which you gave to their ancestors, the city that you have chosen, and the house that I have built for your name;<sup>49</sup> then hear in heaven your dwelling place their prayer and their plea, maintain their cause<sup>50</sup> and forgive your people who have sinned against you, and all their transgressions that they have committed against you; and grant them compassion in the sight of their captors, so that they may have compassion on them<sup>51</sup> (for they are your people and heritage, which you brought out of Egypt, from the midst of the iron-smelter).<sup>52</sup> Let your eyes be open to the plea of your servant, and to the plea of your people Israel, listening to them whenever they call to you.<sup>53</sup> For you have separated them from among all the peoples of the earth, to be your heritage, just as you promised through Moses, your servant, when you brought our ancestors out of Egypt, O Lord GOD."

### Solomon Blesses the Assembly

54 Now when Solomon finished offering all this prayer and this plea to the LORD, he arose from facing the altar of the LORD, where he had knelt with hands outstretched toward heaven;<sup>55</sup> he stood and blessed all the assembly of Israel with a loud voice:

56 "Blessed be the LORD, who has given rest to his people Israel according to all that he promised; not one word has failed of all his good promise, which he spoke through his servant Moses.<sup>57</sup> The LORD our God be with us, as he was with our ancestors; may he not leave us or abandon us,<sup>58</sup> but incline our hearts to him, to walk in all his

ways, and to keep his commandments, his statutes, and his ordinances, which he commanded our ancestors.<sup>59</sup> Let these words of mine, with which I pleaded before the LORD, be near to the LORD our God day and night, and may he maintain the cause of his servant and the cause of his people Israel, as each day requires;<sup>60</sup> so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God; there is no other.<sup>61</sup> Therefore devote yourselves completely to the LORD our God, walking in his statutes and keeping his commandments, as at this day."

### Solomon Offers Sacrifices

62 Then the king, and all Israel with him, offered sacrifice before the LORD.<sup>63</sup> Solomon offered as sacrifices of well-being to the LORD twenty-two thousand oxen and one hundred twenty thousand sheep. So the king and all the people of Israel dedicated the house of the LORD.<sup>64</sup> The same day the king consecrated the middle of the court that was in front of the house of the LORD; for there he offered the burnt offerings and the grain offerings and the fat pieces of the sacrifices of well-being, because the bronze altar that was before the LORD was too small to receive the burnt offerings and the grain offerings and the fat pieces of the sacrifices of well-being.

65 So Solomon held the festival at that time, and all Israel with him—a great assembly, people from Lebo-hamath to the Wadi of Egypt—before the LORD our God, seven days.<sup>a</sup> <sup>66</sup> On the eighth day he sent the people away; and they blessed the king, and went to their tents, joyful and in good spirits because of all the goodness that the LORD had shown to his servant David and to his people Israel.

### God Appears Again to Solomon

**9** When Solomon had finished building the house of the LORD and the king's house and all that Solomon desired to build,<sup>2</sup> the LORD appeared to Solomon a second time, as he had appeared to him at Gibeon.<sup>3</sup> The LORD said to him, "I have heard your prayer and your plea, which you made before me; I have consecrated this house that you have built, and put my name there

<sup>a</sup> Compare Gk: Heb *seven days and seven days, fourteen days*

### Read 1 Kings 9:1–14

While God accepts Solomon's prayer and consecrates the Jerusalem temple, the point is made quite clearly that the fate of the monarchy, the nation, and the temple is in the hands of Solomon and his successors. They must obey the covenant or face utter destruction.

**Reflect:** Consider the fact that it is not enough to build temples or stage massive sacrifices if in the next moment we forget the significance of what we have done and turn to other concerns that exclude God.

**Pray:** Pray for the strength of mind and spirit to obey God's commands and the resolution to overcome the temptations of the world.

**Act:** Let us strive to set God's purpose first in our lives. Let us be true to our pledges of obedience to God and recognize that both our honor and our hope for the future are at stake.

forever; my eyes and my heart will be there for all time. <sup>4</sup> As for you, if you will walk before me, as David your father walked, with integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you, and keeping my statutes and my ordinances, <sup>5</sup> then I will establish your royal throne over Israel forever, as I promised your father David, saying, 'There shall not fail you a successor on the throne of Israel.'

<sup>6</sup> "If you turn aside from following me, you or your children, and do not keep my commandments and my statutes that I have set before you, but go and serve other gods and worship them, <sup>7</sup> then I will cut Israel off from the land that I have given them; and the house that I have consecrated for my name I will cast out of my sight; and Israel will become a proverb and a taunt among all peoples. <sup>8</sup> This house will become a heap of ruins;<sup>a</sup> everyone passing by it will be astonished, and will hiss; and they will say, 'Why has the LORD done such a thing to this land and to this house?' <sup>9</sup> Then they will say, 'Because they have forsaken the LORD their God, who brought their ancestors out of the land of Egypt, and embraced other gods, worshiping them and serving them; therefore the LORD has brought this disaster upon them.'"

<sup>10</sup> At the end of twenty years, in which Solomon had built the two houses, the house of the LORD and the king's house, <sup>11</sup> King Hiram of Tyre having supplied Solomon with cedar and cypress timber and gold, as much as he desired, King Solomon gave to Hiram twenty cities in the land of Galilee. <sup>12</sup> But when Hiram came from Tyre to see the cities that Solomon had given him, they did not please him. <sup>13</sup> Therefore he said, "What kind of cities are these that you have given me, my brother?" So they are called the land of Cabul<sup>b</sup> to this day. <sup>14</sup> But Hiram had sent to the king one hundred twenty talents of gold.

### Other Acts of Solomon

<sup>15</sup> This is the account of the forced labor that King Solomon conscripted to build the house of the LORD and his own house, the Millo and the wall of Jerusalem, Hazor, Megiddo, Gezer <sup>16</sup> (Pharaoh king of Egypt had gone up and captured Gezer and burned it down, had killed the Canaanites who lived in the city, and had given it as dowry to his daughter, Solomon's wife; <sup>17</sup> so Solomon rebuilt Gezer), Lower Beth-horon, <sup>18</sup> Baalath, Tamar in the wilderness, within the land, <sup>19</sup> as well as all of Solomon's storage cities, the cities for his chariots, the cities for his cavalry, and whatever Solomon desired to build, in Jerusalem, in Lebanon, and in all the land of his dominion. <sup>20</sup> All the people who were left of the

<sup>a</sup> Syr Old Latin: Heb *will become high*

<sup>b</sup> Perhaps meaning a *land good for nothing*

### Read 1 Kings 9:15–28

The extent of Solomon's kingdom (compare dimensions in Deut 34:1–3) are detailed in terms of construction projects (border fortresses and storehouse cities), the conscription of non-Israelite peoples, diplomatic interplay with Hiram of Tyre, and the establishment of economic links with areas ranging from the seaport at Ezion-geber to the mines of Ophir.

**Reflect:** Consider the complexities of managing a nation, its resources, and its people. It is easy to assume that things just get done, but Solomon's infant bureaucracy must have had to invent or borrow a lot of administrative policies and procedures.

**Pray:** Ask for a spirit of wisdom and compassion for our national leaders as they strive to carry out the duties of their office and interact with the representatives of other countries.

**Act:** Become familiar with the workings of government and exercise your right to vote. Encourage our leaders to make efficient use of our natural resources and work for the common good.

Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, who were not of the people of Israel—<sup>21</sup> their descendants who were still left in the land, whom the Israelites were unable to destroy completely—these Solomon conscripted for slave labor, and so they are to this day. <sup>22</sup> But of the Israelites Solomon made no slaves; they were the soldiers, they were his officials, his commanders, his captains, and the commanders of his chariotry and cavalry.

<sup>23</sup> These were the chief officers who were over Solomon's work: five hundred fifty, who had charge of the people who carried on the work.

<sup>24</sup> But Pharaoh's daughter went up from the city of David to her own house that Solomon had built for her; then he built the Millo.

<sup>25</sup> Three times a year Solomon used to offer up burnt offerings and sacrifices of well-being on the altar that he built for the LORD, offering incense<sup>a</sup> before the LORD. So he completed the house.

### Solomon's Commercial Activity

<sup>26</sup> King Solomon built a fleet of ships at Ezion-geber, which is near Eloth on the shore of the Red Sea,<sup>b</sup> in the land of Edom. <sup>27</sup> Hiram sent his servants with the fleet, sailors who were familiar with the sea, together with the servants of Solomon. <sup>28</sup> They went to Ophir, and imported from there four hundred twenty talents of gold, which they delivered to King Solomon.

### Visit of the Queen of Sheba

**10** When the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon (fame due to<sup>c</sup> the name of the LORD), she came to test him with hard questions. <sup>2</sup> She came to Jerusalem with a very great retinue, with camels bearing spices, and very much gold, and precious stones; and when she came to Solomon, she told him all that was on her mind. <sup>3</sup> Solomon answered all her questions; there was nothing hidden from the king that he could not explain to her. <sup>4</sup> When the queen of Sheba had observed all the wisdom of Solomon, the house that he had built, <sup>5</sup> the food of his table, the seating of his officials, and the attendance of his servants, their clothing, his valets, and his burnt offerings that he offered at the house of the LORD, there was no more spirit in her.

<sup>6</sup> So she said to the king, "The report was true that I heard in my own land of your accomplishments and of your wisdom, <sup>7</sup> but I did not believe the reports until I came and my own eyes had seen it. Not even half had been told me; your wisdom and prosperity far surpass the report that I had heard. <sup>8</sup> Happy are your wives!<sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Gk: Heb *offering incense with it that was*

<sup>b</sup> Or *Sea of Reeds*

<sup>c</sup> Meaning of Heb uncertain

<sup>d</sup> Gk Syr: Heb *men*

### Read 1 Kings 10

The golden age of Solomon's reign is summed up in the visit of the queen of Sheba and the fantastic chronicle of how the king's God-given wisdom and unsurpassed wealth became renowned throughout the world.

**Reflect:** Consider how countries tend to portray their founding fathers as bigger-than-life characters. Note, however, that a golden age, when silver is "as common in Jerusalem as stones," never lasts and becomes simply a fond memory of better days.

**Pray:** Pray for guidance to live well in the present rather than wish for the glories of the past.

**Act:** Work to build a just community that is aware of the efforts of our predecessors to create our nation, that respects the environment, and that safeguards our natural resources for future generations.

Happy are these your servants, who continually attend you and hear your wisdom! <sup>9</sup> Blessed be the LORD your God, who has delighted in you and set you on the throne of Israel! Because the LORD loved Israel forever, he has made you king to execute justice and righteousness." <sup>10</sup> Then she gave the king one hundred twenty talents of gold, a great quantity of spices, and precious stones; never again did spices come in such quantity as that which the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon.

<sup>11</sup> Moreover, the fleet of Hiram, which carried gold from Ophir, brought from Ophir a great quantity of almug wood and precious stones. <sup>12</sup> From the almug wood the king made supports for the house of the LORD, and for the king's house, lyres also and harps for the singers; no such almug wood has come or been seen to this day.

<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile King Solomon gave to the queen of Sheba every desire that she expressed, as well as what he gave her out of Solomon's royal bounty. Then she returned to her own land, with her servants.

<sup>14</sup> The weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred sixty-six talents of gold, <sup>15</sup> besides that which came from the traders and from the business of the merchants, and from all the kings of Arabia and the governors of the land. <sup>16</sup> King Solomon made two hundred large shields of beaten gold; six hundred shekels of gold went into each large shield. <sup>17</sup> He made three hundred shields of beaten gold; three minas of gold went into each shield; and the king put them in the House of the Forest of Lebanon. <sup>18</sup> The king also made a great ivory throne, and overlaid it with the finest gold. <sup>19</sup> The throne had six steps. The top of the throne was rounded in the back, and on each side of the seat were arm rests and two lions standing beside the arm rests, <sup>20</sup> while twelve lions were standing, one on each end of a step on the six steps. Nothing like it was ever made in any kingdom. <sup>21</sup> All King Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold, and all the vessels of the House of the Forest of Lebanon were of pure gold; none were of silver—it was not considered as anything in the days of Solomon. <sup>22</sup> For the king had a fleet of ships of Tarshish at sea with the fleet of Hiram. Once every three years the fleet of ships of Tarshish used to come bringing gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Thus King Solomon excelled all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom. <sup>24</sup> The whole earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put into his mind. <sup>25</sup> Every one of them brought a present, objects of silver and gold, garments, weaponry, spices, horses, and mules, so much year by year.

<sup>a</sup> Or baboons

26 Solomon gathered together chariots and horses; he had fourteen hundred chariots and twelve thousand horses, which he stationed in the chariot cities and with the king in Jerusalem. <sup>27</sup> The king made silver as common in Jerusalem as stones, and he made cedars as numerous as the sycamores of the Shephelah. <sup>28</sup> Solomon's im-

port of horses was from Egypt and Kue, and the king's traders received them from Kue at a price. <sup>29</sup> A chariot could be imported from Egypt for six hundred shekels of silver, and a horse for one hundred fifty; so through the king's traders they were exported to all the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Aram.

### Read 1 Kings 11:1–40

In stark contrast to the picture portrayed in chapter 10, here Solomon's control of Israel and the surrounding kingdoms begins to unravel. Two reasons are provided for this: (1) Solomon's apostasy in building shrines to the gods of his many foreign wives and (2) repercussions of David's military policies that lead to political opponents arising in Edom and Syria and within Israel itself in Solomon's time.

**Reflect:** While there is a richness created by blending cultures through marriage, there is also the danger that compromise can lead to poor decisions. Consider also that old hatreds are hard to overcome and can lead to tension and open conflict if not dealt with fairly.

**Pray:** Ask for guidance in dealing with the temptations of the world that take us away from a true allegiance to God. Pray for our enemies and for reconciliation with those who hate us.

**Act:** Let us study the scriptures and ask the hard questions that need to be asked in order for us to strengthen our faith and thus overcome false or misguided thinking. Let us work to set aside old differences so we can live in harmony with our neighbors.

### Solomon's Errors

**11** King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, <sup>2</sup> from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the Israelites, "You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you; for they will surely incline your heart to follow their gods"; Solomon clung to these in love. <sup>3</sup> Among his wives were seven hundred princesses and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart. <sup>4</sup> For when Solomon was old, his wives turned away his heart after other gods; and his heart was not true to the LORD his God, as was the heart of his father David. <sup>5</sup> For Solomon followed Astarte the goddess of the Sidonians, and Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. <sup>6</sup> So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not completely follow the LORD, as his father David had done. <sup>7</sup> Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Molech the abomination of the Ammonites, on the mountain east of Jerusalem. <sup>8</sup> He did the same for all his foreign wives, who offered incense and sacrificed to their gods.

<sup>9</sup> Then the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, <sup>10</sup> and had commanded him concerning this matter, that he should not follow other gods; but he did not observe what the LORD commanded. <sup>11</sup> Therefore the LORD said to Solomon, "Since this has been your mind and you have not kept my covenant and my statutes that I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and give it to your servant. <sup>12</sup> Yet for the sake of your father David I will not do it in your lifetime; I will tear it out of the hand of your son. <sup>13</sup> I will not, however, tear away the entire kingdom; I will give one tribe to your son, for the sake of my servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen."

### Adversaries of Solomon

14 Then the LORD raised up an adversary against

Solomon, Hadad the Edomite; he was of the royal house in Edom. <sup>15</sup> For when David was in Edom, and Joab the commander of the army went up to bury the dead, he killed every male in Edom <sup>16</sup> (for Joab and all Israel remained there six months, until he had eliminated every male in Edom); <sup>17</sup> but Hadad fled to Egypt with some Edomites who were servants of his father. He was a young boy at that time. <sup>18</sup> They set out from Midian and came to Paran; they took people with them from Paran and came to Egypt, to Pharaoh king of Egypt, who gave him a house, assigned him an allowance of food, and gave him land. <sup>19</sup> Hadad found great favor in the sight of Pharaoh, so that he gave him his sister-in-law for a wife, the sister of Queen Tahpenes. <sup>20</sup> The sister of Tahpenes gave birth by him to his son Genubath, whom Tahpenes weaned in Pharaoh's house; Genubath was in Pharaoh's house among the children of Pharaoh. <sup>21</sup> When Hadad heard in Egypt that David slept with his ancestors and that Joab the commander of the army was dead, Hadad said to Pharaoh, "Let me depart, that I may go to my own country." <sup>22</sup> But Pharaoh said to him, "What do you lack with me that you now seek to go to your own country?" And he said, "No, do let me go."

<sup>23</sup> God raised up another adversary against Solomon,<sup>a</sup> Rezon son of Eliada, who had fled from his master, King Hadadezer of Zobah. <sup>24</sup> He gathered followers around him and became leader of a marauding band, after the slaughter by David; they went to Damascus, settled there, and made him king in Damascus. <sup>25</sup> He was an adversary of Israel all the days of Solomon, making trouble as Hadad did; he despised Israel and reigned over Aram.

### Jeroboam's Rebellion

<sup>26</sup> Jeroboam son of Nebat, an Ephraimite of Zeredah, a servant of Solomon, whose mother's name was Zeruah, a wid-

ow, rebelled against the king. <sup>27</sup> The following was the reason he rebelled against the king. Solomon built the Millo, and closed up the gap in the wall<sup>b</sup> of the city of his father David. <sup>28</sup> The man Jeroboam was very able, and when Solomon saw that the young man was industrious he gave him charge over all the forced labor of the house of Joseph. <sup>29</sup> About that time, when Jeroboam was leaving Jerusalem, the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite found him on the road. Ahijah had clothed himself with a new garment. The two of them were alone in the open country <sup>30</sup> when Ahijah laid hold of the new garment he was wearing and tore it into twelve pieces. <sup>31</sup> He then said to Jeroboam: Take for yourself ten pieces; for thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, "See, I am about to tear the kingdom from the hand of Solomon, and will give you ten tribes. <sup>32</sup> One tribe will remain his, for the sake of my servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city that I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel. <sup>33</sup> This is because he has<sup>c</sup> forsaken me, worshiped Astarte the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of Moab, and Milcom the god of the Ammonites, and has<sup>c</sup> not walked in my ways, doing what is right in my sight and keeping my statutes and my ordinances, as his father David did. <sup>34</sup> Nevertheless I will not take the whole kingdom away from him but will make him ruler all the days of his life, for the sake of my servant David whom I chose and who did keep my commandments and my statutes; <sup>35</sup> but I will take the kingdom away from his son and give it to you—that is, the ten tribes. <sup>36</sup> Yet to his son I will give one tribe, so that my servant David may always have a lamp before me in Jerusalem, the city where I have chosen to put my name. <sup>37</sup> I will take you, and you shall reign over all that your soul desires; you shall be king over Israel. <sup>38</sup> If you will listen to all that I command you, walk in my ways, and do what is right in my sight by keeping my

<sup>a</sup> Heb *him*

<sup>b</sup> Heb lacks *in the wall*

<sup>c</sup> Gk Syr Vg: Heb *they have*



statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did, I will be with you, and will build you an enduring house, as I built for David, and I will give Israel to you. <sup>39</sup> For this reason I will punish the descendants of David, but not forever.” <sup>40</sup> Solomon sought therefore to kill Jeroboam; but Jeroboam promptly fled to Egypt, to King Shishak of Egypt, and remained in Egypt until the death of Solomon.

## Death of Solomon

<sup>41</sup> Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, all that he did as well as his wisdom, are they not written in the Book of the Acts of Solomon? <sup>42</sup> The time that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel was forty years. <sup>43</sup> Solomon slept with his ancestors and was buried in the city of his father David; and his son Rehoboam succeeded him.

### Read 1 Kings 11:41—12:24

Despite the smooth transition of power from Solomon to his son Rehoboam, the forces that could potentially tear the kingdom apart were not soothed when Rehoboam ignored wise counsel and threatened an even harsher administration than his father. With Jeroboam already designated as king by the prophet Ahijah (1 Kings 11:29–39), the northern tribes seceded and formed their own separate nation; Rehoboam could not stop them.

**Reflect:** Consider that a careful examination of the facts and the willingness to compromise in the face of real concerns can defuse tensions between people or groups. A hothead seldom succeeds for long.

**Pray:** Ask as Solomon did for an “understanding mind” (1 Kings 3:9) to deal with crises and to act justly with all persons.

**Act:** Recognize the maxim that happiness comes to those “who do not follow the advice of the wicked” (Ps 1:1). Refrain from boasting or heavy-handed tactics designed to demonstrate your own power.

## The Northern Tribes Secede

**1** Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had come to Shechem to make him king. <sup>2</sup> When Jeroboam son of Nebat heard of it (for he was still in Egypt, where he had fled from King Solomon), then Jeroboam returned from<sup>a</sup> Egypt. <sup>3</sup> And they sent and called him; and Jeroboam and all the assembly of Israel came and said to Rehoboam, <sup>4</sup> “Your father made our yoke heavy. Now therefore lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke that he placed on us, and we will serve you.” <sup>5</sup> He said to them, “Go away for three days, then come again to me.” So the people went away.

<sup>6</sup> Then King Rehoboam took counsel with the older men who had attended his father Solomon while he was still alive, saying, “How do you advise me to answer this people?” <sup>7</sup> They answered him, “If you will be a servant to this people today and serve them, and speak good words to them when you answer them, then they will be your servants forever.” <sup>8</sup> But he disregarded the advice that the older men gave him, and consulted with the young men who had grown up with him and now attended him. <sup>9</sup> He said to them, “What do you advise that we answer this people who have said to me, ‘Lighten the yoke that your father put on us?’” <sup>10</sup> The young men who had grown up with him said to him, “Thus you should say to this people who spoke to you, ‘Your father made our yoke heavy, but you must lighten it for us’; thus you should say to them, ‘My little finger is thicker than my father’s loins.’” <sup>11</sup> Now, whereas my father laid on you a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke. My father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.”

<sup>12</sup> So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king had said, “Come to me again the third day.” <sup>13</sup> The king answered the people harshly. He disregarded the advice that the older men had given him <sup>14</sup> and spoke to them according to the advice of the young men, “My father made your yoke

<sup>a</sup> Gk Vg Compare 2 Chr 10.2: Heb *lived in*

### Read 1 Kings 12:25–32

With a newly formed nation to lead, Jeroboam initiates a series of political moves to create a national identity and separate the northern tribes from Jerusalem and the Davidic monarchy. Though the biblical writer refers to them as a “sin,” new shrines, golden calves, non-Levitical priests, high places, and a new religious calendar are indicators of the character of Israelite religion at the time.

**Reflect:** Given the necessity of creating new symbols of national identity and institutions with which to draw a new nation together, what choices would you make? What else could Jeroboam have done?

**Pray:** Ask that our national leaders be given divine guidance in their decision making. Pray that political considerations may not override what is best for the nation.

**Act:** Strive to become an educated citizen, aware of national policies and the rationale for these courses of action. Work to lower the tensions that divide our society.

heavy, but I will add to your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.”<sup>15</sup> So the king did not listen to the people, because it was a turn of affairs brought about by the LORD that he might fulfill his word, which the LORD had spoken by Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam son of Nebat.

16 When all Israel saw that the king would not listen to them, the people answered the king,

“What share do we have in David?

We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse.

To your tents, O Israel!

Look now to your own house, O David.”

So Israel went away to their tents.<sup>17</sup> But Rehoboam reigned over the Israelites who were living in the towns of Judah.<sup>18</sup> When King Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was taskmaster over the forced labor, all Israel stoned him to death. King Rehoboam then hurriedly mounted his chariot to flee to Jerusalem.<sup>19</sup> So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day.

### First Dynasty: Jeroboam Reigns over Israel

20 When all Israel heard that Jeroboam had returned, they sent and called him to the assembly and made him king over all Israel. There was no one who followed the house of David, except the tribe of Judah alone.

21 When Rehoboam came to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin, one hundred eighty thousand chosen troops to fight against the house of Israel, to restore the kingdom to Rehoboam son of Solomon.<sup>22</sup> But the word of God came to Shemaiah the man of God:<sup>23</sup> Say to King Rehoboam of Judah, son of Solomon, and to all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the rest of the people,<sup>24</sup> “Thus says the LORD, You shall not go up or fight against your kindred the people of Israel. Let everyone go home, for this thing is from me.” So they heeded the word of the LORD and went home again, according to the word of the LORD.

### Jeroboam’s Golden Calves

25 Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim, and resided there; he went out from there and built Penuel.<sup>26</sup> Then Jeroboam said to himself, “Now the kingdom may well revert to the house of David.<sup>27</sup> If this people continues to go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, the heart of this people will turn again to their master, King Rehoboam of Judah; they will kill me and return to King Rehoboam of Judah.”<sup>28</sup> So the king took counsel, and

made two calves of gold. He said to the people,<sup>a</sup> “You have gone up to Jerusalem long enough. Here are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.”<sup>29</sup> He set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan.<sup>30</sup> And this thing became a sin, for the people went to worship before the one at Bethel and before the other as far as Dan.<sup>b</sup> <sup>31</sup> He also made houses<sup>c</sup> on high places, and appointed priests from among all the people, who were not Levites.<sup>32</sup> Jeroboam appointed a festival on

the fifteenth day of the eighth month like the festival that was in Judah, and he offered sacrifices on the altar; so he did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he had made. And he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places that he had made.<sup>33</sup> He went up to the altar that he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, in the month that he alone had devised; he appointed a festival for the people of Israel, and he went up to the altar to offer incense.

### Read 1 Kings 12:33—13:10, 33–34

During the dedication ceremony for his newly established royal shrine at Bethel, Jeroboam is interrupted by an unnamed prophet from Judah who pronounces a curse on the shrine. When Jeroboam attempts to have him arrested, the king’s arm is withered and he is forced to ask the prophet to pray to God on his behalf.

**Reflect:** Consider whether public display is designed to showcase the builder or the subject of the ceremony. Give some thought to who demonstrated true power in this episode.

**Pray:** Ask that we may marvel at God’s creation rather than the work of our own hands (see Solomon’s prayer in 1 Kings 8:23–53).

**Act:** Let us build houses of worship to honor God and as a place where our community can pray together and share in the gifts that God has given us. Let us avoid the temptation to build another tower of Babel to “make a name for ourselves” (Gen 11:4) rather than recognizing our role as part of God’s creation.

### A Man of God from Judah

**13** While Jeroboam was standing by the altar to offer incense, a man of God came out of Judah by the word of the LORD to Bethel<sup>2</sup> and proclaimed against the altar by the word of the LORD, and said, “O altar, altar, thus says the LORD: ‘A son shall be born to the house of David, Josiah by name; and he shall sacrifice on you the priests of the high places who offer incense on you, and human bones shall be burned on you.’”<sup>3</sup> He gave a sign the same day, saying, “This is the sign that the LORD has spoken: ‘The altar shall be torn down, and the ashes that are on it shall be poured out.’”<sup>4</sup> When the king heard what the man of God cried out against the altar at Bethel, Jeroboam stretched out his hand from the altar, saying, “Seize him!” But the hand that he stretched out against him withered so that he could not draw it back to himself.<sup>5</sup> The altar also was torn down, and the ashes poured out from the altar, according to the sign that the man of God had given by the word of the LORD.<sup>6</sup> The king said to the man of God, “Entreat now the favor of the LORD your God, and pray for me, so that my hand may be restored to me.” So the man of God entreated the LORD; and the king’s hand was restored to him, and became as it was before.<sup>7</sup> Then the king said to the man of God, “Come home with me and dine, and I will give you a gift.”<sup>8</sup> But the man of God said to the king, “If you give me half your kingdom, I will not go in with you; nor will I eat food or drink water in this place.”<sup>9</sup> For thus I was commanded by the word of the LORD: You shall not eat food, or drink water, or return by the way that you came.”<sup>10</sup> So he went another way, and did not return by the way that he had come to Bethel.

<sup>11</sup> Now there lived an old prophet in Bethel. One of his sons came and told him all that the man of God had done that day in Bethel; the words also that he had spoken to the king, they told to their father.<sup>12</sup> Their father

<sup>a</sup> Gk: Heb to them

<sup>b</sup> Compare Gk: Heb went to the one as far as Dan

<sup>c</sup> Gk Vg Compare 13.32: Heb a house

### Read 1 Kings 13:11–32

The difficulty of discerning the true voice of God, even for prophets, is highlighted in this episode. The unnamed prophet from Judah pays with his life for having chosen incorrectly to listen to a fellow prophet from Bethel rather than having faith in his original instructions.

**Reflect:** If prophets can make mistakes, how much more likely is it that we can also be led astray by someone speaking with the voice of authority? Consider why the unnamed prophet was tested and whether the prophet from Bethel intentionally lied to him.

**Pray:** Ask for the ability to filter out all voices but that of God. Pray for the courage to follow the path we have been given by God.

**Act:** Let us learn to trust in our convictions to carry out God's commands. Let us strive not to give others unsound advice or to speak in God's name when we are really speaking in our own names.

said to them, "Which way did he go?" And his sons showed him the way that the man of God who came from Judah had gone. <sup>13</sup> Then he said to his sons, "Saddle a donkey for me." So they saddled a donkey for him, and he mounted it. <sup>14</sup> He went after the man of God, and found him sitting under an oak tree. He said to him, "Are you the man of God who came from Judah?" He answered, "I am." <sup>15</sup> Then he said to him, "Come home with me and eat some food." <sup>16</sup> But he said, "I cannot return with you, or go in with you; nor will I eat food or drink water with you in this place; <sup>17</sup> for it was said to me by the word of the LORD: You shall not eat food or drink water there, or return by the way that you came." <sup>18</sup> Then the other<sup>a</sup> said to him, "I also am a prophet as you are, and an angel spoke to me by the word of the LORD: Bring him back with you into your house so that he may eat food and drink water." But he was deceiving him. <sup>19</sup> Then the man of God<sup>a</sup> went back with him, and ate food and drank water in his house.

<sup>20</sup> As they were sitting at the table, the word of the LORD came to the prophet who had brought him back; <sup>21</sup> and he proclaimed to the man of God who came from Judah, "Thus says the LORD: Because you have disobeyed the word of the LORD, and have not kept the commandment that the LORD your God commanded you, <sup>22</sup> but have come back and have eaten food and drunk water in the place of which he said to you, 'Eat no food, and drink no water,' your body shall not come to your ancestral tomb." <sup>23</sup> After the man of God<sup>a</sup> had eaten food and had drunk, they saddled for him a donkey belonging to the prophet who had brought him back. <sup>24</sup> Then as he went away, a lion met him on the road and killed him. His body was thrown in the road, and the donkey stood beside it; the lion also stood beside the body. <sup>25</sup> People passed by and saw the body thrown in the road, with the lion standing by the body. And they came and told it in the town where the old prophet lived.

<sup>26</sup> When the prophet who had brought him back from the way heard of it, he said, "It is the man of God who disobeyed the word of the LORD; therefore the LORD has given him to the lion, which has torn him and killed him according to the word that the LORD spoke to him." <sup>27</sup> Then he said to his sons, "Saddle a donkey for me." So they saddled one, <sup>28</sup> and he went and found the body thrown in the road, with the donkey and the lion standing beside the body. The lion had not eaten the body or attacked the donkey. <sup>29</sup> The prophet took up the body of the man of God, laid it on the donkey, and brought it back to the city,<sup>b</sup> to mourn and to bury him. <sup>30</sup> He laid the body in his own grave; and they mourned over him,

<sup>a</sup> Heb he

<sup>b</sup> Gk: Heb he came to the town of the old prophet

saying, "Alas, my brother!" <sup>31</sup> After he had buried him, he said to his sons, "When I die, bury me in the grave in which the man of God is buried; lay my bones beside his bones." <sup>32</sup> For the saying that he proclaimed by the word of the LORD against the altar in Bethel, and against all the houses of the high places that are in the cities of Samaria, shall surely come to pass."

<sup>33</sup> Even after this event Jeroboam did not turn from his evil way, but made priests for the high places again from among all the people; any who wanted to be priests he consecrated for the high places. <sup>34</sup> This matter became sin to the house of Jeroboam, so as to cut it off and to destroy it from the face of the earth.

### Read 1 Kings 14:1–20

In a prophecy delivered to Jeroboam's wife, the prophet Ahijah curses Jeroboam's household and predicts the rise of a rival who will eliminate them all. The basis for this political upheaval is Jeroboam's unfaithfulness and idolatry after having been given the kingdom by God.

**Reflect:** Consider the consequences of a lack of gratitude on those who give and those who receive. Reflect on the difficulties ahead for an Israel that lacks strong, consistent leadership.

**Pray:** Ask for a contrite heart that can pray for forgiveness without disguise or deception.

**Act:** Let us make an honest effort at self-examination to determine what changes need to be made in our lives before we are consumed by selfish concerns.

### Judgment on the House of Jeroboam

**14** At that time Abijah son of Jeroboam fell sick. <sup>2</sup> Jeroboam said to his wife, "Go, disguise yourself, so that it will not be known that you are the wife of Jeroboam, and go to Shiloh; for the prophet Ahijah is there, who said of me that I should be king over this people. <sup>3</sup> Take with you ten loaves, some cakes, and a jar of honey, and go to him; he will tell you what shall happen to the child."

<sup>4</sup> Jeroboam's wife did so; she set out and went to Shiloh, and came to the house of Ahijah. Now Ahijah could not see, for his eyes were dim because of his age. <sup>5</sup> But the LORD said to Ahijah, "The wife of Jeroboam is coming to inquire of you concerning her son; for he is sick. Thus and thus you shall say to her."

When she came, she pretended to be another woman. <sup>6</sup> But when Ahijah heard the sound of her feet, as she came in at the door, he said, "Come in, wife of Jeroboam; why do you pretend to be another? For I am charged with heavy tidings for you. <sup>7</sup> Go, tell Jeroboam, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Because I exalted you from among the people, made you leader over my people Israel, <sup>8</sup> and tore the kingdom away from the house of David to give it to you; yet you have not been like my servant David, who kept my commandments and followed me with all his heart, doing only that which was right in my sight, <sup>9</sup> but you have done evil above all those who were before you and have gone and made for yourself other gods, and cast images, provoking me to anger, and have thrust me behind your back; <sup>10</sup> therefore, I will bring evil upon the house of Jeroboam. I will cut off from Jeroboam every male, both bond and free in Israel, and will consume the house of Jeroboam, just as one burns up dung until it is all gone. <sup>11</sup> Anyone belonging to Jeroboam who dies in the city, the dogs shall eat; and anyone who dies in the open country, the birds of the air shall eat; for the LORD has spoken.' <sup>12</sup> Therefore set out, go to your house. When your feet enter the city, the child shall die. <sup>13</sup> All Israel shall mourn for him and bury him; for he alone of Jeroboam's family shall

### Read 1 Kings 14:21–31

The golden age of Solomon comes crashing down during Rehoboam's reign. As in Israel, high places and idol worship were to be found in every village. Judah was invaded by the Egyptian pharaoh Shishak, who plundered the temple, taking its golden shields, and Rehoboam had to make do with bronze replacements.

**Reflect:** The weakened condition of both Israel and Judah suggests the wisdom of the maxim “divide and conquer.” Neither of these small states will be as strong as they were when united under David and Solomon.

**Pray:** Ask for the strength to deal with current problems and the wisdom to prevent future ones.

**Act:** Work to create a well-educated and vibrant faith community that can recognize its potential for weakness and strive to foster mutual support.

come to the grave, because in him there is found something pleasing to the LORD, the God of Israel, in the house of Jeroboam. <sup>14</sup> Moreover the LORD will raise up for himself a king over Israel, who shall cut off the house of Jeroboam today, even right now!<sup>a</sup>

<sup>15</sup> “The LORD will strike Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water; he will root up Israel out of this good land that he gave to their ancestors, and scatter them beyond the Euphrates, because they have made their sacred poles,<sup>b</sup> provoking the LORD to anger. <sup>16</sup> He will give Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam, which he sinned and which he caused Israel to commit.”

<sup>17</sup> Then Jeroboam's wife got up and went away, and she came to Tirzah. As she came to the threshold of the house, the child died. <sup>18</sup> All Israel buried him and mourned for him, according to the word of the LORD, which he spoke by his servant the prophet Ahijah.

### Death of Jeroboam

<sup>19</sup> Now the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, how he warred and how he reigned, are written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel. <sup>20</sup> The time that Jeroboam reigned was twenty-two years; then he slept with his ancestors, and his son Nadab succeeded him.

### Rehoboam Reigns over Judah

<sup>21</sup> Now Rehoboam son of Solomon reigned in Judah. Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city that the LORD had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put his name there. His mother's name was Naamah the Ammonite. <sup>22</sup> Judah did what was evil in the sight of the LORD; they provoked him to jealousy with their sins that they committed, more than all that their ancestors had done. <sup>23</sup> For they also built for themselves high places, pillars, and sacred poles<sup>b</sup> on every high hill and under every green tree; <sup>24</sup> there were also male temple prostitutes in the land. They committed all the abominations of the nations that the LORD drove out before the people of Israel.

<sup>25</sup> In the fifth year of King Rehoboam, King Shishak of Egypt came up against Jerusalem; <sup>26</sup> he took away the treasures of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the king's house; he took everything. He also took away all the shields of gold that Solomon had made; <sup>27</sup> so King Rehoboam made shields of bronze instead, and committed them to the hands of the officers of the guard, who kept the door of the king's house. <sup>28</sup> As often as the king went into the house of the LORD, the guard carried them and brought them back to the guardroom.

<sup>a</sup> Meaning of Heb uncertain

<sup>b</sup> Heb *Asherim*



29 Now the rest of the acts of Rehoboam, and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah? <sup>30</sup> There was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continually.

<sup>31</sup> Rehoboam slept with his ancestors and was buried with his ancestors in the city of David. His mother's name was Namah the Ammonite. His son Abijam succeeded him.

### Read 1 Kings 15:1–32

The political stability of Israel and Judah is contrasted while their border disputes are chronicled. The Davidic monarchy maintains its continuity and benefits from Asa's strong leadership and diplomatic acumen, while Jeroboam's house is decimated by the usurper Baasha.

**Reflect:** It is interesting to consider the petty disputes that consume nations and persons. Statecraft becomes a chess game in which parties try to outmaneuver each other.

**Pray:** Ask for the wisdom to resolve disputes with the least cost to either party. Pray for peace.

**Act:** Study history, listen carefully to political rhetoric, and form educated opinions that can help direct our leaders and strengthen our communities.

### Abijam Reigns over Judah: Idolatry and War

**15** Now in the eighteenth year of King Jeroboam son of Nebat, Abijam began to reign over Judah. <sup>2</sup> He reigned for three years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Maacah daughter of Abishalom. <sup>3</sup> He committed all the sins that his father did before him; his heart was not true to the LORD his God, like the heart of his father David. <sup>4</sup> Nevertheless for David's sake the LORD his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem, setting up his son after him, and establishing Jerusalem; <sup>5</sup> because David did what was right in the sight of the LORD, and did not turn aside from anything that he commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite. <sup>6</sup> The war begun between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continued all the days of his life. <sup>7</sup> The rest of the acts of Abijam, and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah? There was war between Abijam and Jeroboam. <sup>8</sup> Abijam slept with his ancestors, and they buried him in the city of David. Then his son Asa succeeded him.

### Asa Reigns over Judah

<sup>9</sup> In the twentieth year of King Jeroboam of Israel, Asa began to reign over Judah; <sup>10</sup> he reigned forty-one years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Maacah daughter of Abishalom. <sup>11</sup> Asa did what was right in the sight of the LORD, as his father David had done. <sup>12</sup> He put away the male temple prostitutes out of the land, and removed all the idols that his ancestors had made. <sup>13</sup> He also removed his mother Maacah from being queen mother, because she had made an abominable image for Asherah; Asa cut down her image and burned it at the Wadi Kidron. <sup>14</sup> But the high places were not taken away. Nevertheless the heart of Asa was true to the LORD all his days. <sup>15</sup> He brought into the house of the LORD the votive gifts of his father and his own votive gifts—silver, gold, and utensils.

### Alliance with Aram against Israel

<sup>16</sup> There was war between Asa and King Baasha of Israel all their days. <sup>17</sup> King Baasha of Israel went up against Judah, and built Ramah, to prevent anyone from going out or coming in to King Asa of Judah. <sup>18</sup> Then Asa took all the silver and the gold that were left

in the treasures of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the king's house, and gave them into the hands of his servants. King Asa sent them to King Ben-hadad son of Tabrimmon son of Hezion of Aram, who resided in Damascus, saying, <sup>19</sup> "Let there be an alliance between me and you, like that between my father and your father: I am sending you a present of silver and gold; go, break your alliance with King Baasha of Israel, so that he may withdraw from me." <sup>20</sup> Ben-hadad listened to King Asa, and sent the commanders of his armies against the cities of Israel. He conquered Ijon, Dan, Abel-beth-maacah, and all Chinneroth, with all the land of Naphtali. <sup>21</sup> When Baasha heard of it, he stopped building Ramah and lived in Tirzah. <sup>22</sup> Then King Asa made a proclamation to all Judah, none was exempt: they carried away the stones of Ramah and its timber, with which Baasha had been building; with them King Asa built Geba of Benjamin and Mizpah. <sup>23</sup> Now the rest of all the acts of Asa, all his power, all that he did, and the cities that he built, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah? But in his old age he was diseased in his feet. <sup>24</sup> Then Asa slept with his ancestors, and was buried with his ancestors in the city of his father David; his son Jehoshaphat succeeded him.

### Nadab Reigns over Israel

<sup>25</sup> Nadab son of Jeroboam began to reign over Israel in the second year of King

Asa of Judah; he reigned over Israel two years. <sup>26</sup> He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, walking in the way of his ancestor and in the sin that he caused Israel to commit.

<sup>27</sup> Baasha son of Ahijah, of the house of Issachar, conspired against him; and Baasha struck him down at Gibbethon, which belonged to the Philistines; for Nadab and all Israel were laying siege to Gibbethon. <sup>28</sup> So Baasha killed Nadab<sup>a</sup> in the third year of King Asa of Judah, and succeeded him. <sup>29</sup> As soon as he was king, he killed all the house of Jeroboam; he left to the house of Jeroboam not one that breathed, until he had destroyed it, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke by his servant Ahijah the Shilonite—<sup>30</sup> because of the sins of Jeroboam that he committed and that he caused Israel to commit, and because of the anger to which he provoked the LORD, the God of Israel.

<sup>31</sup> Now the rest of the acts of Nadab, and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel? <sup>32</sup> There was war between Asa and King Baasha of Israel all their days.

### Second Dynasty: Baasha Reigns over Israel

<sup>33</sup> In the third year of King Asa of Judah, Baasha son of Ahijah began to reign over all Israel at Tirzah; he reigned twenty-four years. <sup>34</sup> He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, walking in the way of Jeroboam and in the sin that he caused Israel to commit.

**16** The word of the LORD came to Jehu son of Hanani against Baasha, saying, <sup>2</sup> "Since I exalted you out of the dust and made you leader over my people Israel, and you have walked in the way of Jeroboam, and have caused my people Israel to sin, provoking me to anger with their sins, <sup>3</sup> therefore, I will consume Baasha and his house, and I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam son of Nebat. <sup>4</sup> Anyone belonging to Baasha who dies in the city the dogs shall eat; and anyone of his who dies in the field the birds of the air shall eat."

<sup>5</sup> Now the rest of the acts of Baasha, what he did, and his power, are they not written in the Book of the

<sup>a</sup> Heb *him*

**Read: 1 Kings 15:33—16:22**

The cycle of political turmoil continues in Israel. God once again sends a prophet, Jehu son of Hanani, to curse King Baasha's household. This leads to a revolt by Zimri, a military commander. Zimri eliminates all of Baasha's household, but reigns for only seven days as king before he is overthrown by yet another general, Omri.

**Reflect:** Consider how political instability can create opportunities for those who wish to seize power for themselves. What is the missing element in this chronicle of violence and ambition?

**Pray:** Ask that the energies our leaders put into their work may be directed toward positive and just efforts rather than their own ambitions.

**Act:** Work to break the cycle of self-interest that often governs human behavior. Strive to strengthen God's kingdom on earth rather than supporting short-lived human kingdoms.

Annals of the Kings of Israel? <sup>6</sup> Baasha slept with his ancestors, and was buried at Tirzah; and his son Elah succeeded him. <sup>7</sup> Moreover the word of the LORD came by the prophet Jehu son of Hanani against Baasha and his house, both because of all the evil that he did in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger with the work of his hands, in being like the house of Jeroboam, and also because he destroyed it.

**Elah Reigns over Israel**

<sup>8</sup> In the twenty-sixth year of King Asa of Judah, Elah son of Baasha began to reign over Israel in Tirzah; he reigned two years. <sup>9</sup> But his servant Zimri, commander of half his chariots, conspired against him. When he was at Tirzah, drinking himself drunk in the house of Arza, who was in charge of the palace at Tirzah, <sup>10</sup> Zimri came in and struck him down and killed him, in the twenty-seventh year of King Asa of Judah, and succeeded him.

<sup>11</sup> When he began to reign, as soon as he had seated himself on his throne, he killed all the house of Baasha; he did not leave him a single male of his kindred or his friends. <sup>12</sup> Thus Zimri destroyed all the house of Baasha, according to the word of the LORD, which he spoke against Baasha by the prophet Jehu—<sup>13</sup> because of all the sins of Baasha and the sins of his son Elah that they committed, and that they caused Israel to commit, provoking the LORD God of Israel to anger with their idols. <sup>14</sup> Now the rest of the acts of Elah, and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel?

**Third Dynasty: Zimri Reigns over Israel**

<sup>15</sup> In the twenty-seventh year of King Asa of Judah, Zimri reigned seven days in Tirzah. Now the troops were encamped against Gibbethon, which belonged to the Philistines, <sup>16</sup> and the troops who were encamped heard it said, "Zimri has conspired, and he has killed the king"; therefore all Israel made Omri, the commander of the army, king over Israel that day in the camp. <sup>17</sup> So Omri went up from Gibbethon, and all Israel with him, and they besieged Tirzah. <sup>18</sup> When Zimri saw that the city was taken, he went into the citadel of the king's house; he burned down the king's house over himself with fire, and died—<sup>19</sup> because of the sins that he committed, doing evil in the sight of the LORD, walking in the way of Jeroboam, and for the sin that he committed, causing Israel to sin. <sup>20</sup> Now the rest of the acts of Zimri, and the conspiracy that he made, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel?

### Read 1 Kings 16:23–34

The continuous political disruption of Israel ends for a time under the reign of Omri and his successor Ahab. The biblical writer, however, chooses to highlight the idolatrous practices of these kings and Ahab's Phoenician wife Jezebel rather than the greater influence and stability they brought to Israel.

**Reflect:** Give some thought in reading an account of the kings of Israel to what the writer has left out of the story. Stock phrases and charges of idolatry may be justified, but long administrations usually include some positive events for the nation.

**Pray:** Ask for the ability to question as well as to accept. Pray for a fuller understanding of our own history and our place in the world.

**Act:** Whenever possible, consult more than one witness or account of events. Learn to recognize that there is a story behind every history that has been written down.

### Fourth Dynasty: Omri Reigns over Israel

21 Then the people of Israel were divided into two parts; half of the people followed Tibni son of Ginath, to make him king, and half followed Omri. <sup>22</sup> But the people who followed Omri overcame the people who followed Tibni son of Ginath; so Tibni died, and Omri became king. <sup>23</sup> In the thirty-first year of King Asa of Judah, Omri began to reign over Israel; he reigned for twelve years, six of them in Tirzah.

### Samaria the New Capital

24 He bought the hill of Samaria from Shemer for two talents of silver; he fortified the hill, and called the city that he built, Samaria, after the name of Shemer, the owner of the hill.

25 Omri did what was evil in the sight of the LORD; he did more evil than all who were before him. <sup>26</sup> For he walked in all the way of Jeroboam son of Nebat, and in the sins that he caused Israel to commit, provoking the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger by their idols. <sup>27</sup> Now the rest of the acts of Omri that he did, and the power that he showed, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel? <sup>28</sup> Omri slept with his ancestors, and was buried in Samaria; his son Ahab succeeded him.

### Ahab Reigns over Israel

29 In the thirty-eighth year of King Asa of Judah, Ahab son of Omri began to reign over Israel; Ahab son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty-two years. <sup>30</sup> Ahab son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD more than all who were before him.

### Ahab Marries Jezebel and Worships Baal

31 And as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, he took as his wife Jezebel daughter of King Ethbaal of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshiped him. <sup>32</sup> He erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he built in Samaria. <sup>33</sup> Ahab also made a sacred pole.<sup>a</sup> Ahab did more to provoke the anger of the LORD, the God of Israel, than had all the kings of Israel who were before him. <sup>34</sup> In his days Hiel of Bethel built Jericho; he laid its foundation at the cost of Abiram his firstborn, and set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the LORD, which he spoke by Joshua son of Nun.

### Elijah Predicts a Drought

**17** Now Elijah the Tishbite, of Tishbe<sup>b</sup> in Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the LORD the God of Israel

<sup>a</sup> Heb *Asherah*

<sup>b</sup> Gk: *Heb of the settlers*

## Read 1 Kings 17

After creating a pair of super villains (Ahab and Jezebel), the biblical writer sets them against God's heroic prophet, Elijah. The contest begins with the prediction of a three-year drought and subsequent famine. Elijah spends the time in Zarephath (in Phoenicia), where he brings life to a widow and her son and receives their acknowledgment as a true prophet.

**Reflect:** Consider the irony that Elijah predicts death by drought for Israel while he brings life to inhabitants of Jezebel's home country.

**Pray:** Pray for those beset by natural calamity, poverty, and despair.

**Act:** Like Elijah, work to relieve the effects of poverty, hunger, and homelessness. Pray for God's assistance to make this happen.

lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word." <sup>2</sup> The word of the LORD came to him, saying, <sup>3</sup> "Go from here and turn eastward, and hide yourself by the Wadi Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. <sup>4</sup> You shall drink from the wadi, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there." <sup>5</sup> So he went and did according to the word of the LORD; he went and lived by the Wadi Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. <sup>6</sup> The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening; and he drank from the wadi. <sup>7</sup> But after a while the wadi dried up, because there was no rain in the land.

## The Widow of Zarephath

<sup>8</sup> Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, <sup>9</sup> "Go now to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and live there; for I have commanded a widow there to feed you." <sup>10</sup> So he set out and went to Zarephath. When he came to the gate of the town, a widow was there gathering sticks; he called to her and said, "Bring me a little water in a vessel, so that I may drink." <sup>11</sup> As she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, "Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand." <sup>12</sup> But she said, "As the LORD your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of meal in a jar, and a little oil in a jug; I am now gathering a couple of sticks, so that I may go home and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die." <sup>13</sup> Elijah 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, and afterwards make something for yourself and your son. <sup>14</sup> For thus says the LORD the God of Israel: The jar of meal will not be emptied and the jug of oil will not fail until the day that the LORD sends rain on the earth." <sup>15</sup> She went and did as Elijah said, so that she as well as he and her household ate for many days. <sup>16</sup> The jar of meal was not emptied, neither did the jug of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke by Elijah.

## Elijah Revives the Widow's Son

<sup>17</sup> After this the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, became ill; his illness was so severe that there was no breath left in him. <sup>18</sup> She then said to Elijah, "What have you against me, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my sin to remembrance, and to cause the death of my son!" <sup>19</sup> But he said to her, "Give me your son." He took him from her bosom, carried him up into the upper chamber where he was lodging, and laid him on his own bed. <sup>20</sup> He cried out to the LORD, "O LORD my God, have you brought calamity even upon the widow with whom I am staying,

by killing her son?" <sup>21</sup> Then he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried out to the LORD, "O LORD my God, let this child's life come into him again." <sup>22</sup> The LORD listened to the voice of Elijah; the life of the child came into him again, and he revived. <sup>23</sup> Elijah took the child,

brought him down from the upper chamber into the house, and gave him to his mother; then Elijah said, "See, your son is alive." <sup>24</sup> So the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is truth."

### Read 1 Kings 18

To end the drought Elijah confronts Ahab and challenges the prophets of Baal to a contest between gods on Mt. Carmel. Like the miraculous opening of the Red Sea (Ex 14:10–31), this contest is designed to prove to the Israelites who the true God is. After taunting the failure of Baal, Elijah demonstrates God's power in fire and the needed rain.

**Reflect:** Consider the basis for your faith, and how fragile it can be. Are we like Obadiah, who secretly supports God, but fears to let it be known? Are we like the people who "straddle the issue" and require miracles to decide who really is God?

**Pray:** Ask for the courage to make your faith known and to see God in all creation without demanding fresh miracles to prove God exists.

**Act:** Be willing to protect those who are in danger, as Obadiah did, and to take the lead like Elijah to stand up for God in the face of the world's temptations.

### Elijah's Message to Ahab

**18** After many days the word of the LORD came to Elijah, in the third year of the drought,<sup>a</sup> saying, "Go, present yourself to Ahab; I will send rain on the earth." <sup>2</sup> So Elijah went to present himself to Ahab. The famine was severe in Samaria. <sup>3</sup> Ahab summoned Obadiah, who was in charge of the palace. (Now Obadiah revered the LORD greatly; <sup>4</sup> when Jezebel was killing off the prophets of the LORD, Obadiah took a hundred prophets, hid them fifty to a cave, and provided them with bread and water.) <sup>5</sup> Then Ahab said to Obadiah, "Go through the land to all the springs of water and to all the wadis; perhaps we may find grass to keep the horses and mules alive, and not lose some of the animals." <sup>6</sup> So they divided the land between them to pass through it; Ahab went in one direction by himself, and Obadiah went in another direction by himself.

<sup>7</sup> As Obadiah was on the way, Elijah met him; Obadiah recognized him, fell on his face, and said, "Is it you, my lord Elijah?" <sup>8</sup> He answered him, "It is I. Go, tell your lord that Elijah is here." <sup>9</sup> And he said, "How have I sinned, that you would hand your servant over to Ahab, to kill me?" <sup>10</sup> As the LORD your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom to which my lord has not sent to seek you; and when they would say, 'He is not here,' he would require an oath of the kingdom or nation, that they had not found you. <sup>11</sup> But now you say, 'Go, tell your lord that Elijah is here.' <sup>12</sup> As soon as I have gone from you, the spirit of the LORD will carry you I know not where; so, when I come and tell Ahab and he cannot find you, he will kill me, although I your servant have revered the LORD from my youth. <sup>13</sup> Has it not been told my lord what I did when Jezebel killed the prophets of the LORD, how I hid a hundred of the LORD's prophets fifty to a cave, and provided them with bread and water? <sup>14</sup> Yet now you say, 'Go, tell your lord that Elijah is here'; he will surely kill me." <sup>15</sup> Elijah said, "As the LORD of hosts lives, before whom I stand, I will surely show myself to him today." <sup>16</sup> So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him; and Ahab went to meet Elijah.

<sup>17</sup> When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, "Is it you, you troubler of Israel?" <sup>18</sup> He answered, "I have not

<sup>a</sup> Heb lacks of the drought



troubled Israel; but you have, and your father's house, because you have forsaken the commandments of the LORD and followed the Baals. <sup>19</sup> Now therefore have all Israel assemble for me at Mount Carmel, with the four hundred fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table."

### **Elijah's Triumph over the Priests of Baal**

<sup>20</sup> So Ahab sent to all the Israelites, and assembled the prophets at Mount Carmel. <sup>21</sup> Elijah then came near to all the people, and said, "How long will you go limping with two different opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." The people did not answer him a word. <sup>22</sup> Then Elijah said to the people, "I, even I only, am left a prophet of the LORD; but Baal's prophets number four hundred fifty. <sup>23</sup> Let two bulls be given to us; let them choose one bull for themselves, cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire to it; I will prepare the other bull and lay it on the wood, but put no fire to it. <sup>24</sup> Then you call on the name of your god and I will call on the name of the LORD; the god who answers by fire is indeed God." All the people answered, "Well spoken!" <sup>25</sup> Then Elijah said to 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, but put no fire to it." <sup>26</sup> So they took the bull that was given them, prepared it, and called on the name of Baal from morning until noon, crying, "O Baal, answer us!" But there was no voice, and no answer. They limped about the altar that they had made. <sup>27</sup> At noon Elijah mocked them, saying, "Cry aloud! Surely he is a god; either he is meditating, or he has wandered away, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened." <sup>28</sup> Then they cried aloud and, as was their custom, they cut themselves with swords and lances until the blood gushed out over them. <sup>29</sup> As midday passed, they raved on until the time of the offering of the oblation, but there was no voice, no answer, and no response.

<sup>30</sup> Then Elijah said to all the people,

"Come closer to me"; and all the people came closer to him. First he repaired the altar of the LORD that had been thrown down; <sup>31</sup> Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD came, saying, "Israel shall be your name"; <sup>32</sup> with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD. Then he made a trench around the altar, large enough to contain two measures of seed. <sup>33</sup> Next he put the wood in order, cut the bull in pieces, and laid it on the wood. He said, "Fill four jars with water and pour it on the burnt offering and on the wood." <sup>34</sup> Then he said, "Do it a second time"; and they did it a second time. Again he said, "Do it a third time"; and they did it a third time, <sup>35</sup> so that the water ran all around the altar, and filled the trench also with water.

<sup>36</sup> At the time of the offering of the oblation, the prophet Elijah came near and said, "O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your bidding. <sup>37</sup> Answer me, O LORD, answer me, so that this people may know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back." <sup>38</sup> Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering, the wood, the stones, and the dust, and even licked up the water that was in the trench. <sup>39</sup> When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, "The LORD indeed is God; the LORD indeed is God." <sup>40</sup> Elijah said to them, "Seize the prophets of Baal; do not let one of them escape." Then they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the Wadi Kishon, and killed them there.

### **The Drought Ends**

<sup>41</sup> Elijah said to Ahab, "Go up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of rushing rain." <sup>42</sup> So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; there he bowed himself down upon the earth and put his face between his knees. <sup>43</sup> He said to his servant, "Go up now, look toward the sea." He went up and looked, and said,

“There is nothing.” Then he said, “Go again seven times.” <sup>44</sup> At the seventh time he said, “Look, a little cloud no bigger than a person’s hand is rising out of the sea.” Then he said, “Go say to Ahab, ‘Harness your chariot and go down before the rain

stops you.’” <sup>45</sup> In a little while the heavens grew black with clouds and wind; there was a heavy rain. Ahab rode off and went to Jezreel. <sup>46</sup> But the hand of the LORD was on Elijah; he girded up his loins and ran in front of Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.

### Read 1 Kings 19:1–18

In the face of Jezebel’s anger, Elijah flees, despairs over his lack of courage, and tries to justify himself. Like Moses, he journeys through the wilderness to Mt. Horeb (= Mt. Sinai), where he receives a fresh commission to serve God’s purpose. His perception of God in “a sound of sheer silence” separates his God from those worshiped by other nations.

**Reflect:** Consider how we work through our failures by fleeing from problems, providing self-justifications, and sometimes surrendering ourselves to God.

**Pray:** Ask for the understanding to set aside self-doubts and useless excuses and be open to God’s message in our heart.

**Act:** Work to overcome despair and self-hatred and to recognize the possibilities presented by new missions for God.

### Elijah Flees from Jezebel

**19** Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. <sup>2</sup> Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, “So may the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life like the life of one of them by this time tomorrow.” <sup>3</sup> Then he was afraid; he got up and fled for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongs to Judah; he left his servant there.

<sup>4</sup> But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a solitary broom tree. He asked that he might die: “It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors.” <sup>5</sup> Then he lay down under the broom tree and fell asleep. Suddenly an angel touched him and said to him, “Get up and eat.” <sup>6</sup> He looked, and there at his head was a cake baked on hot stones, and a jar of water. He ate and drank, and lay down again. <sup>7</sup> The angel of the LORD came a second time, touched him, and said, “Get up and eat, otherwise the journey will be too much for you.” <sup>8</sup> He got up, and ate and drank; then he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God. <sup>9</sup> At that place he came to a cave, and spent the night there.

Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” <sup>10</sup> He answered, “I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away.”

### Elijah Meets God at Horeb

<sup>11</sup> He said, “Go out and stand on the mountain before the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by.” Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; <sup>12</sup> and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. <sup>13</sup> When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of

### Read 1 Kings 19:19–21

The commissioning of Elisha as Elijah's successor includes some familiar images: plowing and the sacrifice of a team of oxen (Saul in 1 Sam 11:5–7), use of clothing as symbol of power (Ahijah in 1 Kings 11:29–33), and a request to bid parents goodbye (compare Lk 9:59–62).

**Reflect:** Consider how successors are chosen and the symbols we use to make this clear. Reflect on what it costs to accept a call to service.

**Pray:** Ask for the courage to accept a call to serve as a leader, a minister, a member of the military, or a role model for others.

**Act:** Take the opportunity to attend an ordination or watch a swearing-in ceremony or an inauguration in order to learn how we legitimize and acknowledge our leaders.

the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" <sup>14</sup> He answered, "I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away." <sup>15</sup> Then the LORD said to him, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus; when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael as king over Aram. <sup>16</sup> Also you shall anoint Jehu son of Nimshi as king over Israel; and you shall anoint Elisha son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah as prophet in your place. <sup>17</sup> Whoever escapes from the sword of Hazael, Jehu shall kill; and whoever escapes from the sword of Jehu, Elisha shall kill. <sup>18</sup> Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him."

### Elisha Becomes Elijah's Disciple

<sup>19</sup> So he set out from there, and found Elisha son of Shaphat, who was plowing. There were twelve yoke of oxen ahead of him, and he was with the twelfth. Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle over him. <sup>20</sup> He left the oxen, ran after Elijah, and said, "Let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you." Then Elijah<sup>a</sup> said to him, "Go back again; for what have I done to you?" <sup>21</sup> He returned from following him, took the yoke of oxen, and slaughtered them; using the equipment from the oxen, he boiled their flesh, and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he set out and followed Elijah, and became his servant.

### Ahab's Wars with the Arameans

**20** King Ben-hadad of Aram gathered all his army together; thirty-two kings were with him, along with horses and chariots. He marched against Samaria, laid siege to it, and attacked it. <sup>2</sup> Then he sent messengers into the city to King Ahab of Israel, and said to him: "Thus says Ben-hadad: <sup>3</sup> Your silver and gold are mine; your fairest wives and children also are mine." <sup>4</sup> The king of Israel answered, "As you say, my lord, O king, I am yours, and all that I have." <sup>5</sup> The messengers came again and said: "Thus says Ben-hadad: I sent to you, saying, 'Deliver to me your silver and gold, your wives and children'; <sup>6</sup> nevertheless I will send my servants to you tomorrow about this time, and they shall search your house and the houses of your servants, and lay hands on whatever pleases them,<sup>b</sup> and take it away."

<sup>7</sup> Then the king of Israel called all the elders of the land, and said, "Look now! See how this man is seeking trouble; for he sent to me for my wives, my children, my

<sup>a</sup> Heb *he*

<sup>b</sup> Gk Syr Vg: Heb *you*

## Read 1 Kings 20

Accounts of warfare in ancient Israel provided opportunities to demonstrate the power of the Divine Warrior. Ahab is assured that God will give him victories over the Syrians. However, when Ahab negotiates an end to the conflict instead of killing the Syrian King Ben-hadad, a prophet accuses him of failing to obey God's command.

**Reflect:** Consider the theme of absolute obedience that is demanded of Israel's kings (compare Saul and Samuel in 1 Sam 15). Note that having mercy on our enemies has become the hallmark of modern warfare and diplomacy.

**Pray:** Ask for God's assistance in times of trial, but be willing to petition God to spare us the necessity of utterly destroying our enemies (see Abraham's petition in Gn 18:16–32).

**Act:** Let us work for a peaceful and just resolution to disagreements and encourage our leaders to seek diplomatic avenues to avoid war and the impoverishment of nations.

silver, and my gold; and I did not refuse him.”<sup>8</sup> Then all the elders and all the people said to him, “Do not listen or consent.”<sup>9</sup> So he said to the messengers of Ben-hadad, “Tell my lord the king: All that you first demanded of your servant I will do; but this thing I cannot do.” The messengers left and brought him word again.<sup>10</sup> Ben-hadad sent to him and said, “The gods do so to me, and more also, if the dust of Samaria will provide a handful for each of the people who follow me.”<sup>11</sup> The king of Israel answered, “Tell him: One who puts on armor should not brag like one who takes it off.”<sup>12</sup> When Ben-hadad heard this message—now he had been drinking with the kings in the booths—he said to his men, “Take your positions!” And they took their positions against the city.

## Prophetic Opposition to Ahab

13 Then a certain prophet came up to King Ahab of Israel and said, “Thus says the LORD, Have you seen all this great multitude? Look, I will give it into your hand today; and you shall know that I am the LORD.”<sup>14</sup> Ahab said, “By whom?” He said, “Thus says the LORD, By the young men who serve the district governors.” Then he said, “Who shall begin the battle?” He answered, “You.”<sup>15</sup> Then he mustered the young men who served the district governors, two hundred thirty-two; after them he mustered all the people of Israel, seven thousand.

16 They went out at noon, while Ben-hadad was drinking himself drunk in the booths, he and the thirty-two kings allied with him.<sup>17</sup> The young men who served the district governors went out first. Ben-hadad had sent out scouts,<sup>a</sup> and they reported to him, “Men have come out from Samaria.”<sup>18</sup> He said, “If they have come out for peace, take them alive; if they have come out for war, take them alive.”

19 But these had already come out of the city: the young men who served the district governors, and the army that followed them.<sup>20</sup> Each killed his man; the Arameans fled and Israel pursued them, but King Ben-hadad of Aram escaped on a horse with the cavalry.<sup>21</sup> The king of Israel went out, attacked the horses and chariots, and defeated the Arameans with a great slaughter.

22 Then the prophet approached the king of Israel and said to him, “Come, strengthen yourself, and consider well what you have to do; for in the spring the king of Aram will come up against you.”

## The Arameans Are Defeated

23 The servants of the king of Aram said to him, “Their gods are gods of the hills, and so they were

<sup>a</sup> Heb lacks *scouts*

stronger than we; but let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they. <sup>24</sup> Also do this: remove the kings, each from his post, and put commanders in place of them; <sup>25</sup> and muster an army like the army that you have lost, horse for horse, and chariot for chariot; then we will fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they.” He heeded their voice, and did so.

<sup>26</sup> In the spring Ben-hadad mustered the Arameans and went up to Aphek to fight against Israel. <sup>27</sup> After the Israelites had been mustered and provisioned, they went out to engage them; the people of Israel encamped opposite them like two little flocks of goats, while the Arameans filled the country. <sup>28</sup> A man of God approached and said to the king of Israel, “Thus says the LORD: Because the Arameans have said, ‘The LORD is a god of the hills but he is not a god of the valleys,’ therefore I will give all this great multitude into your hand, and you shall know that I am the LORD.” <sup>29</sup> They encamped opposite one another seven days. Then on the seventh day the battle began; the Israelites killed one hundred thousand Aramean foot soldiers in one day. <sup>30</sup> The rest fled into the city of Aphek; and the wall fell on twenty-seven thousand men that were left.

Ben-hadad also fled, and entered the city to hide. <sup>31</sup> His servants said to him, “Look, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings; let us put sackcloth around our waists and ropes on our heads, and go out to the king of Israel; perhaps he will spare your life.” <sup>32</sup> So they tied sackcloth around their waists, put ropes on their heads, went to the king of Israel, and said, “Your servant Ben-hadad says, ‘Please let me live.’” And he said, “Is he still alive? He is my brother.” <sup>33</sup> Now the men were watching for an omen; they quickly took it up from him and said, “Yes, Ben-

hadad is your brother.” Then he said, “Go and bring him.” So Ben-hadad came out to him; and he had him come up into the chariot. <sup>34</sup> Ben-hadad<sup>a</sup> said to him, “I will restore the towns that my father took from your father; and you may establish bazaars for yourself in Damascus, as my father did in Samaria.” The king of Israel responded,<sup>b</sup> “I will let you go on those terms.” So he made a treaty with him and let him go.

### A Prophet Condemns Ahab

<sup>35</sup> At the command of the LORD a certain member of a company of prophets<sup>c</sup> said to another, “Strike me!” But the man refused to strike him. <sup>36</sup> Then he said to him, “Because you have not obeyed the voice of the LORD, as soon as you have left me, a lion will kill you.” And when he had left him, a lion met him and killed him. <sup>37</sup> Then he found another man and said, “Strike me!” So the man hit him, striking and wounding him. <sup>38</sup> Then the prophet departed, and waited for the king along the road, disguising himself with a bandage over his eyes. <sup>39</sup> As the king passed by, he cried to the king and said, “Your servant went out into the thick of the battle; then a soldier turned and brought a man to me, and said, ‘Guard this man; if he is missing, your life shall be given for his life, or else you shall pay a talent of silver.’” <sup>40</sup> While your servant was busy here and there, he was gone.” The king of Israel said to him, “So shall your judgment be; you yourself have decided it.” <sup>41</sup> Then he quickly took the bandage away from his eyes. The king of Israel recognized him as one of the prophets. <sup>42</sup> Then he said to him, “Thus says the LORD, ‘Because you have let the man go whom I had devoted to destruction, therefore your life shall be for his life, and your people for his people.’” <sup>43</sup> The king of Israel set out toward home, resentful and sullen, and came to Samaria.

### Naboth’s Vineyard

**21** Later the following events took place: Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard in Jezreel, beside the palace of King Ahab of Samaria. <sup>2</sup> And Ahab said to

<sup>a</sup> Heb He

<sup>b</sup> Heb lacks *The king of Israel responded*

<sup>c</sup> Heb of the sons of the prophets

## Read 1 Kings 21

A dispute over a vineyard leads Jezebel to obtain this piece of land for Ahab by hiring false witnesses and condemning Naboth to death. When Elijah confronts the king over this judicial murder and curses his household, Ahab's repentance is so genuine that God relents and passes the punishment to the next generation.

**Reflect:** Consider how many innocent people fall victim to the desires of the powerful. Reflect on God's willingness to set aside deserved punishment in the face of true repentance.

**Pray:** Let us ask for the ability to recognize our sins and to humbly repent so that we can be reconciled with our neighbors.

**Act:** We need to be willing to confront those who have committed injustices and open to forgive them when they turn aside from their selfish desires.

Naboth, "Give me your vineyard, so that I may have it for a vegetable garden, because it is near my house; I will give you a better vineyard for it; or, if it seems good to you, I will give you its value in money."<sup>3</sup> But Naboth said to Ahab, "The LORD forbid that I should give you my ancestral inheritance."<sup>4</sup> Ahab went home resentful and sullen because of what Naboth the Jezreelite had said to him; for he had said, "I will not give you my ancestral inheritance." He lay down on his bed, turned away his face, and would not eat.

5 His wife Jezebel came to him and said, "Why are you so depressed that you will not eat?"<sup>6</sup> He said to her, "Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite and said to him, 'Give me your vineyard for money; or else, if you prefer, I will give you another vineyard for it'; but he answered, 'I will not give you my vineyard.'"<sup>7</sup> His wife Jezebel said to him, "Do you now govern Israel? Get up, eat some food, and be cheerful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite."

8 So she wrote letters in Ahab's name and sealed them with his seal; she sent the letters to the elders and the nobles who lived with Naboth in his city.<sup>9</sup> She wrote in the letters, "Proclaim a fast, and seat Naboth at the head of the assembly;<sup>10</sup> seat two scoundrels opposite him, and have them bring a charge against him, saying, 'You have cursed God and the king.' Then take him out, and stone him to death."<sup>11</sup> The men of his city, the elders and the nobles who lived in his city, did as Jezebel had sent word to them. Just as it was written in the letters that she had sent to them,<sup>12</sup> they proclaimed a fast and seated Naboth at the head of the assembly.<sup>13</sup> The two scoundrels came in and sat opposite him; and the scoundrels brought a charge against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, "Naboth cursed God and the king." So they took him outside the city, and stoned him to death.<sup>14</sup> Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, "Naboth has been stoned; he is dead."

15 As soon as Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned and was dead, Jezebel said to Ahab, "Go, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give you for money; for Naboth is not alive, but dead."<sup>16</sup> As soon as Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, Ahab set out to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it.

## Elijah Pronounces God's Sentence

17 Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying:<sup>18</sup> Go down to meet King Ahab of Israel, who rules<sup>a</sup> in Samaria; he is now in the vineyard of Naboth, where he has gone to take possession.<sup>19</sup> You shall say to him, "Thus says the LORD: Have you killed,

<sup>a</sup> Heb *who is*



and also taken possession?" You shall say to him, "Thus says the LORD: In the place where dogs licked up the blood of Naboth, dogs will also lick up your blood."

20 Ahab said to Elijah, "Have you found me, O my enemy?" He answered, "I have found you. Because you have sold yourself to do what is evil in the sight of the LORD, <sup>21</sup> I will bring disaster on you; I will consume you, and will cut off from Ahab every male, bond or free, in Israel; <sup>22</sup> and I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha son of Ahijah, because you have provoked me to anger and have caused Israel to sin. <sup>23</sup> Also concerning Jezebel the LORD said, 'The dogs shall eat Jezebel within the bounds of Jezreel.' <sup>24</sup> Anyone belonging to Ahab who dies in the city the dogs shall

eat; and anyone of his who dies in the open country the birds of the air shall eat."

25 (Indeed, there was no one like Ahab, who sold himself to do what was evil in the sight of the LORD, urged on by his wife Jezebel. <sup>26</sup> He acted most abominably in going after idols, as the Amorites had done, whom the LORD drove out before the Israelites.)

27 When Ahab heard those words, he tore his clothes and put sackcloth over his bare flesh; he fasted, lay in the sackcloth, and went about dejectedly. <sup>28</sup> Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite: <sup>29</sup> "Have you seen how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has humbled himself before me, I will not bring the disaster in his days; but in his son's days I will bring the disaster on his house."

### Read 1 Kings 22:1–40

Not trusting the word of court prophets, Jehoshaphat asks that Ahab seek the word of an independent voice on whether they should go to war with Aram (Syria). Micaiah describes a dream in which God addresses the Divine Assembly and asks for someone to provide a lying message to the court prophets so that Ahab will be killed in battle. When Ahab decides to test who is telling the truth, he is mortally wounded.

**Reflect:** Consider that there may be many voices speaking in the name of God, but it is not always easy to determine who is delivering the true message. What purpose is served by God putting Ahab to the test here?

**Pray:** Ask for the ability to discern God's truth for us. Pray for the resolution to seek out God's message for our own lives.

**Act:** Resolve to engage in regular Bible study as well as discussion of scripture and tradition, and continuously ask questions in order to better understand God's purpose.

### Joint Campaign with Judah against Aram

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

5 But Jehoshaphat also said to the king of Israel, "Inquire first for the word of the LORD." <sup>6</sup> Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred of them, and said to them, "Shall I go to battle against Ramoth-gilead, or shall I refrain?" They said, "Go up; for the LORD will give it into the hand of the king." <sup>7</sup> But Jehoshaphat said, "Is there no other prophet of the LORD here of whom we may inquire?" <sup>8</sup> The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "There is still one other by whom we may inquire of the LORD, Micaiah son of Imlah; but I hate him, for he never prophesies anything favorable about me, but only disaster." Jehoshaphat said, "Let the king not say such a thing." <sup>9</sup> Then the king of Israel summoned an officer and said, "Bring quickly Micaiah son of Imlah." <sup>10</sup> Now the king of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judah were sitting on their thrones, arrayed in their robes, at the threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets were prophesying before them. <sup>11</sup> Zedekiah

son of Chenaanah made for himself horns of iron, and he said, "Thus says the LORD: With these you shall gore the Arameans until they are destroyed."<sup>12</sup> All the prophets were prophesying the same and saying, "Go up to Ramoth-gilead and triumph; the LORD will give it into the hand of the king."

### Micaiah Predicts Failure

13 The messenger who had gone to summon Micaiah said to him, "Look, the words of the prophets with one accord are favorable to the king; let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak favorably."<sup>14</sup> But Micaiah said, "As the LORD lives, whatever the LORD says to me, that I will speak."

15 When he had come to the king, the king said to him, "Micaiah, shall we go to Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall we refrain?" He answered him, "Go up and triumph; the LORD will give it into the hand of the king."<sup>16</sup> But the king said to him, "How many times must I make you swear to tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?"<sup>17</sup> Then Micaiah<sup>a</sup> said, "I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, like sheep that have no shepherd; and the LORD said, 'These have no master; let each one go home in peace.'<sup>18</sup> The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Did I not tell you that he would not prophesy anything favorable about me, but only disaster?"

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

put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets; the LORD has decreed disaster for you."

24 Then Zedekiah son of Chenaanah came up to Micaiah, slapped him on the cheek, and said, "Which way did the spirit of the LORD pass from me to speak to you?"<sup>25</sup> Micaiah replied, "You will find out on that day when you go in to hide in an inner chamber."<sup>26</sup> The king of Israel then ordered, "Take Micaiah, and return him to Amon the governor of the city and to Joash the king's son,<sup>27</sup> and say, 'Thus says the king: Put this fellow in prison, and feed him on reduced rations of bread and water until I come in peace.'<sup>28</sup> Micaiah said, "If you return in peace, the LORD has not spoken by me." And he said, "Hear, you peoples, all of you!"

### Defeat and Death of Ahab

29 So the king of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judah went up to Ramoth-gilead.<sup>30</sup> The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "I will disguise myself and go into battle, but you wear your robes." So the king of Israel disguised himself and went into battle.<sup>31</sup> Now the king of Aram had commanded the thirty-two captains of his chariots, "Fight with no one small or great, but only with the king of Israel."<sup>32</sup> When the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, they said, "It is surely the king of Israel." So they turned to fight against him; and Jehoshaphat cried out.<sup>33</sup> When the captains of the chariots saw that it was not the king of Israel, they turned back from pursuing him.<sup>34</sup> But a certain man drew his bow and unknowingly struck the king of Israel between the scale armor and the breastplate; so he said to the driver of his chariot, "Turn around, and carry me out of the battle, for I am wounded."<sup>35</sup> The battle grew hot that day, and the king was propped up in his chariot facing the Arameans, until at evening he died; the blood from the wound had flowed into the bottom of the chariot.<sup>36</sup> Then about sunset a

<sup>a</sup> Heb *he*

### Read 1 Kings 22:41–53

A contrast is drawn between a good king, Jehoshaphat of Judah, and a bad king, Ahaziah, son of Ahab, in Israel. Because he continued Asa's policies and obeyed God's commands, Jehoshaphat and his nation prospered and expanded their rule into Edom, while Ahaziah ruled only a short time and provoked God to punish his people.

**Reflect:** Consider how we judge leaders and their accomplishments. How do we determine whether they have truly benefited the nation and left a positive legacy?

**Pray:** Ask that God provide our leaders with the wisdom and temperament to work for the good of all peoples.

**Act:** Let us make it a regular practice to praise our leaders when they have contributed to a just society and let them know when we feel they have failed in their responsibilities.

shout went through the army, "Every man to his city, and every man to his country!"

37 So the king died, and was brought to Samaria; they buried the king in Samaria. <sup>38</sup> They washed the chariot by the pool of Samaria; the dogs licked up his blood, and the prostitutes washed themselves in it,<sup>a</sup> according to the word of the LORD that he had spoken. <sup>39</sup> Now the rest of the acts of Ahab, and all that he did, and the ivory house that he built, and all the cities that he built, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel? <sup>40</sup> So Ahab slept with his ancestors; and his son Ahaziah succeeded him.

### Jehoshaphat Reigns over Judah

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

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

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

### Ahaziah Reigns over Israel

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

<sup>a</sup> Heb lacks *in it*

# 2 KINGS

## Elijah Denounces Ahaziah

### Read 2 Kings 1

After Ahab's death, his son Ahaziah continues the pattern of apostasy when he orders his advisers to consult the prophets of the Philistine god Baal-zebub about his injuries. Elijah once again serves as the champion of Yahweh and he humbles both the military and the king.

**Reflect:** Consider Elijah's question, "Is it because there is no God in Israel...?" and reflect on the choices we make without consulting God.

**Pray:** Pray for guidance to meet personal challenges and to ask for God's loving care. Pray for humility and the ability to seek to serve God's purposes.

**Act:** Since health care is a serious matter, it is important to seek out the best possible care from professional providers. However, it is also important not to use a disability to manipulate others.

**1** After the death of Ahab, Moab rebelled against Israel.

**2** Ahaziah had fallen through the lattice in his upper chamber in Samaria, and lay injured; so he sent messengers, telling them, "Go, inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, whether I shall recover from this injury."<sup>3</sup> But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, "Get up, go to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say to them, 'Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron?'"<sup>4</sup> Now therefore thus says the LORD, 'You shall not leave the bed to which you have gone, but you shall surely die.'" So Elijah went.

**5** The messengers returned to the king, who said to them, "Why have you returned?"<sup>6</sup> They answered him, "There came a man to meet us, who said to us, 'Go back to the king who sent you, and say to him: Thus says the LORD: Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are sending to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you shall not leave the bed to which you have gone, but shall surely die.'"<sup>7</sup> He said to them, "What sort of man was he who came to meet you and told you these things?"<sup>8</sup> They answered him, "A hairy man, with a leather belt around his waist." He said, "It is Elijah the Tishbite."

**9** Then the king sent to him a captain of fifty with his fifty men. He went up to Elijah, who was sitting on the top of a hill, and said to him, "O man of God, the king says, 'Come down.'"<sup>10</sup> But Elijah answered the captain of fifty, "If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty." Then fire came down from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty.

**11** Again the king sent to him another captain of fifty with his fifty. He went up<sup>a</sup> and said to him, "O man of God, this is the king's order: Come down quickly!"<sup>12</sup> But Elijah answered them, "If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty." Then the fire of God came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty.

**13** Again the king sent the captain of a third fifty with his fifty. So the third captain of fifty went up, and came and fell on his knees before Elijah, and entreated him, "O man of God, please let my life, and the life of these

<sup>a</sup> Gk Compare verses 9, 13: Heb *He answered*

fifty servants of yours, be precious in your sight. <sup>14</sup> Look, fire came down from heaven and consumed the two former captains of fifty men with their fifties; but now let my life be precious in your sight.” <sup>15</sup> Then the angel of the LORD said to Elijah, “Go down with him; do not be afraid of him.” So he set out and went down with him to the king, <sup>16</sup> and said to him, “Thus says the LORD: Because you have sent messengers to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron,—is it because there is no God in Israel to inquire of his word?—therefore you shall not

leave the bed to which you have gone, but you shall surely die.”

### Death of Ahaziah

<sup>17</sup> So he died according to the word of the LORD that Elijah had spoken. His brother,<sup>a</sup> Jehoram succeeded him as king in the second year of King Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat of Judah, because Ahaziah had no son. <sup>18</sup> Now the rest of the acts of Ahaziah that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel?

### Read 2 Kings 2:1–18

Just prior to Elijah’s translation, Elisha’s resolve to stay with his master is tested. His persistence is rewarded by the miraculous crossing of the Jordan River, Elijah’s being taken away, and Elisha’s receiving a portion of the prophet’s power as a sign that he is the true successor.

**Reflect:** Reflect on our own desires and wishes. Are they self-centered or God-centered? Will what we hope and work for make us true successors to the faithful followers of God?

**Pray:** Pray for the strength to carry out the tasks given to us and to recognize what is most important. Pray for a willingness to accept things without wasting energy by chasing false beliefs.

**Act:** Be willing to place yourself in the company of those who serve the needs of the church and God’s kingdom on earth. Hold to your convictions and be ready to take up the mantle of authority should it come your way.

### Elijah Ascends to Heaven

**2** Now when the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. <sup>2</sup> Elijah said to Elisha, “Stay here; for the LORD has sent me as far as Bethel.” But Elisha said, “As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So they went down to Bethel. <sup>3</sup> The company of prophets<sup>b</sup> who were in Bethel came out to Elisha, and said to him, “Do you know that today the LORD will take your master away from you?” And he said, “Yes, I know; keep silent.”

<sup>4</sup> Elijah said to him, “Elisha, stay here; for the LORD has sent me to Jericho.” But he said, “As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So they came to Jericho. <sup>5</sup> The company of prophets<sup>b</sup> who were at Jericho drew near to Elisha, and said to him, “Do you know that today the LORD will take your master away from you?” And he answered, “Yes, I know; be silent.”

<sup>6</sup> Then Elijah said to him, “Stay here; for the LORD has sent me to the Jordan.” But he said, “As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So the two of them went on. <sup>7</sup> Fifty men of the company of prophets<sup>b</sup> also went, and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan. <sup>8</sup> Then Elijah took his mantle and rolled it up, and struck the water; the water was parted to the one side and to the other, until the two of them crossed on dry ground.

<sup>9</sup> When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, “Tell me what I may do for you, before I am taken from you.” Elisha said, “Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit.” <sup>10</sup> He responded, “You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it will be granted you; if not, it will not.” <sup>11</sup> As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven. <sup>12</sup> Elisha kept

<sup>a</sup> Gk Syr: Heb lacks *His brother*

<sup>b</sup> Heb *sons of the prophets*

### Read 2 Kings 2:19–25

A contrast is provided between a city (Jericho) that requests Elisha's help to their benefit and another city (Bethel) that jeers at him and is cursed. In the latter case, this may be tied to Jeroboam's use of Bethel as one of his royal shrines (1 Kings 12:26–32).

**Reflect:** Consider how we approach or react to public figures. Do we look to them for assistance and change or do we puff out our pride, lock our minds, and reject what they may have to offer?

**Pray:** Ask for a discerning heart and mind that can recognize God's presence. Pray that we can set aside pride, anger, and foolish behavior.

**Act:** Be open to the opportunities of caring for God's gift of the earth, striving to protect the environment and thereby making its resources available for many generations to come.

### Read 2 Kings 3

Contained within the story of Jehoram's campaign against a rebellious Moab is Elisha's ecstatic prophecy of relief and victory for the allied armies and a depiction of ancient warfare.

**Reflect:** Consider Jehoram's willingness to ask for God's assistance and Elisha's reluctance to help. Reflect on the prophet's recognition of the "good king" of Judah as the basis for his aid.

**Pray:** Ask for a humble spirit and be willing to lay your needs before God without demanding anything.

**Act:** Strive to make peace with those who have injured you rather than resort to violence that may harm others and their property.

watching and crying out, "Father, father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" But when he could no longer see him, he grasped his own clothes and tore them in two pieces.

### Elisha Succeeds Elijah

13 He picked up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. 14 He took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and struck the water, saying, "Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?" When he had struck the water, the water was parted to the one side and to the other, and Elisha went over.

15 When the company of prophets<sup>a</sup> who were at Jericho saw him at a distance, they declared, "The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha." They came to meet him and bowed to the ground before him. 16 They said to him, "See now, we have fifty strong men among your servants; please let them go and seek your master; it may be that the spirit of the LORD has caught him up and thrown him down on some mountain or into some valley." He responded, "No, do not send them." 17 But when they urged him until he was ashamed, he said, "Send them." So they sent fifty men who searched for three days but did not find him. 18 When they came back to him (he had remained at Jericho), he said to them, "Did I not say to you, Do not go?"

### Elisha Performs Miracles

19 Now the people of the city said to Elisha, "The location of this city is good, as my lord sees; but the water is bad, and the land is unfruitful." 20 He said, "Bring me a new bowl, and put salt in it." So they brought it to him. 21 Then he went to the spring of water and threw the salt into it, and said, "Thus says the LORD, I have made this water wholesome; from now on neither death nor miscarriage shall come from it." 22 So the water has been wholesome to this day, according to the word that Elisha spoke.

23 He went up from there to Bethel; and while he was going up on the way, some small boys came out of the city and jeered at him, saying, "Go away, baldhead! Go away, baldhead!" 24 When he turned around and saw them, he cursed them in the name of the LORD. Then two she-bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the boys. 25 From there he went on to Mount Carmel, and then returned to Samaria.

### Jehoram Reigns over Israel

**3** In the eighteenth year of King Jehoshaphat of Judah, Jehoram son of Ahab became king over Israel

<sup>a</sup> Heb sons of the prophets



in Samaria; he reigned twelve years. <sup>2</sup> He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, though not like his father and mother, for he removed the pillar of Baal that his father had made. <sup>3</sup> Nevertheless he clung to the sin of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he caused Israel to commit; he did not depart from it.

### War with Moab

4 Now King Mesha of Moab was a sheep breeder, who used to deliver to the king of Israel one hundred thousand lambs, and the wool of one hundred thousand rams. <sup>5</sup> But when Ahab died, the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel. <sup>6</sup> So King Jehoram marched out of Samaria at that time and mustered all Israel. <sup>7</sup> As he went he sent word to King Jehoshaphat of Judah, "The king of Moab has rebelled against me; will you go with me to battle against Moab?" He answered, "I will; I am with you, my people are your people, my horses are your horses." <sup>8</sup> Then he asked, "By which way shall we march?" Jehoram answered, "By the way of the wilderness of Edom."

9 So the king of Israel, the king of Judah, and the king of Edom set out; and when they had made a roundabout march of seven days, there was no water for the army or for the animals that were with them. <sup>10</sup> Then the king of Israel said, "Alas! The LORD has summoned us, three kings, only to be handed over to Moab." <sup>11</sup> But Jehoshaphat said, "Is there no prophet of the LORD here, through whom we may inquire of the LORD?" Then one of the servants of the king of Israel answered, "Elisha son of Shaphat, who used to pour water on the hands of Elijah, is here." <sup>12</sup> Jehoshaphat said, "The word of the LORD is with him." So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him.

13 Elisha said to the king of Israel, "What have I to do with you? Go to your father's prophets or to your mother's." But the king of Israel said to him, "No; it is the

LORD who has summoned us, three kings, only to be handed over to Moab." <sup>14</sup> Elisha said, "As the LORD of hosts lives, whom I serve, were it not that I have regard for King Jehoshaphat of Judah, I would give you neither a look nor a glance. <sup>15</sup> But get me a musician." And then, while the musician was playing, the power of the LORD came on him. <sup>16</sup> And he said, "Thus says the LORD, 'I will make this wadi full of pools.' <sup>17</sup> For thus says the LORD, 'You shall see neither wind nor rain, but the wadi shall be filled with water, so that you shall drink, you, your cattle, and your animals.' <sup>18</sup> This is only a trifle in the sight of the LORD, for he will also hand Moab over to you. <sup>19</sup> You shall conquer every fortified city and every choice city; every good tree you shall fell, all springs of water you shall stop up, and every good piece of land you shall ruin with stones." <sup>20</sup> The next day, about the time of the morning offering, suddenly water began to flow from the direction of Edom, until the country was filled with water.

21 When all the Moabites heard that the kings had come up to fight against them, all who were able to put on armor, from the youngest to the oldest, were called out and were drawn up at the frontier. <sup>22</sup> When they rose early in the morning, and the sun shone upon the water, the Moabites saw the water opposite them as red as blood. <sup>23</sup> They said, "This is blood; the kings must have fought together, and killed one another. Now then, Moab, to the spoil!" <sup>24</sup> But when they came to the camp of Israel, the Israelites rose up and attacked the Moabites, who fled before them; as they entered Moab they continued the attack.<sup>a</sup> <sup>25</sup> The cities they overturned, and on every good piece of land everyone threw a stone, until it was covered; every spring of water they stopped up, and every good tree they felled. Only at Kir-hareseth did the stone walls remain, until the slingers surrounded and attacked it. <sup>26</sup> When the king of Moab saw that the battle was going against him,

<sup>a</sup> Compare Ck Syr: Meaning of Heb uncertain

## Read 2 Kings 4

In a series of short stories the point is made that those who serve God and rely on or assist the prophet Elisha have chosen the way of life and they will be rewarded. Thus a widow's family is saved from debt slavery, a childless couple receives a son, the poisoned stew of the guild prophets is purified, and a large group is fed from twenty loaves (compare Mt 14:16–21).

**Reflect:** Consider the benefits of the servant role. Each of these people or groups chose to remain faithful to God in a time when many turned away. As a result, when they were in need the Lord came to their aid. Working together makes the task easier and life more enjoyable.

**Pray:** Let us pray for a cooperative spirit and for the strength to overcome our fears and our tendency to complain.

**Act:** Be willing to share your goods, your time, and yourself so that no person is forgotten and the needy are cared for.

he took with him seven hundred swordsmen to break through, opposite the king of Edom; but they could not. <sup>27</sup> Then he took his firstborn son who was to succeed him, and offered him as a burnt offering on the wall. And great wrath came upon Israel, so they withdrew from him and returned to their own land.

## Elisha and the Widow's Oil

**4** Now the wife of a member of the company of prophets<sup>a</sup> cried to Elisha, "Your servant my husband is dead; and you know that your servant feared the LORD, but a creditor has come to take my two children as slaves." <sup>2</sup> Elisha said to her, "What shall I do for you? Tell me, what do you have in the house?" She answered, "Your servant has nothing in the house, except a jar of oil." <sup>3</sup> He said, "Go outside, borrow vessels from all your neighbors, empty vessels and not just a few. <sup>4</sup> Then go in, and shut the door behind you and your children, and start pouring into all these vessels; when each is full, set it aside." <sup>5</sup> So she left him and shut the door behind her and her children; they kept bringing vessels to her, and she kept pouring. <sup>6</sup> When the vessels were full, she said to her son, "Bring me another vessel." But he said to her, "There are no more." Then the oil stopped flowing. <sup>7</sup> She came and told the man of God, and he said, "Go sell the oil and pay your debts, and you and your children can live on the rest."

## Elisha Raises the Shunammite's Son

**8** One day Elisha was passing through Shunem, where a wealthy woman lived, who urged him to have a meal. So whenever he passed that way, he would stop there for a meal. <sup>9</sup> She said to her husband, "Look, I am sure that this man who regularly passes our way is a holy man of God. <sup>10</sup> Let us make a small roof chamber with walls, and put there for him a bed, a table, a chair, and a lamp, so that he can stay there whenever he comes to us."

**11** One day when he came there, he went up to the chamber and lay down there. <sup>12</sup> He said to his servant Gehazi, "Call the Shunammite woman." When he had called her, she stood before him. <sup>13</sup> He said to him, "Say to her, Since you have taken all this trouble for us, what may be done for you? Would you have a word spoken on your behalf to the king or to the commander of the army?" She answered, "I live among my own people." <sup>14</sup> He said, "What then may be done for her?" Gehazi answered, "Well, she has no son, and her husband is old." <sup>15</sup> He said, "Call her." When he had called her, she stood at the door. <sup>16</sup> He said, "At this season, in due time, you shall embrace a son." She replied, "No, my

<sup>a</sup> Heb *the sons of the prophets*

lord, O man of God; do not deceive your servant.”

17 The woman conceived and bore a son at that season, in due time, as Elisha had declared to her.

18 When the child was older, he went out one day to his father among the reapers. <sup>19</sup> He complained to his father, “Oh, my head, my head!” The father said to his servant, “Carry him to his mother.” <sup>20</sup> He carried him and brought him to his mother; the child sat on her lap until noon, and he died. <sup>21</sup> She went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God, closed the door on him, and left. <sup>22</sup> Then she called to her husband, and said, “Send me one of the servants and one of the donkeys, so that I may quickly go to the man of God and come back again.” <sup>23</sup> He said, “Why go to him today? It is neither new moon nor sabbath.” She said, “It will be all right.” <sup>24</sup> Then she saddled the donkey and said to her servant, “Urge the animal on; do not hold back for me unless I tell you.” <sup>25</sup> So she set out, and came to the man of God at Mount Carmel.

When the man of God saw her coming, he said to Gehazi his servant, “Look, there is the Shunammite woman; <sup>26</sup> run at once to meet her, and say to her, Are you all right? Is your husband all right? Is the child all right?” She answered, “It is all right.” <sup>27</sup> When she came to the man of God at the mountain, she caught hold of his feet. Gehazi approached to push her away. But the man of God said, “Let her alone, for she is in bitter distress; the LORD has hidden it from me and has not told me.” <sup>28</sup> Then she said, “Did I ask my lord for a son? Did I not say, Do not mislead me?” <sup>29</sup> He said to Gehazi, “Gird up your loins, and take my staff in your hand, and go. If you meet anyone, give no greeting, and if anyone greets you, do not answer; and lay my staff on the face of the child.” <sup>30</sup> Then the mother of the child said, “As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave without you.”

So he rose up and followed her. <sup>31</sup> Gehazi went on ahead and laid the staff on the face of the child, but there was no sound or sign of life. He came back to meet him and told him, “The child has not awakened.”

<sup>32</sup> When Elisha came into the house, he saw the child lying dead on his bed. <sup>33</sup> So he went in and closed the door on the two of them, and prayed to the LORD. <sup>34</sup> Then he got up on the bed<sup>a</sup> and lay upon the child, putting his mouth upon his mouth, his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands; and while he lay bent over him, the flesh of the child became warm. <sup>35</sup> He got down, walked once to and fro in the room, then got up again and bent over him; the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes. <sup>36</sup> Elisha<sup>b</sup> summoned Gehazi and said, “Call the Shunammite woman.” So he called her. When she came to him, he said, “Take your son.” <sup>37</sup> She came and fell at his feet, bowing to the ground; then she took her son and left.

### Elisha Purifies the Pot of Stew

<sup>38</sup> When Elisha returned to Gilgal, there was a famine in the land. As the company of prophets was<sup>c</sup> sitting before him, he said to his servant, “Put the large pot on, and make some stew for the company of prophets.”<sup>d</sup> <sup>39</sup> One of them went out into the field to gather herbs; he found a wild vine and gathered from it a lapful of wild gourds, and came and cut them up into the pot of stew, not knowing what they were. <sup>40</sup> They served some for the men to eat. But while they were eating the stew, they cried out, “O man of God, there is death in the pot!” They could not eat it. <sup>41</sup> He said, “Then bring some flour.” He threw it into the pot, and said, “Serve the people and let them eat.” And there was nothing harmful in the pot.

### Elisha Feeds One Hundred Men

<sup>42</sup> A man came from Baal-shalishah, bringing food from the first fruits to the man

<sup>a</sup> Heb lacks *on the bed*

<sup>b</sup> Heb *he*

<sup>c</sup> Heb *sons of the prophets were*

<sup>d</sup> Heb *sons of the prophets*

of God: twenty loaves of barley and fresh ears of grain in his sack. Elisha said, “Give it to the people and let them eat.”<sup>43</sup> But his servant said, “How can I set this before a hundred people?” So he repeated, “Give it

to the people and let them eat, for thus says the LORD, ‘They shall eat and have some left.’”<sup>44</sup> He set it before them, they ate, and had some left, according to the word of the LORD.

### Read 2 Kings 5

In a demonstration of God’s concern for all people, the Syrian general Naaman is healed of his leprosy. His ability to trust despite his hurt pride and national loyalties is the deciding factor in his healing. Naaman’s statement of faith contrasts with the avarice of Gehazi.

**Reflect:** Consider the lengths to which Naaman is willing to go to be healed and get his life back. Note how his acknowledgment of God’s power is an example of the theme of universalism.

**Pray:** Pray that, like Naaman, you too may be able to trust despite hurt pride.

**Act:** Endeavor to overcome disabilities so that they will dominate neither our lives nor those of others. Learn to set aside the pride that may stand in the way of a cure or a more fulfilled life.

### The Healing of Naaman

**5** Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man and in high favor with his master, because by him the LORD had given victory to Aram. The man, though a mighty warrior, suffered from leprosy.<sup>a</sup> <sup>2</sup> Now the Arameans on one of their raids had taken a young girl captive from the land of Israel, and she served Naaman’s wife. <sup>3</sup> She said to her mistress, “If only my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy.”<sup>a</sup> <sup>4</sup> So Naaman<sup>b</sup> went in and told his lord just what the girl from the land of Israel had said. <sup>5</sup> And the king of Aram said, “Go then, and I will send along a letter to the king of Israel.”

He went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten sets of garments. <sup>6</sup> He brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, “When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you my servant Naaman, that you may cure him of his leprosy.”<sup>a</sup> <sup>7</sup> When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, “Am I God, to give death or life, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy?<sup>a</sup> Just look and see how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me.”

<sup>8</sup> But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent a message to the king, “Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come to me, that he may learn that there is a prophet in Israel.” <sup>9</sup> So Naaman came with his horses and chariots, and halted at the entrance of Elisha’s house. <sup>10</sup> Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, “Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored and you shall be clean.” <sup>11</sup> But Naaman became angry and went away, saying, “I thought that for me he would surely come out, and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and would wave his hand over the spot, and cure the leprosy!<sup>a</sup> <sup>12</sup> Are not Abana<sup>c</sup> and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them, and be clean?” He turned and went away in a rage. <sup>13</sup> But his servants approached and said to him, “Father, if the prophet had commanded you to do something difficult, would you not have done it? How much more, when all he said to you was, ‘Wash, and be clean?’” <sup>14</sup> So he went down and immersed himself seven times in the Jordan, ac-

<sup>a</sup> A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain

<sup>b</sup> Heb *he*

<sup>c</sup> Another reading is *Amana*

ording to the word of the man of God; his flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy, and he was clean.

15 Then he returned to the man of God, he and all his company; he came and stood before him and said, "Now I know that there is no God in all the earth except in Israel; please accept a present from your servant." 16 But he said, "As the LORD lives, whom I serve, I will accept nothing!" He urged him to accept, but he refused. 17 Then Naaman said, "If not, please let two mule-loads of earth be given to your servant; for your servant will no longer offer burnt offering or sacrifice to any god except the LORD. 18 But may the LORD pardon your servant on one count: when my master goes into the house of Rimmon to worship there, leaning on my arm, and I bow down in the house of Rimmon, when I do bow down in the house of Rimmon, may the LORD pardon your servant on this one count." 19 He said to him, "Go in peace."

### Gehazi's Greed

But when Naaman had gone from him a short distance, 20 Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, thought, "My master has let that Aramean Naaman off too lightly by not accepting from him what he offered. As the LORD lives, I will run after him

and get something out of him." 21 So Gehazi went after Naaman. When Naaman saw someone running after him, he jumped down from the chariot to meet him and said, "Is everything all right?" 22 He replied, "Yes, but my master has sent me to say, 'Two members of a company of prophets<sup>a</sup> have just come to me from the hill country of Ephraim; please give them a talent of silver and two changes of clothing.'" 23 Naaman said, "Please accept two talents." He urged him, and tied up two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of clothing, and gave them to two of his servants, who carried them in front of Gehazi.<sup>b</sup> 24 When he came to the citadel, he took the bags<sup>c</sup> from them, and stored them inside; he dismissed the men, and they left.

25 He went in and stood before his master; and Elisha said to him, "Where have you been, Gehazi?" He answered, "Your servant has not gone anywhere at all." 26 But he said to him, "Did I not go with you in spirit when someone left his chariot to meet you? Is this a time to accept money and to accept clothing, olive orchards and vineyards, sheep and oxen, and male and female slaves? 27 Therefore the leprosy<sup>d</sup> of Naaman shall cling to you, and to your descendants forever." So he left his presence leprous,<sup>d</sup> as white as snow.

### The Miracle of the Ax Head

**6** Now the company of prophets<sup>a</sup> said to Elisha, "As you see, the place where we live under your charge is too small for us. 2 Let us go to the Jordan, and let us collect logs there, one for each of us, and build a place there for us to live." He answered, "Do so." 3 Then one of them said, "Please come with your servants." And he answered, "I will." 4 So he went with them. When they came to the Jordan, they cut down trees. 5 But as one was felling a log, his ax head fell into the water; he cried out, "Alas, master! It was borrowed." 6 Then the man of God said, "Where did it fall?" When he showed him the place, he cut off a stick, and threw it in there, and made the iron float. 7 He said, "Pick it up." So he reached out his hand and took it.

### The Aramean Attack Is Thwarted

8 Once when the king of Aram was at war with Is-

<sup>a</sup> Heb *sons of the prophets*

<sup>b</sup> Heb *him*

<sup>c</sup> Heb lacks *the bags*

<sup>d</sup> A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain

### Read 2 Kings 6:1–23

Two seemingly unrelated stories about Elisha have the same basic ending. The first story describes the loss of a borrowed iron ax head during construction and the second details how Elisha captures a group of Aramean raiders. In both cases what was lost, an ax head and the raiders, is restored and sent back to its owner.

**Reflect:** Consider how quickly we despair or lose focus when faced with crisis. Reflect on the wisdom Elisha provides to his companions and to the king of Israel about having faith and compassion.

**Pray:** Ask for a calm mind that can accept temporary setbacks. Pray for the ability and the wisdom to see the value of granting mercy and being generous with one's enemies.

**Act:** Recognize life's problems and seek solutions that provide encouragement to those dependent on others. Be willing to ask for help and be grateful when you receive it.

rael, he took counsel with his officers. He said, "At such and such a place shall be my camp."<sup>9</sup> But the man of God sent word to the king of Israel, "Take care not to pass this place, because the Arameans are going down there."<sup>10</sup> The king of Israel sent word to the place of which the man of God spoke. More than once or twice he warned such a place<sup>a</sup> so that it was on the alert.

11 The mind of the king of Aram was greatly perturbed because of this; he called his officers and said to them, "Now tell me who among us sides with the king of Israel?"<sup>12</sup> Then one of his officers said, "No one, my lord king. It is Elisha, the prophet in Israel, who tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedchamber."<sup>13</sup> He said, "Go and find where he is; I will send and seize him." He was told, "He is in Dothan."<sup>14</sup> So he sent horses and chariots there and a great army; they came by night, and surrounded the city.

15 When an attendant of the man of God rose early in the morning and went out, an army with horses and chariots was all around the city. His servant said, "Alas, master! What shall we do?"<sup>16</sup> He replied, "Do not be afraid, for there are more with us than there are with them."<sup>17</sup> Then Elisha prayed: "O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see." So the LORD opened the eyes of the servant, and he saw; the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.<sup>18</sup> When the Arameans<sup>b</sup> came down against him, Elisha prayed to the LORD, and said, "Strike this people, please, with blindness." So he struck them with blindness as Elisha had asked.<sup>19</sup> Elisha said to them, "This is not the way, and this is not the city; follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom you seek." And he led them to Samaria.

20 As soon as they entered Samaria, Elisha said, "O LORD, open the eyes of these men so that they may see." The LORD opened their eyes, and they saw that they were inside Samaria.<sup>21</sup> When the king of Israel saw them he said to Elisha, "Father, shall I kill them? Shall I kill them?"<sup>22</sup> He answered, "No! Did you capture with your sword and your bow those whom you want to kill? Set food and water before them so that they may eat and drink; and let them go to their master."<sup>23</sup> So he prepared for them a great feast; after they ate and drank, he sent them on their way, and they went to their master. And the Arameans no longer came raiding into the land of Israel.

### Ben-hadad's Siege of Samaria

24 Some time later King Ben-hadad of Aram mustered his entire army; he marched against Samaria and

<sup>a</sup> Heb *warned it*

<sup>b</sup> Heb *they*



### Read 2 Kings 6:24—7:20

The siege of Samaria by an Aramean army brings great misery to those within the city and drives destitute lepers to seek aid from the enemy camp. Elisha's role is to remind the people and the king that their hope lies with their God.

**Reflect:** Consider both the desperation of the hungry women and the decision of the lepers to go for help to the enemy. Reflect on why Elisha is not consulted until the city is in such a desperate state.

**Pray:** Ask for the patience necessary to wait on God's saving act. Pray for relief from troubles.

**Act:** Seek to discern God's intention in the midst of hard times or war. Seek out solutions that benefit the whole community and don't just simply serve our own purposes.

laid siege to it. <sup>25</sup> As the siege continued, famine in Samaria became so great that a donkey's head was sold for eighty shekels of silver, and one-fourth of a kab of dove's dung for five shekels of silver. <sup>26</sup> Now as the king of Israel was walking on the city wall, a woman cried out to him, "Help, my lord king!" <sup>27</sup> He said, "No! Let the LORD help you. How can I help you? From the threshing floor or from the wine press?" <sup>28</sup> But then the king asked her, "What is your complaint?" She answered, "This woman said to me, 'Give up your son; we will eat him today, and we will eat my son tomorrow.' <sup>29</sup> So we cooked my son and ate him. The next day I said to her, 'Give up your son and we will eat him.' But she has hidden her son." <sup>30</sup> When the king heard the words of the woman he tore his clothes—now since he was walking on the city wall, the people could see that he had sackcloth on his body underneath—<sup>31</sup> and he said, "So may God do to me, and more, if the head of Elisha son of Shaphat stays on his shoulders today." <sup>32</sup> So he dispatched a man from his presence.

Now Elisha was sitting in his house, and the elders were sitting with him. Before the messenger arrived, Elisha said to the elders, "Are you aware that this murderer has sent someone to take off my head? When the messenger comes, see that you shut the door and hold it closed against him. Is not the sound of his master's feet behind him?" <sup>33</sup> While he was still speaking with them, the king<sup>a</sup> came down to him and said, "This trouble is from the LORD! Why should I hope in the LORD any longer?" <sup>1</sup> But Elisha said, "Hear the word of the LORD: thus says the LORD, Tomorrow about this time a measure of choice meal shall be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, at the gate of Samaria." <sup>2</sup> Then the captain on whose hand the king leaned said to the man of God, "Even if the LORD were to make windows in the sky, could such a thing happen?" But he said, "You shall see it with your own eyes, but you shall not eat from it."

### The Arameans Flee

<sup>3</sup> Now there were four leprous<sup>b</sup> men outside the city gate, who said to one another, "Why should we sit here until we die? <sup>4</sup> If we say, 'Let us enter the city,' the famine is in the city, and we shall die there; but if we sit here, we shall also die. Therefore, let us desert to the Aramean camp; if they spare our lives, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die." <sup>5</sup> So they arose at twilight to go to the Aramean camp; but when they came to the edge of the Aramean camp, there was no one there at all. <sup>6</sup> For the Lord had caused the Aramean army to hear the sound of chariots, and of horses, the

<sup>a</sup> See 7.2: Heb *messenger*

<sup>b</sup> A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain

sound of a great army, so that they said to one another, "The king of Israel has hired the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Egypt to fight against us." <sup>7</sup> So they fled away in the twilight and abandoned their tents, their horses, and their donkeys leaving the camp just as it was, and fled for their lives. <sup>8</sup> When these leprous<sup>a</sup> men had come to the edge of the camp, they went into a tent, ate and drank, carried off silver, gold, and clothing, and went and hid them. Then they came back, entered another tent, carried off things from it, and went and hid them.

<sup>9</sup> Then they said to one another, "What we are doing is wrong. This is a day of good news; if we are silent and wait until the morning light, we will be found guilty; therefore let us go and tell the king's household." <sup>10</sup> So they came and called to the gatekeepers of the city, and told them, "We went to the Aramean camp, but there was no one to be seen or heard there, nothing but the horses tied, the donkeys tied, and the tents as they were." <sup>11</sup> Then the gatekeepers called out and proclaimed it to the king's household. <sup>12</sup> The king got up in the night, and said to his servants, "I will tell you what the Arameans have prepared against us. They know that we are starving; so they have left the camp to hide themselves in the open country, thinking, 'When they come out of the city, we shall take them alive and get into the city.'" <sup>13</sup> One of

his servants said, "Let some men take five of the remaining horses, since those left here will suffer the fate of the whole multitude of Israel that have perished already;<sup>b</sup> let us send and find out." <sup>14</sup> So they took two mounted men, and the king sent them after the Aramean army, saying, "Go and find out." <sup>15</sup> So they went after them as far as the Jordan; the whole way was littered with garments and equipment that the Arameans had thrown away in their haste. So the messengers returned, and told the king.

<sup>16</sup> Then the people went out, and plundered the camp of the Arameans. So a measure of choice meal was sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the LORD. <sup>17</sup> Now the king had appointed the captain on whose hand he leaned to have charge of the gate; the people trampled him to death in the gate, just as the man of God had said when the king came down to him. <sup>18</sup> For when the man of God had said to the king, "Two measures of barley shall be sold for a shekel, and a measure of choice meal for a shekel, about this time tomorrow in the gate of Samaria," <sup>19</sup> the captain had answered the man of God, "Even if the LORD were to make windows in the sky, could such a thing happen?" And he had answered, "You shall see it with your own eyes, but you shall not eat from it." <sup>20</sup> It did indeed happen to him; the people trampled him to death in the gate.

### The Shunammite Woman's Land Restored

**8** Now Elisha had said to the woman whose son he had restored to life, "Get up and go with your household, and settle wherever you can; for the LORD has called for a famine, and it will come on the land for seven years." <sup>2</sup> So the woman got up and did according to the word of the man of God; she went with her household and settled in the land of the Philistines seven years. <sup>3</sup> At the end of the seven years, when the woman returned from the land of the Philistines, she set out to appeal to the king for her house and her land. <sup>4</sup> Now the king was talking with Gehazi the servant of the man of God, saying, "Tell me all the great things that Elisha has done." <sup>5</sup> While he was telling the king how Elisha had restored a dead person to life, the woman whose

<sup>a</sup> A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain

<sup>b</sup> Compare Gk Syr Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain

### Read 2 Kings 8:1–6

The Shunammite woman and her son return to Israel after a seven-year absence due to a famine. Her land and produce are restored to her by the king, who is impressed with Elisha's restoring the son to life (see 2 Kings 4:18–37).

**Reflect:** Consider the recurring use of famine as a narrative theme (see Gen 12:10; Ruth 1:1). Reflect on how God preserves and restores to a normal life those who obey divine commands.

**Pray:** Ask for the ability to be open to God's call to action. Pray for the strength to stand up to authority to claim your rights.

**Act:** Be flexible in the face of potential disaster. Learn to survive amidst confusion and to rebuild when the opportunity arises.

### Read 2 Kings 8:7–15

This is one of four tales in 1 and 2 Kings about dying monarchs (1 Kings 14; 2 Kings 1; 8; 20). In each, the king sends a messenger to a prophet asking if he will recover from injury or illness and in each the prophet predicts the death of the king. In this instance, Hazael will benefit from the murder of King Ben-hadad (see 1 Kings 19:15).

**Reflect:** Consider the personal suffering experienced by Elisha over his prediction, when he knows Hazael will cause great suffering in Israel.

**Pray:** Pray for the ability to meet the challenge of making difficult decisions.

**Act:** Recognize the personal cost of being a public figure. Stand up to the difficult choices in life.

son he had restored to life appealed to the king for her house and her land. Gehazi said, "My lord king, here is the woman, and here is her son whom Elisha restored to life."<sup>6</sup> When the king questioned the woman, she told him. So the king appointed an official for her, saying, "Restore all that was hers, together with all the revenue of the fields from the day that she left the land until now."

### Death of Ben-hadad

7 Elisha went to Damascus while King Ben-hadad of Aram was ill. When it was told him, "The man of God has come here,"<sup>8</sup> the king said to Hazael, "Take a present with you and go to meet the man of God. Inquire of the LORD through him, whether I shall recover from this illness."<sup>9</sup> So Hazael went to meet him, taking a present with him, all kinds of goods of Damascus, forty camel loads. When he entered and stood before him, he said, "Your son King Ben-hadad of Aram has sent me to you, saying, 'Shall I recover from this illness?'"<sup>10</sup> Elisha said to him, "Go, say to him, 'You shall certainly recover'; but the LORD has shown me that he shall certainly die."<sup>11</sup> He fixed his gaze and stared at him, until he was ashamed. Then the man of God wept.<sup>12</sup> Hazael asked, "Why does my lord weep?" He answered, "Because I know the evil that you will do to the people of Israel; you will set their fortresses on fire, you will kill their young men with the sword, dash in pieces their little ones, and rip up their pregnant women."<sup>13</sup> Hazael said, "What is your servant, who is a mere dog, that he should do this great thing?" Elisha answered, "The LORD has shown me that you are to be king over Aram."<sup>14</sup> Then he left Elisha, and went to his master Ben-hadad,<sup>a</sup> who said to him, "What did Elisha say to you?" And he answered, "He told me that you would certainly recover."<sup>15</sup> But the next day he took the bed-cover and dipped it in water and spread it over the king's face, until he died. And Hazael succeeded him.

### Jehoram Reigns over Judah

16 In the fifth year of King Joram son of Ahab of Israel,<sup>b</sup> Jehoram son of King Jehoshaphat of Judah began to reign.<sup>17</sup> He was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem.<sup>18</sup> He walked in the way of the kings of Israel, as the house of Ahab had done, for the daughter of Ahab was his wife. He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD.<sup>19</sup> Yet the LORD would not destroy Judah, for the sake of his servant David, since he had promised to give a lamp to him and to his descendants forever.

20 In his days Edom revolted against the rule of Ju-

<sup>a</sup> Heb lacks *Ben-hadad*

<sup>b</sup> Gk Syr: Heb adds *Jehoshaphat being king of Judah*,

### Read 2 Kings 8:16–29

In this passage the problems of the kings of Judah and Israel are described (the loss of a rebellious Edom and failure to defeat Hazael of Aram). Their failures are based on their connection to the House of Ahab and their continuation of his unfaithful policies.

**Reflect:** Consider how the compiler of these royal annals consistently blames the kings' failures on the fact that they "walked in the way of the kings of Israel" = the sin of Jeroboam (see 1 Kings 12:25–33).

**Pray:** Pray for our leaders, that they may be able to follow a wise course of action.

**Act:** Resolve to work for the betterment of our community and encourage our leaders to uphold the law and be good role models.

### Read 2 Kings 9:1–29

At Elisha's instruction (see 1 Kings 19:16), a guild prophet anoints Jehu as king of Israel and gives him the divine command to destroy the house of Ahab. With the backing of his own troops, Jehu uses this opportunity to kill Joram, king of Israel, and Ahaziah, king of Judah.

**Reflect:** Consider how the text ties up narrative threads, with Joram's body being left unburied on Naboth's field, fulfilling Elijah's curse against the house of Ahab (see 1 Kings 21:17–26).

**Pray:** Pray for justice and peace. Ask for an end to the chaos of war and civil unrest.

**Act:** Avoid opportunism, but do accept the challenge of working to bring about a just society.

dah, and set up a king of their own.<sup>21</sup> Then Joram crossed over to Zair with all his chariots. He set out by night and attacked the Edomites and their chariot commanders who had surrounded him;<sup>a</sup> but his army fled home.<sup>22</sup> So Edom has been in revolt against the rule of Judah to this day. Libnah also revolted at the same time.<sup>23</sup> Now the rest of the acts of Joram, and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah?<sup>24</sup> So Joram slept with his ancestors, and was buried with them in the city of David; his son Ahaziah succeeded him.

### Ahaziah Reigns over Judah

25 In the twelfth year of King Joram son of Ahab of Israel, Ahaziah son of King Jehoram of Judah began to reign.<sup>26</sup> Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he began to reign; he reigned one year in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Athaliah, a granddaughter of King Omri of Israel.<sup>27</sup> He also walked in the way of the house of Ahab, doing what was evil in the sight of the LORD, as the house of Ahab had done, for he was son-in-law to the house of Ahab.

28 He went with Joram son of Ahab to wage war against King Hazael of Aram at Ramoth-gilead, where the Arameans wounded Joram.<sup>29</sup> King Joram returned to be healed in Jezreel of the wounds that the Arameans had inflicted on him at Ramah, when he fought against King Hazael of Aram. King Ahaziah son of Jehoram of Judah went down to see Joram son of Ahab in Jezreel, because he was wounded.

### Anointing of Jehu

**9** Then the prophet Elisha called a member of the company of prophets<sup>b</sup> and said to him, "Gird up your loins; take this flask of oil in your hand, and go to Ramoth-gilead.<sup>2</sup> When you arrive, look there for Jehu son of Jehoshaphat, son of Nimshi; go in and get him to leave his companions, and take him into an inner chamber.<sup>3</sup> Then take the flask of oil, pour it on his head, and say, 'Thus says the LORD: I anoint you king over Israel.' Then open the door and flee; do not linger."

4 So the young man, the young prophet, went to Ramoth-gilead.<sup>5</sup> He arrived while the commanders of the army were in council, and he announced, "I have a message for you, commander." "For which one of us?" asked Jehu. "For you, commander."<sup>6</sup> So Jehu<sup>c</sup> got up and went inside; the young man poured the oil on his head, saying to him, "Thus says the LORD the God of Israel: I anoint you king over the people of the LORD, over Israel.<sup>7</sup> You shall strike down the house of your master

<sup>a</sup> Meaning of Heb uncertain

<sup>b</sup> Heb *sons of the prophets*

<sup>c</sup> Heb *he*

Ahab, so that I may avenge on Jezebel the blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the LORD. <sup>8</sup> For the whole house of Ahab shall perish; I will cut off from Ahab every male, bond or free, in Israel. <sup>9</sup> I will make the house of Ahab like the house of Jeroboam son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha son of Ahijah. <sup>10</sup> The dogs shall eat Jezebel in the territory of Jezreel, and no one shall bury her." Then he opened the door and fled.

11 When Jehu came back to his master's officers, they said to him, "Is everything all right? Why did that madman come to you?" He answered them, "You know the sort and how they babble." <sup>12</sup> They said, "Liar! Come on, tell us!" So he said, "This is just what he said to me: 'Thus says the LORD, I anoint you king over Israel.'" <sup>13</sup> Then hurriedly they all took their cloaks and spread them for him on the bare<sup>a</sup> steps; and they blew the trumpet, and proclaimed, "Jehu is king."

### Joram of Israel Killed

14 Thus Jehu son of Jehoshaphat son of Nimshi conspired against Joram. Joram with all Israel had been on guard at Ramoth-gilead against King Hazael of Aram; <sup>15</sup> but King Joram had returned to be healed in Jezreel of the wounds that the Arameans had inflicted on him, when he fought against King Hazael of Aram. So Jehu said, "If this is your wish, then let no one slip out of the city to go and tell the news in Jezreel." <sup>16</sup> Then Jehu mounted his chariot and went to Jezreel, where Joram was lying ill. King Ahaziah of Judah had come down to visit Joram.

17 In Jezreel, the sentinel standing on the tower spied the company of Jehu arriving, and said, "I see a company." Joram said, "Take a horseman; send him to meet them, and let him say, 'Is it peace?'" <sup>18</sup> So the horseman went to meet him; he said, "Thus says the king, 'Is it peace?'" Jehu responded, "What have you to do with

peace? Fall in behind me." The sentinel reported, saying, "The messenger reached them, but he is not coming back." <sup>19</sup> Then he sent out a second horseman, who came to them and said, 'Thus says the king, 'Is it peace?'" Jehu answered, "What have you to do with peace? Fall in behind me." <sup>20</sup> Again the sentinel reported, "He reached them, but he is not coming back. It looks like the driving of Jehu son of Nimshi; for he drives like a maniac."

21 Joram said, "Get ready." And they got his chariot ready. Then King Joram of Israel and King Ahaziah of Judah set out, each in his chariot, and went to meet Jehu; they met him at the property of Naboth the Jezreelite. <sup>22</sup> When Joram saw Jehu, he said, "Is it peace, Jehu?" He answered, "What peace can there be, so long as the many whoredoms and sorceries of your mother Jezebel continue?" <sup>23</sup> Then Joram reined about and fled, saying to Ahaziah, "Treason, Ahaziah!" <sup>24</sup> Jehu drew his bow with all his strength, and shot Joram between the shoulders, so that the arrow pierced his heart; and he sank in his chariot. <sup>25</sup> Jehu said to his aide Bidkar, "Lift him out, and throw him on the plot of ground belonging to Naboth the Jezreelite; for remember, when you and I rode side by side behind his father Ahab how the LORD uttered this oracle against him: <sup>26</sup> 'For the blood of Naboth and for the blood of his children that I saw yesterday, says the LORD, I swear I will repay you on this very plot of ground.' Now therefore lift him out and throw him on the plot of ground, in accordance with the word of the LORD."

### Ahaziah of Judah Killed

27 When King Ahaziah of Judah saw this, he fled in the direction of Beth-haggan. Jehu pursued him, saying, "Shoot him also!" And they shot him<sup>b</sup> in the chariot at the ascent to Gur, which is by Ibleam. Then he fled to Megiddo, and died there. <sup>28</sup> His officers carried him in a chariot to Jerusa-

<sup>a</sup> Meaning of Heb uncertain

<sup>b</sup> Syr Vg Compare Gk: Heb lacks *and they shot him*



### Read 2 Kings 9:30–37

Jehu's coup is completed when he marches on Jezreel and eliminates Jezebel as a political threat. Her charge of treason is deflected and Elijah's curse is enacted (see 1 Kings 21:23 and 2 Kings 9:7–10).

**Reflect:** Consider how labels (Jezebel calling Jehu a “Zimri” = traitor) can be potent weapons and how they can be deflected.

**Pray:** Pray for courage in troubled times. Ask for humility and the ability to reason with others.

**Act:** Let us set aside pride and learn to recognize our own failings so that we can work for a better world.

### Read 2 Kings 10

Following up his victory over Ahab's son, Jehu demands the capitulation of the leaders of Samaria. What results is a general purge of Ahab's family and his supporters in fulfillment of Elijah's prophecy (1 Kings 21:21–24). Jehu also uses a ruse to gather all the worshipers of Baal and then has them all killed and the Baal temple desecrated.

**Reflect:** Consider how a change of regime often results in a purge of the supporters of the previous ruler. Reflect on Jehu's extreme tactics and the realization that the final days of Israel are coming as the territories in Transjordan fall to Hazael of Aram (vv. 32–33).

**Pray:** Ask for the ability to weather the storm of human ambitions and to see the way to peace.

**Act:** Let us learn to place our confidence and allegiance in following God's pattern for our lives. Let us work to create a just and caring world.

lem, and buried him in his tomb with his ancestors in the city of David.

29 In the eleventh year of Joram son of Ahab, Ahaziah began to reign over Judah.

### Jezebel's Violent Death

30 When Jehu came to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it; she painted her eyes, and adorned her head, and looked out of the window. <sup>31</sup> As Jehu entered the gate, she said, “Is it peace, Zimri, murderer of your master?” <sup>32</sup> He looked up to the window and said, “Who is on my side? Who?” Two or three eunuchs looked out at him. <sup>33</sup> He said, “Throw her down.” So they threw her down; some of her blood splattered on the wall and on the horses, which trampled on her. <sup>34</sup> Then he went in and ate and drank; he said, “See to that cursed woman and bury her; for she is a king's daughter.” <sup>35</sup> But when they went to bury her, they found no more of her than the skull and the feet and the palms of her hands. <sup>36</sup> When they came back and told him, he said, “This is the word of the LORD, which he spoke by his servant Elijah the Tishbite, ‘In the territory of Jezreel the dogs shall eat the flesh of Jezebel; <sup>37</sup> the corpse of Jezebel shall be like dung on the field in the territory of Jezreel, so that no one can say, This is Jezebel.’”

### Massacre of Ahab's Descendants

**10** Now Ahab had seventy sons in Samaria. So Jehu wrote letters and sent them to Samaria, to the rulers of Jezreel,<sup>a</sup> to the elders, and to the guardians of the sons of<sup>b</sup> Ahab, saying, <sup>2</sup> “Since your master's sons are with you and you have at your disposal chariots and horses, a fortified city, and weapons, <sup>3</sup> select the son of your master who is the best qualified, set him on his father's throne, and fight for your master's house.” <sup>4</sup> But they were utterly terrified and said, “Look, two kings could not withstand him; how then can we stand?” <sup>5</sup> So the steward of the palace, and the governor of the city, along with the elders and the guardians, sent word to Jehu: “We are your servants; we will do anything you say. We will not make anyone king; do whatever you think right.” <sup>6</sup> Then he wrote them a second letter, saying, “If you are on my side, and if you are ready to obey me, take the heads of your master's sons and come to me at Jezreel tomorrow at this time.” Now the king's sons, seventy persons, were with the leaders of the city, who were charged with their upbringing. <sup>7</sup> When the letter reached them, they took the king's sons and killed them, seventy persons; they put their heads in baskets and sent them to him at Jezreel. <sup>8</sup> When the messenger came and told him, “They have

<sup>a</sup> Or of the city; Vg Compare Gk

<sup>b</sup> Gk: Heb lacks of the sons of



brought the heads of the king's sons," he said, "Lay them in two heaps at the entrance of the gate until the morning." <sup>9</sup> Then in the morning when he went out, he stood and said to all the people, "You are innocent. It was I who conspired against my master and killed him; but who struck down all these? <sup>10</sup> Know then that there shall fall to the earth nothing of the word of the LORD, which the LORD spoke concerning the house of Ahab; for the LORD has done what he said through his servant Elijah." <sup>11</sup> So Jehu killed all who were left of the house of Ahab in Jezreel, all his leaders, close friends, and priests, until he left him no survivor.

<sup>12</sup> Then he set out and went to Samaria. On the way, when he was at Beth-eked of the Shepherds, <sup>13</sup> Jehu met relatives of King Ahaziah of Judah and said, "Who are you?" They answered, "We are kin of Ahaziah; we have come down to visit the royal princes and the sons of the queen mother." <sup>14</sup> He said, "Take them alive." They took them alive, and slaughtered them at the pit of Beth-eked, forty-two in all; he spared none of them.

<sup>15</sup> When he left there, he met Jehonadab son of Rechab coming to meet him; he greeted him, and said to him, "Is your heart as true to mine as mine is to yours?"<sup>a</sup> Jehonadab answered, "It is." Jehu said,<sup>b</sup> "If it is, give me your hand." So he gave him his hand. Jehu took him up with him into the chariot. <sup>16</sup> He said, "Come with me, and see my zeal for the LORD." So he<sup>c</sup> had him ride in his chariot. <sup>17</sup> When he came to Samaria, he killed all who were left to Ahab in Samaria, until he had wiped them out, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke to Elijah.

### Slaughter of Worshipers of Baal

<sup>18</sup> Then Jehu assembled all the people and said to them, "Ahab offered Baal small service; but Jehu will offer much more.

<sup>19</sup> Now therefore summon to me all the prophets of Baal, all his worshipers, and all his priests; let none be missing, for I have a great sacrifice to offer to Baal; whoever is missing shall not live." But Jehu was acting with cunning in order to destroy the worshipers of Baal. <sup>20</sup> Jehu decreed, "Sanctify a solemn assembly for Baal." So they proclaimed it. <sup>21</sup> Jehu sent word throughout all Israel; all the worshipers of Baal came, so that there was no one left who did not come. They entered the temple of Baal, until the temple of Baal was filled from wall to wall. <sup>22</sup> He said to the keeper of the wardrobe, "Bring out the vestments for all the worshipers of Baal." So he brought out the vestments for them. <sup>23</sup> Then Jehu entered the temple of Baal with Jehonadab son of Rechab; he said to the worshipers of Baal, "Search and see that there is no worshiper of the LORD here among you, but only worshipers of Baal." <sup>24</sup> Then they proceeded to offer sacrifices and burnt offerings.

Now Jehu had stationed eighty men outside, saying, "Whoever allows any of those to escape whom I deliver into your hands shall forfeit his life." <sup>25</sup> As soon as he had finished presenting the burnt offering, Jehu said to the guards and to the officers, "Come in and kill them; let no one escape." So they put them to the sword. The guards and the officers threw them out, and then went into the citadel of the temple of Baal. <sup>26</sup> They brought out the pillar<sup>d</sup> that was in the temple of Baal, and burned it. <sup>27</sup> Then they demolished the pillar of Baal, and destroyed the temple of Baal, and made it a latrine to this day.

<sup>28</sup> Thus Jehu wiped out Baal from Israel. <sup>29</sup> But Jehu did not turn aside from the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he caused Israel to commit—the golden calves that were in Bethel and in Dan. <sup>30</sup> The LORD said to Jehu, "Because you have done well in carrying out what I consider right, and in accordance with all that

<sup>a</sup> Gk: Heb *Is it right with your heart, as my heart is with your heart?*

<sup>b</sup> Gk: Heb lacks *Jehu said*

<sup>c</sup> Gk Syr Tg: Heb *they*

<sup>d</sup> Gk Vg Syr Tg: Heb *pillars*

was in my heart have dealt with the house of Ahab, your sons of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel.”<sup>31</sup> But Jehu was not careful to follow the law of the LORD the God of Israel with all his heart; he did not turn from the sins of Jeroboam, which he caused Israel to commit.

### Death of Jehu

32 In those days the LORD began to trim off parts of Israel. Hazael defeated them throughout the territory of Israel:<sup>33</sup> from

the Jordan eastward, all the land of Gilead, the Gadites, the Reubenites, and the Manassites, from Aroer, which is by the Wadi Arnon, that is, Gilead and Bashan.<sup>34</sup> Now the rest of the acts of Jehu, all that he did, and all his power, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel?<sup>35</sup> So Jehu slept with his ancestors, and they buried him in Samaria. His son Jehohaz succeeded him.<sup>36</sup> The time that Jehu reigned over Israel in Samaria was twenty-eight years.

### Read 2 Kings 11

Athaliah, mother of King Ahaziah and the last representative of the house of Ahab, usurps the throne of Judah and murders most of the royal heirs. One child, Joash, is hidden during her six-year reign. When the priest Jehoiada anoints Joash king, Athaliah is executed, the temple of Baal is destroyed, and the people renew their allegiance to the Davidic line.

**Reflect:** Consider how the biblical editors tie together the threads of the story about the destruction of the house of Ahab.

**Pray:** Pray for God’s blessing on those who are willing to endanger themselves to preserve the lives of the innocent.

**Act:** Resist the temptation to accept corruption and high-level usurpation of power. Exercise your voice in the cause of justice.

### Athaliah Reigns over Judah

**11** Now when Athaliah, Ahaziah’s mother, saw that her son was dead, she set about to destroy all the royal family.<sup>2</sup> But Jehosheba, King Joram’s daughter, Ahaziah’s sister, took Joash son of Ahaziah, and stole him away from among the king’s children who were about to be killed; she put<sup>a</sup> him and his nurse in a bedroom. Thus she<sup>b</sup> hid him from Athaliah, so that he was not killed;<sup>3</sup> he remained with her six years, hidden in the house of the LORD, while Athaliah reigned over the land.

### Jehoiada Anoints the Child Joash

4 But in the seventh year Jehoiada summoned the captains of the Carites and of the guards and had them come to him in the house of the LORD. He made a covenant with them and put them under oath in the house of the LORD; then he showed them the king’s son.<sup>5</sup> He commanded them, “This is what you are to do: one-third of you, those who go off duty on the sabbath and guard the king’s house<sup>6</sup> (another third being at the gate Sur and a third at the gate behind the guards), shall guard the palace;<sup>7</sup> and your two divisions that come on duty in force on the sabbath and guard the house of the LORD<sup>c</sup> shall surround the king, each with weapons in hand; and whoever approaches the ranks is to be killed. Be with the king in his comings and goings.”

9 The captains did according to all that the priest Jehoiada commanded; each brought his men who were to go off duty on the sabbath, with those who were to come on duty on the sabbath, and came to the priest Jehoiada.<sup>10</sup> The priest delivered to the captains the spears and shields that had been King David’s, which were in the house of the LORD;<sup>11</sup> the guards stood, every man with his weapons in his hand, from the south side of the house to the north side of the house,

<sup>a</sup> With 2 Chr 22.11: Heb lacks *she put*

<sup>b</sup> Gk Syr Vg Compare 2 Chr 22.11: Heb *they*

<sup>c</sup> Heb *the LORD to the king*

around the altar and the house, to guard the king on every side. <sup>12</sup> Then he brought out the king's son, put the crown on him, and gave him the covenant;<sup>a</sup> they proclaimed him king, and anointed him; they clapped their hands and shouted, "Long live the king!"

### Death of Athaliah

<sup>13</sup> When Athaliah heard the noise of the guard and of the people, she went into the house of the LORD to the people; <sup>14</sup> when she looked, there was the king standing by the pillar, according to custom, with the captains and the trumpeters beside the king, and all the people of the land rejoicing and blowing trumpets. Athaliah tore her clothes and cried, "Treason! Treason!" <sup>15</sup> Then the priest Jehoiada commanded the captains who were set over the army, "Bring her out between the ranks, and kill with the sword anyone who follows her." For the priest said, "Let her not be killed in the house of the LORD." <sup>16</sup> So they laid

hands on her; she went through the horses' entrance to the king's house, and there she was put to death.

<sup>17</sup> Jehoiada made a covenant between the LORD and the king and people, that they should be the LORD's people; also between the king and the people. <sup>18</sup> Then all the people of the land went to the house of Baal, and tore it down; his altars and his images they broke in pieces, and they killed Mattan, the priest of Baal, before the altars. The priest posted guards over the house of the LORD. <sup>19</sup> He took the captains, the Carites, the guards, and all the people of the land; then they brought the king down from the house of the LORD, marching through the gate of the guards to the king's house. He took his seat on the throne of the kings. <sup>20</sup> So all the people of the land rejoiced; and the city was quiet after Athaliah had been killed with the sword at the king's house.

<sup>21</sup><sup>b</sup> Jehoash<sup>c</sup> was seven years old when he began to reign.

### The Temple Repaired

**12** In the seventh year of Jehu, Jehoash began to reign; he reigned forty years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Zibiah of Beer-sheba. <sup>2</sup> Jehoash did what was right in the sight of the LORD all his days, because the priest Jehoiada instructed him. <sup>3</sup> Nevertheless the high places were not taken away; the people continued to sacrifice and make offerings on the high places.

<sup>4</sup> Jehoash said to the priests, "All the money offered as sacred donations that is brought into the house of the LORD, the money for which each person is assessed—the money from the assessment of persons—and the money from the voluntary offerings brought into the house of the LORD, <sup>5</sup> let the priests receive from each of the donors; and let them repair the house wherever any need of repairs is discovered." <sup>6</sup> But by the twenty-third year of King Jehoash the priests had made no repairs on the house. <sup>7</sup> Therefore King Jehoash summoned the priest Jehoiada with the other priests and said to them, "Why are you not repairing the house? Now therefore do not accept any more money from your donors but hand it over for the repair of the house." <sup>8</sup> So the priests agreed that they would neither accept more money from the people nor repair the house.

<sup>a</sup> Or *treaty* or *testimony*; Heb *eduth*

<sup>b</sup> Ch 12.1 in Heb

<sup>c</sup> Another spelling is *Joash*; see verse 19

## Read 2 Kings 12

The note on Joash's reign is dominated by an account of raising necessary funds to make repairs on the temple. Continued conflict with Hazael of Aram results in having to pay tribute to prevent an attack on Jerusalem. Joash's rule ends with his assassination and the accession of his son, Amaziah.

**Reflect:** Consider the difficulties that arise during capital campaigns and the renovation of churches.

**Pray:** Pray for the conscientious efforts of workers, fund raisers, and clergy to ensure that worship space continues to serve its purpose for the benefit of all.

**Act:** Serve the community with honesty and integrity. Look for ways to increase efficiency and ensure that funds are used for their allotted purpose.

9 Then the priest Jehoiada took a chest, made a hole in its lid, and set it beside the altar on the right side as one entered the house of the LORD; the priests who guarded the threshold put in it all the money that was brought into the house of the LORD. <sup>10</sup> Whenever they saw that there was a great deal of money in the chest, the king's secretary and the high priest went up, counted the money that was found in the house of the LORD, and tied it up in bags. <sup>11</sup> They would give the money that was weighed out into the hands of the workers who had the oversight of the house of the LORD; then they paid it out to the carpenters and the builders who worked on the house of the LORD, <sup>12</sup> to the masons and the stonecutters, as well as to buy timber and quarried stone for making repairs on the house of the LORD, as well as for any outlay for repairs of the house. <sup>13</sup> But for the house of the LORD no basins of silver, snuffers, bowls, trumpets, or any vessels of gold, or of silver, were made from the money that was brought into the house of the LORD, <sup>14</sup> for that was given to the workers who were repairing the house of the LORD with it. <sup>15</sup> They did not ask an accounting from those into whose hand they delivered the money to pay out to the workers, for they dealt honestly. <sup>16</sup> The money from the guilt offerings and the money from the sin offerings was not brought into the house of the LORD; it belonged to the priests.

## Hazael Threatens Jerusalem

17 At that time King Hazael of Aram went up, fought against Gath, and took it. But when Hazael set his face to go up against Jerusalem, <sup>18</sup> King Jehoash of Judah took all the votive gifts that Jehoshaphat, Jehoram, and Ahaziah, his ancestors, the kings of Judah, had dedicated, as well as his own votive gifts, all the gold that was found in the treasuries of the house of the LORD and of the king's house, and sent these to King Hazael of Aram. Then Hazael withdrew from Jerusalem.

## Death of Joash

19 Now the rest of the acts of Joash, and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah? <sup>20</sup> His servants arose, devised a conspiracy, and killed Joash in the house of Millo, on the way that goes down to Silla. <sup>21</sup> It was Jozacar son of Shimeath and Jehozabad son of Shomer, his servants, who struck him down, so that he died. He was buried with his ancestors in the city of David; then his son Amaziah succeeded him.

### Read 2 Kings 13

Jehu's successors on the throne of Israel fail to put aside the sins of Jeroboam (see 1 Kings 12:25–33) and God allows the Syrians to oppress them. Temporary relief comes when Joash seeks out Elisha and God grants three victories over Aram.

**Reflect:** Consider the cycle, also found in the book of Judges, in which the Israelites sin, God allows them to be oppressed, and, when they ask for God's help, temporary relief comes until they sin once again. Reflect on the power of Elisha's remains to restore a dead man to life.

**Pray:** Pray for the willingness to ask for God's aid in times of distress and to show true contrition for your sins.

**Act:** Let us recognize our failings and seek to obey God's will in our lives. Let us place greater faith in God's power.

### Jehoahaz Reigns over Israel

**13** In the twenty-third year of King Joash son of Ahaziah of Judah, Jehoahaz son of Jehu began to reign over Israel in Samaria; he reigned seventeen years. <sup>2</sup> He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and followed the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he caused Israel to sin; he did not depart from them. <sup>3</sup> The anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, so that he gave them repeatedly into the hand of King Hazael of Aram, then into the hand of Ben-hadad son of Hazael. <sup>4</sup> But Jehoahaz entreated the LORD, and the LORD heeded him; for he saw the oppression of Israel, how the king of Aram oppressed them. <sup>5</sup> Therefore the LORD gave Israel a savior, so that they escaped from the hand of the Arameans; and the people of Israel lived in their homes as formerly. <sup>6</sup> Nevertheless they did not depart from the sins of the house of Jeroboam, which he caused Israel to sin, but walked<sup>a</sup> in them; the sacred pole<sup>b</sup> also remained in Samaria. <sup>7</sup> So Jehoahaz was left with an army of not more than fifty horsemen, ten chariots and ten thousand footmen; for the king of Aram had destroyed them and made them like the dust at threshing. <sup>8</sup> Now the rest of the acts of Jehoahaz and all that he did, including his might, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel? <sup>9</sup> So Jehoahaz slept with his ancestors, and they buried him in Samaria; then his son Joash succeeded him.

### Jehoash Reigns over Israel

**10** In the thirty-seventh year of King Joash of Judah, Jehoash son of Jehoahaz began to reign over Israel in Samaria; he reigned sixteen years. <sup>11</sup> He also did what was evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he caused Israel to sin, but he walked in them. <sup>12</sup> Now the rest of the acts of Joash, and all that he did, as well as the might with which he fought against King Amaziah of Judah, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel? <sup>13</sup> So Joash slept with his ancestors, and Jeroboam sat upon his throne; Joash was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel.

### Death of Elisha

**14** Now when Elisha had fallen sick with the illness of which he was to die, King Joash of Israel went down to him, and wept before him, crying, "My father, my father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" <sup>15</sup> Elisha said to him, "Take a bow and arrows"; so he took a bow and arrows. <sup>16</sup> Then he said to the king of Israel, "Draw the bow"; and he drew it. Elisha laid his hands on the king's hands. <sup>17</sup> Then he said, "Open the window east-

<sup>a</sup> Gk Syr Tg Vg: Heb *he walked*

<sup>b</sup> Heb *Asherah*

ward”; and he opened it. Elisha said, “Shoot”; and he shot. Then he said, “The LORD’s arrow of victory, the arrow of victory over Aram! For you shall fight the Arameans in Aphek until you have made an end of them.” <sup>18</sup> He continued, “Take the arrows”; and he took them. He said to the king of Israel, “Strike the ground with them”; he struck three times, and stopped. <sup>19</sup> Then the man of God was angry with him, and said, “You should have struck five or six times; then you would have struck down Aram until you had made an end of it, but now you will strike down Aram only three times.”

<sup>20</sup> So Elisha died, and they buried him. Now bands of Moabites used to invade the land in the spring of the year. <sup>21</sup> As a man was being buried, a marauding band was seen and the man was thrown into the

grave of Elisha; as soon as the man touched the bones of Elisha, he came to life and stood on his feet.

### Israel Recaptures Cities from Aram

<sup>22</sup> Now King Hazael of Aram oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz. <sup>23</sup> But the LORD was gracious to them and had compassion on them; he turned toward them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them; nor has he banished them from his presence until now.

<sup>24</sup> When King Hazael of Aram died, his son Ben-hadad succeeded him. <sup>25</sup> Then Jehoash son of Jehoahaz took again from Ben-hadad son of Hazael the towns that he had taken from his father Jehoahaz in war. Three times Joash defeated him and recovered the towns of Israel.

### Read 2 Kings 14

As the annals of the kings of Israel and Judah continue, it is made clear that Israel, under Jehoash and Jeroboam II, is the dominant state, defeating Judah in battle at Bethshemesh, extracting huge tribute, and restoring control over the Transjordanian territories.

**Reflect:** Consider how ambition can seduce a leader to overstep his bounds and bring disaster on his people.

**Pray:** Pray for the wisdom not to convict children for the sins of their parents. Ask for the strength to set aside personal desires and to seek to do God’s will.

**Act:** Learn to evaluate situations rationally and not allow false hopes or easy victories to cloud good judgment when addressing bigger challenges.

### Amaziah Reigns over Judah

**14** In the second year of King Joash son of Joahaz of Israel, King Amaziah son of Joash of Judah, began to reign. <sup>2</sup> He was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother’s name was Jehoaddin of Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup> He did what was right in the sight of the LORD, yet not like his ancestor David; in all things he did as his father Joash had done. <sup>4</sup> But the high places were not removed; the people still sacrificed and made offerings on the high places. <sup>5</sup> As soon as the royal power was firmly in his hand he killed his servants who had murdered his father the king. <sup>6</sup> But he did not put to death the children of the murderers; according to what is written in the book of the law of Moses, where the LORD commanded, “The parents shall not be put to death for the children, or the children be put to death for the parents; but all shall be put to death for their own sins.”

<sup>7</sup> He killed ten thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt and took Sela by storm; he called it Jokthe-el, which is its name to this day.

<sup>8</sup> Then Amaziah sent messengers to King Jehoash son of Jehoahaz, son of Jehu, of Israel, saying, “Come, let us look one another in the face.” <sup>9</sup> King Jehoash of Israel sent word to King Amaziah of Judah, “A thornbush on Lebanon sent to a cedar on Lebanon, saying, ‘Give your daughter to my son for a wife’; but a wild animal of Lebanon passed by and trampled down the thornbush. <sup>10</sup> You have indeed defeated Edom, and



your heart has lifted you up. Be content with your glory, and stay at home; for why should you provoke trouble so that you fall, you and Judah with you?"

11 But Amaziah would not listen. So King Jehoash of Israel went up; he and King Amaziah of Judah faced one another in battle at Beth-shemesh, which belongs to Judah. <sup>12</sup> Judah was defeated by Israel; everyone fled home. <sup>13</sup> King Jehoash of Israel captured King Amaziah of Judah son of Jehoash, son of Ahaziah, at Beth-shemesh; he came to Jerusalem, and broke down the wall of Jerusalem from the Ephraim Gate to the Corner Gate, a distance of four hundred cubits. <sup>14</sup> He seized all the gold and silver, and all the vessels that were found in the house of the LORD and in the treasuries of the king's house, as well as hostages; then he returned to Samaria.

15 Now the rest of the acts that Jehoash did, his might, and how he fought with King Amaziah of Judah, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel? <sup>16</sup> Jehoash slept with his ancestors, and was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel; then his son Jeroboam succeeded him.

17 King Amaziah son of Joash of Judah lived fifteen years after the death of King Jehoash son of Jehoahaz of Israel. <sup>18</sup> Now the rest of the deeds of Amaziah, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah? <sup>19</sup> They made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem, and he fled to Lachish. But they sent after him to Lachish, and killed him there. <sup>20</sup> They brought him

on horses; he was buried in Jerusalem with his ancestors in the city of David. <sup>21</sup> All the people of Judah took Azariah, who was sixteen years old, and made him king to succeed his father Amaziah. <sup>22</sup> He rebuilt Elath and restored it to Judah, after King Amaziah<sup>a</sup> slept with his ancestors.

### Jeroboam II Reigns over Israel

23 In the fifteenth year of King Amaziah son of Joash of Judah, King Jeroboam son of Joash of Israel began to reign in Samaria; he reigned forty-one years. <sup>24</sup> He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he caused Israel to sin. <sup>25</sup> He restored the border of Israel from Lebo-hamath as far as the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the LORD, the God of Israel, which he spoke by his servant Jonah son of Amittai, the prophet, who was from Gath-hepher. <sup>26</sup> For the LORD saw that the distress of Israel was very bitter; there was no one left, bond or free, and no one to help Israel. <sup>27</sup> But the LORD had not said that he would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven, so he saved them by the hand of Jeroboam son of Joash.

28 Now the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, and all that he did, and his might, how he fought, and how he recovered for Israel Damascus and Hamath, which had belonged to Judah, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel? <sup>29</sup> Jeroboam slept with his ancestors, the kings of Israel; his son Zechariah succeeded him.

### Azariah Reigns over Judah

**15** In the twenty-seventh year of King Jeroboam of Israel King Azariah son of Amaziah of Judah began to reign. <sup>2</sup> He was sixteen years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty-two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jecoliah of Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup> He did what was right in the sight of the LORD, just as his father Amaziah had done. <sup>4</sup> Nevertheless the high places were not taken away; the people still sacrificed and made offerings on the high places. <sup>5</sup> The LORD struck the king, so that he was leprous<sup>b</sup> to the day of his death, and lived

<sup>a</sup> Heb *the king*

<sup>b</sup> A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain

## Read 2 Kings 15

Growing political instability in Israel leads to a series of assassinations and palace coups. In addition, Assyria is a growing threat that requires heavy tribute payments and eventually the loss of territory and the deportation of people from Galilee and Gilead to Mesopotamia.

**Reflect:** Consider the fate of small states caught up in the territorial ambitions of the superpowers. Reflect on how it is often easier to ignore growing problems than to address them.

**Pray:** Pray for peace and stability, and that our leaders may be able to deal successfully with the challenges of our day.

**Act:** Become an informed citizen so that you can better understand how and why political decisions are made.

in a separate house. Jotham the king's son was in charge of the palace, governing the people of the land. <sup>6</sup> Now the rest of the acts of Azariah, and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah? <sup>7</sup> Azariah slept with his ancestors; they buried him with his ancestors in the city of David; his son Jotham succeeded him.

### Zechariah Reigns over Israel

<sup>8</sup> In the thirty-eighth year of King Azariah of Judah, Zechariah son of Jeroboam reigned over Israel in Samaria six months. <sup>9</sup> He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, as his ancestors had done. He did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he caused Israel to sin. <sup>10</sup> Shallum son of Jabesh conspired against him, and struck him down in public and killed him, and reigned in place of him. <sup>11</sup> Now the rest of the deeds of Zechariah are written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel. <sup>12</sup> This was the promise of the LORD that he gave to Jehu, "Your sons shall sit on the throne of Israel to the fourth generation." And so it happened.

### Shallum Reigns over Israel

<sup>13</sup> Shallum son of Jabesh began to reign in the thirty-ninth year of King Uzziah of Judah; he reigned one month in Samaria. <sup>14</sup> Then Menahem son of Gadi came up from Tirzah and came to Samaria; he struck down Shallum son of Jabesh in Samaria and killed him; he reigned in place of him. <sup>15</sup> Now the rest of the deeds of Shallum, including the conspiracy that he made, are written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel. <sup>16</sup> At that time Menahem sacked Tiphseh, all who were in it and its territory from Tirzah on; because they did not open it to him, he sacked it. He ripped open all the pregnant women in it.

### Menahem Reigns over Israel

<sup>17</sup> In the thirty-ninth year of King Azariah of Judah, Menahem son of Gadi began to reign over Israel; he reigned ten years in Samaria. <sup>18</sup> He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not depart all his days from any of the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he caused Israel to sin. <sup>19</sup> King Pul of Assyria came against the land; Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver, so that he might help him confirm his hold on the royal power. <sup>20</sup> Menahem exacted the money from Israel, that is, from all the wealthy, fifty shekels of silver from each one, to give to the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria turned back, and did not stay there in the land. <sup>21</sup> Now the rest of the deeds of Menahem, and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the

Annals of the Kings of Israel? <sup>22</sup> Menahem slept with his ancestors, and his son Pekahiah succeeded him.

### **Pekahiah Reigns over Israel**

23 In the fiftieth year of King Azariah of Judah, Pekahiah son of Menahem began to reign over Israel in Samaria; he reigned two years. <sup>24</sup> He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not turn away from the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he caused Israel to sin. <sup>25</sup> Pekah son of Remaliah, his captain, conspired against him with fifty of the Gileadites, and attacked him in Samaria, in the citadel of the palace along with Argob and Arieih; he killed him, and reigned in place of him. <sup>26</sup> Now the rest of the deeds of Pekahiah, and all that he did, are written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel.

### **Pekah Reigns over Israel**

27 In the fifty-second year of King Azariah of Judah, Pekah son of Remaliah began to reign over Israel in Samaria; he reigned twenty years. <sup>28</sup> He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he caused Israel to sin.

29 In the days of King Pekah of Israel, King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria came and captured Ijon, Abel-beth-maacah, Janoah, Kedesh, Hazor, Gilead, and Galilee, all the

land of Naphtali; and he carried the people captive to Assyria. <sup>30</sup> Then Hoshea son of Elah made a conspiracy against Pekah son of Remaliah, attacked him, and killed him; he reigned in place of him, in the twentieth year of Jotham son of Uzziah. <sup>31</sup> Now the rest of the acts of Pekah, and all that he did, are written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel.

### **Jotham Reigns over Judah**

32 In the second year of King Pekah son of Remaliah of Israel, King Jotham son of Uzziah of Judah began to reign. <sup>33</sup> He was twenty-five years old when he began to reign and reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jerusha daughter of Zadok. <sup>34</sup> He did what was right in the sight of the LORD, just as his father Uzziah had done. <sup>35</sup> Nevertheless the high places were not removed; the people still sacrificed and made offerings on the high places. He built the upper gate of the house of the LORD. <sup>36</sup> Now the rest of the acts of Jotham, and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah? <sup>37</sup> In those days the LORD began to send King Rezin of Aram and Pekah son of Remaliah against Judah. <sup>38</sup> Jotham slept with his ancestors, and was buried with his ancestors in the city of David, his ancestor; his son Ahaz succeeded him.

### **Ahaz Reigns over Judah**

**16** In the seventeenth year of Pekah son of Remaliah, King Ahaz son of Jotham of Judah began to reign. <sup>2</sup> Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign; he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. He did not do what was right in the sight of the LORD his God, as his ancestor David had done, <sup>3</sup> but he walked in the way of the kings of Israel. He even made his son pass through fire, according to the abominable practices of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel. <sup>4</sup> He sacrificed and made offerings on the high places, on the hills, and under every green tree.

5 Then King Rezin of Aram and King Pekah son of Remaliah of Israel came up to wage war on Jerusalem; they besieged Ahaz but could not conquer him. <sup>6</sup> At that time the king of Edom<sup>a</sup> recovered Elath for Edom,<sup>b</sup> and

<sup>a</sup> Cn: Heb *King Rezin of Aram*

<sup>b</sup> Cn: Heb *Aram*

### Read 2 Kings 16

Fearing that he will be overthrown by the kings of Israel and Syria, Ahaz of Judah submits to the king of Assyria as a vassal, pays tribute, and imports Assyrian worship practices into the temple in Jerusalem.

**Reflect:** Consider the costs of setting aside one's own convictions to save oneself from harm.

**Pray:** Pray for the ability to trust in God's willingness to aid those who ask for help.

**Act:** Study history in order to learn how small states fare when they form unwise alliances with larger states for short-term security.

drove the Judeans from Elath; and the Edomites came to Elath, where they live to this day. <sup>7</sup> Ahaz sent messengers to King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria, saying, "I am your servant and your son. Come up, and rescue me from the hand of the king of Aram and from the hand of the king of Israel, who are attacking me." <sup>8</sup> Ahaz also took the silver and gold found in the house of the LORD and in the treasures of the king's house, and sent a present to the king of Assyria. <sup>9</sup> The king of Assyria listened to him; the king of Assyria marched up against Damascus, and took it, carrying its people captive to Kir; then he killed Rezin.

<sup>10</sup> When King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria, he saw the altar that was at Damascus. King Ahaz sent to the priest Uriah a model of the altar, and its pattern, exact in all its details. <sup>11</sup> The priest Uriah built the altar; in accordance with all that King Ahaz had sent from Damascus, just so did the priest Uriah build it, before King Ahaz arrived from Damascus. <sup>12</sup> When the king came from Damascus, the king viewed the altar. Then the king drew near to the altar, went up on it, <sup>13</sup> and offered his burnt offering and his grain offering, poured his drink offering, and dashed the blood of his offerings of well-being against the altar. <sup>14</sup> The bronze altar that was before the LORD he removed from the front of the house, from the place between his altar and the house of the LORD, and put it on the north side of his altar. <sup>15</sup> King Ahaz commanded the priest Uriah, saying, "Upon the great altar offer the morning burnt offering, and the evening grain offering, and the king's burnt offering, and his grain offering, with the burnt offering of all the people of the land, their grain offering, and their drink offering; then dash against it all the blood of the burnt offering, and all the blood of the sacrifice; but the bronze altar shall be for me to inquire by." <sup>16</sup> The priest Uriah did everything that King Ahaz commanded.

<sup>17</sup> Then King Ahaz cut off the frames of the stands, and removed the laver from them; he removed the sea from the bronze oxen that were under it, and put it on a pediment of stone. <sup>18</sup> The covered portal for use on the sabbath that had been built inside the palace, and the outer entrance for the king he removed from<sup>a</sup> the house of the LORD. He did this because of the king of Assyria. <sup>19</sup> Now the rest of the acts of Ahaz that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah? <sup>20</sup> Ahaz slept with his ancestors, and was buried with his ancestors in the city of David; his son Hezekiah succeeded him.

<sup>a</sup> Cn: Heb lacks *from*

## Read 2 Kings 17

Israel's fall to the Assyrians and the deportation of the people of the northern kingdom are ascribed to Jeroboam's sin and the unfaithfulness of the nation. The people sent from Mesopotamia to repopulate Israel continue to worship their own gods while venerating the God of Israel.

**Reflect:** Consider the problems faced by relocated populations in acclimating themselves to a new area.

**Pray:** Pray for understanding and compassion for immigrants and the willingness to assist them.

**Act:** Identify ways to integrate and meet the needs of new people entering your community.

## Hoshea Reigns over Israel

**17** In the twelfth year of King Ahaz of Judah, Hoshea son of Elah began to reign in Samaria over Israel; he reigned nine years. <sup>2</sup> He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, yet not like the kings of Israel who were before him. <sup>3</sup> King Shalmaneser of Assyria came up against him; Hoshea became his vassal, and paid him tribute. <sup>4</sup> But the king of Assyria found treachery in Hoshea; for he had sent messengers to King So of Egypt, and offered no tribute to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year; therefore the king of Assyria confined him and imprisoned him.

## Israel Carried Captive to Assyria

<sup>5</sup> Then the king of Assyria invaded all the land and came to Samaria; for three years he besieged it. <sup>6</sup> In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria captured Samaria; he carried the Israelites away to Assyria. He placed them in Halah, on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.

<sup>7</sup> This occurred because the people of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. They had worshiped other gods <sup>8</sup> and walked in the customs of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel, and in the customs that the kings of Israel had introduced.<sup>a</sup> <sup>9</sup> The people of Israel secretly did things that were not right against the LORD their God. They built for themselves high places at all their towns, from watchtower to fortified city; <sup>10</sup> they set up for themselves pillars and sacred poles<sup>b</sup> on every high hill and under every green tree; <sup>11</sup> there they made offerings on all the high places, as the nations did whom the LORD carried away before them. They did wicked things, provoking the LORD to anger; <sup>12</sup> they served idols, of which the LORD had said to them, "You shall not do this." <sup>13</sup> Yet the LORD warned Israel and Judah by every prophet and every seer, saying, "Turn from your evil ways and keep my commandments and my statutes, in accordance with all the law that I commanded your ancestors and that I sent to you by my servants the prophets." <sup>14</sup> They would not listen but were stubborn, as their ancestors had been, who did not believe in the LORD their God. <sup>15</sup> They despised his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their ancestors, and the warnings that he gave them. They went after false idols and became false; they followed the nations that were around them, concerning whom the LORD had commanded them that they should not do as they did. <sup>16</sup> They rejected all the commandments of the LORD their God and made for themselves

<sup>a</sup> Meaning of Heb uncertain

<sup>b</sup> Heb *Asherim*

cast images of two calves; they made a sacred pole,<sup>a</sup> worshiped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. <sup>17</sup> They made their sons and their daughters pass through fire; they used divination and augury; and they sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger. <sup>18</sup> Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them out of his sight; none was left but the tribe of Judah alone.

<sup>19</sup> Judah also did not keep the commandments of the LORD their God but walked in the customs that Israel had introduced. <sup>20</sup> The LORD rejected all the descendants of Israel; he punished them and gave them into the hand of plunderers, until he had banished them from his presence.

<sup>21</sup> When he had torn Israel from the house of David, they made Jeroboam son of Nebat king. Jeroboam drove Israel from following the LORD and made them commit great sin. <sup>22</sup> The people of Israel continued in all the sins that Jeroboam committed; they did not depart from them <sup>23</sup> until the LORD removed Israel out of his sight, as he had foretold through all his servants the prophets. So Israel was exiled from their own land to Assyria until this day.

### Assyria Resettles Samaria

<sup>24</sup> The king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria in place of the people of Israel; they took possession of Samaria, and settled in its cities. <sup>25</sup> When they first settled there, they did not worship the LORD; therefore the LORD sent lions among them, which killed some of them. <sup>26</sup> So the king of Assyria was told, "The nations that you have carried away and placed in the cities of Samaria do not know the law of the god of the land; therefore he has sent lions among them; they are killing them, because they do not know the law of the god of the land." <sup>27</sup> Then the king of Assyria commanded, "Send there one of the priests

whom you carried away from there; let him<sup>b</sup> go and live there, and teach them the law of the god of the land." <sup>28</sup> So one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and lived in Bethel; he taught them how they should worship the LORD.

<sup>29</sup> But every nation still made gods of its own and put them in the shrines of the high places that the people of Samaria had made, every nation in the cities in which they lived; <sup>30</sup> the people of Babylon made Succoth-benoth, the people of Cuth made Nergal, the people of Hamath made Ashima; <sup>31</sup> the Avvites made Nibhaz and Tartak; the Sepharvites burned their children in the fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim. <sup>32</sup> They also worshiped the LORD and appointed from among themselves all sorts of people as priests of the high places, who sacrificed for them in the shrines of the high places. <sup>33</sup> So they worshiped the LORD but also served their own gods, after the manner of the nations from among whom they had been carried away. <sup>34</sup> To this day they continue to practice their former customs.

They do not worship the LORD and they do not follow the statutes or the ordinances or the law or the commandment that the LORD commanded the children of Jacob, whom he named Israel. <sup>35</sup> The LORD had made a covenant with them and commanded them, "You shall not worship other gods or bow yourselves to them or serve them or sacrifice to them, <sup>36</sup> but you shall worship the LORD, who brought you out of the land of Egypt with great power and with an outstretched arm; you shall bow yourselves to him, and to him you shall sacrifice. <sup>37</sup> The statutes and the ordinances and the law and the commandment that he wrote for you, you shall always be careful to observe. You shall not worship other gods; <sup>38</sup> you shall not forget the covenant that I have made with you. You shall not worship other gods, <sup>39</sup> but you

<sup>a</sup> Heb *Asherah*

<sup>b</sup> Syr Vg: Heb *them*



shall worship the LORD your God; he will deliver you out of the hand of all your enemies.”<sup>40</sup> They would not listen, however, but they continued to practice their former custom.

41 So these nations worshiped the LORD, but also served their carved images; to this day their children and their children’s children continue to do as their ancestors did.

### Read 2 Kings 18

Hezekiah is extolled as a good king because of his resistance to foreign worship practices and his religious reforms. However, he is not able to withstand the invading Assyrian army of Sennacherib and is forced to pay a huge tribute. During the siege of Jerusalem, the Assyrian ambassador taunts Hezekiah, claiming that Judah’s God had sent the Assyrians and calling on the people to surrender.

**Reflect:** Consider the arguments of the Assyrian ambassador that are based on both military realities and claims of a superior culture. How effective is his statement that Yahweh had sent the Assyrians to punish Judah?

**Pray:** Pray for the ability to discern truth from deceit and self-interest from honest convictions.

**Act:** Try to make your decisions and actions so transparent to others that there is no need to hide details or to speak in code.

### Hezekiah’s Reign over Judah

**18** In the third year of King Hoshea son of Elah of Israel, Hezekiah son of King Ahaz of Judah began to reign.<sup>2</sup> He was twenty-five years old when he began to reign; he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother’s name was Abi daughter of Zechariah.<sup>3</sup> He did what was right in the sight of the LORD just as his ancestor David had done.<sup>4</sup> He removed the high places, broke down the pillars, and cut down the sacred pole.<sup>a</sup> He broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the people of Israel had made offerings to it; it was called Nehushtan.<sup>5</sup> He trusted in the LORD the God of Israel; so that there was no one like him among all the kings of Judah after him, or among those who were before him.<sup>6</sup> For he held fast to the LORD; he did not depart from following him but kept the commandments that the LORD commanded Moses.<sup>7</sup> The LORD was with him; wherever he went, he prospered. He rebelled against the king of Assyria and would not serve him.<sup>8</sup> He attacked the Philistines as far as Gaza and its territory, from watchtower to fortified city.

9 In the fourth year of King Hezekiah, which was the seventh year of King Hoshea son of Elah of Israel, King Shalmaneser of Assyria came up against Samaria, besieged it,<sup>10</sup> and at the end of three years, took it. In the sixth year of Hezekiah, which was the ninth year of King Hoshea of Israel, Samaria was taken.<sup>11</sup> The king of Assyria carried the Israelites away to Assyria, settled them in Halah, on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes,<sup>12</sup> because they did not obey the voice of the LORD their God but transgressed his covenant—all that Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded; they neither listened nor obeyed.

### Sennacherib Invades Judah

13 In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, King Sennacherib of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them.<sup>14</sup> King Hezekiah of Judah sent to the king of Assyria at Lachish, saying, “I have done wrong; withdraw from me; whatever you impose on me I will bear.” The king of Assyria demanded of King Hezekiah of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold.<sup>15</sup> Hezekiah gave him all

<sup>a</sup> Heb *Asherah*

the silver that was found in the house of the LORD and in the treasuries of the king's house. <sup>16</sup> At that time Hezekiah stripped the gold from the doors of the temple of the LORD, and from the doorposts that King Hezekiah of Judah had overlaid and gave it to the king of Assyria. <sup>17</sup> The king of Assyria sent the Tartan, the Rabsaris, and the Rabshakeh with a great army from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem. They went up and came to Jerusalem. When they arrived, they came and stood by the conduit of the upper pool, which is on the highway to the Fuller's Field. <sup>18</sup> When they called for the king, there came out to them Eliakim son of Hilkiyah, who was in charge of the palace, and Shebna the secretary, and Joah son of Asaph, the recorder.

<sup>19</sup> The Rabshakeh said to them, "Say to Hezekiah: Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria: On what do you base this confidence of yours? <sup>20</sup> Do you think that mere words are strategy and power for war? On whom do you now rely, that you have rebelled against me? <sup>21</sup> See, you are relying now on Egypt, that broken reed of a staff, which will pierce the hand of anyone who leans on it. Such is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who rely on him. <sup>22</sup> But if you say to me, 'We rely on the LORD our God,' is it not he whose high places and altars Hezekiah has removed, saying to Judah and to Jerusalem, 'You shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem?' <sup>23</sup> Come now, make a wager with my master the king of Assyria: I will give you two thousand horses, if you are able on your part to set riders on them. <sup>24</sup> How then can you repulse a single captain among the least of my master's servants, when you rely on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen? <sup>25</sup> Moreover, is it without the LORD that I have come up against this place to destroy it? The LORD said to me, Go up against this land, and destroy it."

<sup>26</sup> Then Eliakim son of Hilkiyah, and Shebna, and Joah said to the Rabshakeh, "Please speak to your servants in the Ara-

maic language, for we understand it; do not speak to us in the language of Judah within the hearing of the people who are on the wall." <sup>27</sup> But the Rabshakeh said to them, "Has my master sent me to speak these words to your master and to you, and not to the people sitting on the wall, who are doomed with you to eat their own dung and to drink their own urine?"

<sup>28</sup> Then the Rabshakeh stood and called out in a loud voice in the language of Judah, "Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria! <sup>29</sup> Thus says the king: 'Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he will not be able to deliver you out of my hand. <sup>30</sup> Do not let Hezekiah make you rely on the LORD by saying, The LORD will surely deliver us, and this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.' <sup>31</sup> Do not listen to Hezekiah; for thus says the king of Assyria: 'Make your peace with me and come out to me; then every one of you will eat from your own vine and your own fig tree, and drink water from your own cistern, <sup>32</sup> until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of olive oil and honey, that you may live and not die. Do not listen to Hezekiah when he misleads you by saying, The LORD will deliver us. <sup>33</sup> Has any of the gods of the nations ever delivered its land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? <sup>34</sup> Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah? Have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? <sup>35</sup> Who among all the gods of the countries have delivered their countries out of my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?"

<sup>36</sup> But the people were silent and answered him not a word, for the king's command was, "Do not answer him." <sup>37</sup> Then Eliakim son of Hilkiyah, who was in charge of the palace, and Shebna the secretary, and Joah son of Asaph, the recorder, came to Hezekiah with their clothes torn and told him the words of the Rabshakeh.

## Read 2 Kings 19

In his distress, Hezekiah receives a prophecy of reassurance from Isaiah that he should not fear the Assyrians. The prophet's message chastises the Assyrians for their boasts and their failure to recognize that Yahweh is the master of all events. Isaiah predicts the unsuccessful end to the siege of Jerusalem and the assassination of the Assyrian king Sennacherib.

**Reflect:** Compare the reactions of Ahaz (2 Kings 16) and Hezekiah to an invading army. Reflect on Isaiah's message in both cases for the kings to be unafraid and to leave the matter up to God.

**Pray:** Pray for the wisdom to see God's hand at work in all things and for the willingness to seek God's aid.

**Act:** Follow Hezekiah's example of prayer, contrition, and trust. Seek out ways to solve problems without giving up hope.

## Hezekiah Consults Isaiah

**19** When King Hezekiah heard it, he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD. <sup>2</sup> And he sent Eliakim, who was in charge of the palace, and Shebna the secretary, and the senior priests, covered with sackcloth, to the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz. <sup>3</sup> They said to him, "Thus says Hezekiah, This day is a day of distress, of rebuke, and of disgrace; children have come to the birth, and there is no strength to bring them forth. <sup>4</sup> It may be that the LORD your God heard all the words of the Rabshakeh, whom his master the king of Assyria has sent to mock the living God, and will rebuke the words that the LORD your God has heard; therefore lift up your prayer for the remnant that is left." <sup>5</sup> When the servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah, <sup>6</sup> Isaiah said to them, "Say to your master, 'Thus says the LORD: Do not be afraid because of the words that you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have reviled me. <sup>7</sup> I myself will put a spirit in him, so that he shall hear a rumor and return to his own land; I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.'"

## Sennacherib's Threat

<sup>8</sup> The Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria fighting against Libnah; for he had heard that the king had left Lachish. <sup>9</sup> When the king<sup>a</sup> heard concerning King Tirhakah of Ethiopia,<sup>b</sup> "See, he has set out to fight against you," he sent messengers again to Hezekiah, saying, <sup>10</sup> "Thus shall you speak to King Hezekiah of Judah: Do not let your God on whom you rely deceive you by promising that Jerusalem will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria. <sup>11</sup> See, you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, destroying them utterly. Shall you be delivered? <sup>12</sup> Have the gods of the nations delivered them, the nations that my predecessors destroyed, Gozan, Haran, Rezeph, and the people of Eden who were in Telassar? <sup>13</sup> Where is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, the king of the city of Sepharvaim, the king of Hena, or the king of Ivvah?"

## Hezekiah's Prayer

<sup>14</sup> Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it; then Hezekiah went up to the house of the LORD and spread it before the LORD. <sup>15</sup> And Hezekiah prayed before the LORD, and said: "O LORD the God of Israel, who are enthroned above the cherubim, you are God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth. <sup>16</sup> Incline your ear, O LORD, and hear; open your eyes, O LORD, and

<sup>a</sup> Heb *he*

<sup>b</sup> Or *Nubia*; Heb *Cush*

see; hear the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to mock the living God. <sup>17</sup> Truly, O LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste the nations and their lands, <sup>18</sup> and have hurled their gods into the fire, though they were no gods but the work of human hands—wood and stone—and so they were destroyed. <sup>19</sup> So now, O LORD our God, save us, I pray you, from his hand, so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you, O LORD, are God alone.”

<sup>20</sup> Then Isaiah son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: I have heard your prayer to me about King Sennacherib of Assyria. <sup>21</sup> This is the word that the LORD has spoken concerning him:

She despises you, she scorns you—  
virgin daughter Zion;  
she tosses her head—behind your back,  
daughter Jerusalem.

<sup>22</sup> “Whom have you mocked and reviled?  
Against whom have you raised  
your voice  
and haughtily lifted your eyes?  
Against the Holy One of Israel!

<sup>23</sup> By your messengers you have  
mocked the Lord,  
and you have said, ‘With my  
many chariots  
I have gone up the heights of the  
mountains,  
to the far recesses of Lebanon;  
I felled its tallest cedars,  
its choicest cypresses;  
I entered its farthest retreat,  
its densest forest.

<sup>24</sup> I dug wells  
and drank foreign waters,  
I dried up with the sole of my foot  
all the streams of Egypt.’

<sup>25</sup> “Have you not heard  
that I determined it long ago?  
I planned from days of old  
what now I bring to pass,  
that you should make fortified cities  
crash into heaps of ruins,

<sup>26</sup> while their inhabitants, shorn of  
strength,  
are dismayed and confounded;  
they have become like plants of the  
field  
and like tender grass,  
like grass on the housetops,  
blighted before it is grown.

<sup>27</sup> “But I know your rising<sup>a</sup> and your  
sitting,  
your going out and coming in,  
and your raging against me.

<sup>28</sup> Because you have raged against me  
and your arrogance has come to  
my ears,  
I will put my hook in your nose  
and my bit in your mouth;  
I will turn you back on the way  
by which you came.

<sup>29</sup> “And this shall be the sign for you: This year you shall eat what grows of itself, and in the second year what springs from that; then in the third year sow, reap, plant vineyards, and eat their fruit. <sup>30</sup> The surviving remnant of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward; <sup>31</sup> for from Jerusalem a remnant shall go out, and from Mount Zion a band of survivors. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

<sup>32</sup> “Therefore thus says the LORD concerning the king of Assyria: He shall not come into this city, shoot an arrow there, come before it with a shield, or cast up a siege ramp against it. <sup>33</sup> By the way that he came, by the same he shall return; he shall not come into this city, says the LORD. <sup>34</sup> For I will defend this city to save it, for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David.”

### Sennacherib’s Defeat and Death

<sup>35</sup> That very night the angel of the LORD set out and struck down one hundred eighty-five thousand in the camp of the Assyrians; when morning dawned, they were all dead bodies. <sup>36</sup> Then King Sennacherib of

<sup>a</sup> Gk Compare Isa 37.27 Q Ms: MT lacks *rising*

Assyria left, went home, and lived at Nineveh.<sup>37</sup> As he was worshipping in the house of his god Nisroch, his sons Adrammelech

and Sharezer killed him with the sword, and they escaped into the land of Ararat. His son Esar-haddon succeeded him.

### Read 2 Kings 20

God responds to Hezekiah's prayer and instructs Isaiah to tell the king he will recover and rule another fifteen years. Hezekiah's pride in his possessions is displayed to the Babylonian messengers and Isaiah predicts the eventual fall of Jerusalem and the Babylonian exile of the people of Judah.

**Reflect:** Consider the power of prayer and reflect on God's willingness to effect change for good. Reflect on the human desire to show off and its consequences.

**Pray:** Pray for healing and peace, but in God's name and for the good of God's kingdom.

**Act:** Recognize that all blessings are gifts of God. Strive to be grateful for these gifts.

### Hezekiah's Illness

**20** In those days Hezekiah became sick and was at the point of death. The prophet Isaiah son of Amoz came to him, and said to him, "Thus says the LORD: Set your house in order, for you shall die; you shall not recover."<sup>2</sup> Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD:<sup>3</sup> "Remember now, O LORD, I implore you, how I have walked before you in faithfulness with a whole heart, and have done what is good in your sight." Hezekiah wept bitterly.<sup>4</sup> Before Isaiah had gone out of the middle court, the word of the LORD came to him:<sup>5</sup> "Turn back, and say to Hezekiah prince of my people, Thus says the LORD, the God of your ancestor David: I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; indeed, I will heal you; on the third day you shall go up to the house of the LORD.<sup>6</sup> I will add fifteen years to your life. I will deliver you and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria; I will defend this city for my own sake and for my servant David's sake."<sup>7</sup> Then Isaiah said, "Bring a lump of figs. Let them take it and apply it to the boil, so that he may recover."

<sup>8</sup> Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "What shall be the sign that the LORD will heal me, and that I shall go up to the house of the LORD on the third day?"<sup>9</sup> Isaiah said, "This is the sign to you from the LORD, that the LORD will do the thing that he has promised: the shadow has now advanced ten intervals; shall it retreat ten intervals?"<sup>10</sup> Hezekiah answered, "It is normal for the shadow to lengthen ten intervals; rather let the shadow retreat ten intervals."<sup>11</sup> The prophet Isaiah cried to the LORD; and he brought the shadow back the ten intervals, by which the sun<sup>a</sup> had declined on the dial of Ahaz.

### Envoys from Babylon

<sup>12</sup> At that time King Merodach-baladan son of Baladan of Babylon sent envoys with letters and a present to Hezekiah, for he had heard that Hezekiah had been sick.<sup>13</sup> Hezekiah welcomed them;<sup>b</sup> he showed them all his treasure house, the silver, the gold, the spices, the precious oil, his armory, all that was found in his storehouses; there was nothing in his house or in all his realm that Hezekiah did not show them.<sup>14</sup> Then the prophet Isaiah came to King Hezekiah, and said to him, "What did these men say? From where did they come to you?" Hezekiah answered, "They have come from a far country, from Babylon."<sup>15</sup> He said, "What have they

<sup>a</sup> Syr See Isa 38.8 and Tg: Heb *it*

<sup>b</sup> Gk Vg Syr: Heb *When Hezekiah heard about them*

seen in your house?” Hezekiah answered, “They have seen all that is in my house; there is nothing in my storehouses that I did not show them.”

16 Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, “Hear the word of the LORD: <sup>17</sup> Days are coming when all that is in your house, and that which your ancestors have stored up until this day, shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left, says the LORD. <sup>18</sup> Some of your own sons who are born to you shall be taken away; they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.” <sup>19</sup> Then

Hezekiah said to Isaiah, “The word of the LORD that you have spoken is good.” For he thought, “Why not, if there will be peace and security in my days?”

### Death of Hezekiah

20 The rest of the deeds of Hezekiah, all his power, how he made the pool and the conduit and brought water into the city, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah? <sup>21</sup> Hezekiah slept with his ancestors; and his son Manasseh succeeded him.

### Read 2 Kings 21

This is a litany of the sins of Manasseh and his son Amon. Their idolatry and apostasy lead the nation into sin and serve as the justification for the prophetic message of destruction for Judah and Jerusalem.

**Reflect:** Consider the case made against Judah and its kings. Is Manasseh the worst example of a king of Judah or simply a weak ruler caught up in a situation he cannot control?

**Pray:** Pray that we may have strong leaders and discerning advisers to work for the good of the people.

**Act:** In the midst of confusion, hold on to traditional values. Do not be seduced to take the easy path that sacrifices the future for short-term gains.

### Manasseh Reigns over Judah

**21** Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign; he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother’s name was Hephzibah. <sup>2</sup> He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, following the abominable practices of the nations that the LORD drove out before the people of Israel. <sup>3</sup> For he rebuilt the high places that his father Hezekiah had destroyed; he erected altars for Baal, made a sacred pole,<sup>a</sup> as King Ahab of Israel had done, worshiped all the host of heaven, and served them. <sup>4</sup> He built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, “In Jerusalem I will put my name.” <sup>5</sup> He built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD. <sup>6</sup> He made his son pass through fire; he practiced soothsaying and augury, and dealt with mediums and with wizards. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger. <sup>7</sup> The carved image of Asherah that he had made he set in the house of which the LORD said to David and to his son Solomon, “In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put my name forever; <sup>8</sup> I will not cause the feet of Israel to wander any more out of the land that I gave to their ancestors, if only they will be careful to do according to all that I have commanded them, and according to all the law that my servant Moses commanded them.” <sup>9</sup> But they did not listen; Manasseh misled them to do more evil than the nations had done that the LORD destroyed before the people of Israel.

10 The LORD said by his servants the prophets, <sup>11</sup> “Because King Manasseh of Judah has committed these abominations, has done things more wicked than all that the Amorites did, who were before him, and has caused Judah also to sin with his idols; <sup>12</sup> therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, I am bringing upon Jerusalem and Judah such evil that the ears of

<sup>a</sup> Heb *Asherah*



everyone who hears of it will tingle. <sup>13</sup> I will stretch over Jerusalem the measuring line for Samaria, and the plummet for the house of Ahab; I will wipe Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down. <sup>14</sup> I will cast off the remnant of my heritage, and give them into the hand of their enemies; they shall become a prey and a spoil to all their enemies, <sup>15</sup> because they have done what is evil in my sight and have provoked me to anger, since the day their ancestors came out of Egypt, even to this day.”

<sup>16</sup> Moreover Manasseh shed very much innocent blood, until he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another, besides the sin that he caused Judah to sin so that they did what was evil in the sight of the LORD.

<sup>17</sup> Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, all that he did, and the sin that he committed, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah? <sup>18</sup> Manasseh slept with his ancestors, and was buried in the garden of his house, in

the garden of Uzza. His son Amon succeeded him.

### Amon Reigns over Judah

<sup>19</sup> Amon was twenty-two years old when he began to reign; he reigned two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Meshullemeth daughter of Haruz of Jotbah. <sup>20</sup> He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, as his father Manasseh had done. <sup>21</sup> He walked in all the way in which his father walked, served the idols that his father served, and worshiped them; <sup>22</sup> he abandoned the LORD, the God of his ancestors, and did not walk in the way of the LORD. <sup>23</sup> The servants of Amon conspired against him, and killed the king in his house. <sup>24</sup> But the people of the land killed all those who had conspired against King Amon, and the people of the land made his son Josiah king in place of him. <sup>25</sup> Now the rest of the acts of Amon that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah? <sup>26</sup> He was buried in his tomb in the garden of Uzza; then his son Josiah succeeded him.

### Josiah Reigns over Judah

**22** Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign; he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jedidah daughter of Adaiah of Bozkath. <sup>2</sup> He did what was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in all the way of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right or to the left.

### Hilkiah Finds the Book of the Law

<sup>3</sup> In the eighteenth year of King Josiah, the king sent Shaphan son of Azaliah, son of Meshullam, the secretary, to the house of the LORD, saying, <sup>4</sup> “Go up to the high priest Hilkiah, and have him count the entire sum of the money that has been brought into the house of the LORD, which the keepers of the threshold have collected from the people; <sup>5</sup> let it be given into the hand of the workers who have the oversight of the house of the LORD; let them give it to the workers who are at the house of the LORD, repairing the house, <sup>6</sup> that is, to the carpenters, to the builders, to the masons; and let them use it to buy timber and quarried stone to repair the house. <sup>7</sup> But no accounting shall be asked from them for the money that is delivered into their hand, for they deal honestly.”

#### Read 2 Kings 22

With the fall of the Assyrian empire, Josiah initiates a renovation of the Jerusalem temple. In the process, a “book of the law” is discovered, read to the king, and authenticated by the prophetess Huldah. Although the nation is condemned, Josiah's contrition over the people's failure to obey God's law will grant him a peaceful end prior to the catastrophe.

**Reflect:** Consider how God responds favorably to heartfelt repentance. Consider Josiah's penitent response and his command that a prophet be consulted.

**Pray:** Pray for sensitivity to God's will for our lives. Pray for God's mercy in the face of our sins.

**Act:** Support efforts to provide an efficient, safe, and enabling worship space. Recognize when you have taken a wrong turn and be willing to ask God for direction.

8 The high priest Hilkiah said to Shaphan the secretary, "I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD." When Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan, he read it. <sup>9</sup> Then Shaphan the secretary came to the king, and reported to the king, "Your servants have emptied out the money that was found in the house, and have delivered it into the hand of the workers who have oversight of the house of the LORD." <sup>10</sup> Shaphan the secretary informed the king, "The priest Hilkiah has given me a book." Shaphan then read it aloud to the king.

<sup>11</sup> When the king heard the words of the book of the law, he tore his clothes. <sup>12</sup> Then the king commanded the priest Hilkiah, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Achbor son of Micaiah, Shaphan the secretary, and the king's servant Asaiah, saying, <sup>13</sup> "Go, inquire of the LORD for me, for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that has been found; for great is the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our ancestors did not obey the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us."

<sup>14</sup> So the priest Hilkiah, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to the prophetess Huldah the wife of Shallum son of Tikvah, son of Harhas, keeper of the

wardrobe; she resided in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter, where they consulted her. <sup>15</sup> She declared to them, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Tell the man who sent you to me, <sup>16</sup> Thus says the LORD, I will indeed bring disaster on this place and on its inhabitants—all the words of the book that the king of Judah has read. <sup>17</sup> Because they have abandoned me and have made offerings to other gods, so that they have provoked me to anger with all the work of their hands, therefore my wrath will be kindled against this place, and it will not be quenched. <sup>18</sup> But as to the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, thus shall you say to him, Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Regarding the words that you have heard, <sup>19</sup> because your heart was penitent, and you humbled yourself before the LORD, when you heard how I spoke against this place, and against its inhabitants, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and because you have torn your clothes and wept before me, I also have heard you, says the LORD. <sup>20</sup> Therefore, I will gather you to your ancestors, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace; your eyes shall not see all the disaster that I will bring on this place." They took the message back to the king.

### Josiah's Reformation

**23** Then the king directed that all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem should be gathered to him. <sup>2</sup> The king went up to the house of the LORD, and with him went all the people of Judah, all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the priests, the prophets, and all the people, both small and great; he read in their hearing all the words of the book of the covenant that had been found in the house of the LORD. <sup>3</sup> The king stood by the pillar and made a covenant before the LORD, to follow the LORD, keeping his commandments, his decrees, and his statutes, with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. All the people joined in the covenant.

<sup>4</sup> The king commanded the high priest Hilkiah, the priests of the second order, and the guardians of the threshold, to bring out of the temple of the LORD all the vessels made for Baal, for Asherah, and for all the host of heaven; he burned them outside Jerusalem in the

### Read 2 Kings 23:1–35

Josiah's reform includes a covenant renewal, centralization of worship in Jerusalem, the sweeping away of all foreign worship objects, the desecration of the altars at Bethel (see 1 Kings 13:1–3) and Samaria, and revival of Passover celebrations. After dying in battle at Megiddo, his successors are vassals of Egypt and Babylon.

**Reflect:** Consider the complete reversal of policy from Manasseh to Josiah. Reflect on how restoring Judah's identity is bound up with cleansing the temple and nation of foreign worship practices.

**Pray:** Pray for those who work to proclaim God's word and advance God's mission in the world.

**Act:** Give thanks for the opportunity to worship freely. Support reforms designed to strengthen the community and provide more occasions to study God's word.

fields of the Kidron, and carried their ashes to Bethel. <sup>5</sup> He deposed the idolatrous priests whom the kings of Judah had ordained to make offerings in the high places at the cities of Judah and around Jerusalem; those also who made offerings to Baal, to the sun, the moon, the constellations, and all the host of the heavens. <sup>6</sup> He brought out the image of<sup>a</sup> Asherah from the house of the LORD, outside Jerusalem, to the Wadi Kidron, burned it at the Wadi Kidron, beat it to dust and threw the dust of it upon the graves of the common people. <sup>7</sup> He broke down the houses of the male temple prostitutes that were in the house of the LORD, where the women did weaving for Asherah. <sup>8</sup> He brought all the priests out of the towns of Judah, and defiled the high places where the priests had made offerings, from Geba to Beer-sheba; he broke down the high places of the gates that were at the entrance of the gate of Joshua the governor of the city, which were on the left at the gate of the city. <sup>9</sup> The priests of the high places, however, did not come up to the altar of the LORD in Jerusalem, but ate unleavened bread among their kindred. <sup>10</sup> He defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of Ben-hinnom, so that no one would make a son or a daughter pass through fire as an offering to Molech. <sup>11</sup> He removed the horses that the kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun, at the entrance to the house of the LORD, by the chamber of the eunuch Nathan-melech, which was in the precincts;<sup>b</sup> then he burned the chariots of the sun with fire. <sup>12</sup> The altars on the roof of the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars that Manasseh had made in the two courts of the house of the LORD, he pulled down from there and broke in pieces, and threw the rubble into the Wadi Kidron. <sup>13</sup> The king defiled the high places that were east of Jerusalem, to the south of the Mount of Destruction, which King Solomon of Israel had built for Astarte the abomination of the Sidonians, for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. <sup>14</sup> He broke the pillars in pieces, cut down the sacred poles,<sup>c</sup> and covered the sites with human bones.

<sup>15</sup> Moreover, the altar at Bethel, the high place erected by Jeroboam son of Nebat, who caused Israel to sin—he pulled down that altar along with the high place. He burned the high place, crushing it to dust; he also burned the sacred pole.<sup>d</sup> <sup>16</sup> As Josiah turned, he saw the tombs there on the mount; and he sent and took the bones out of the tombs, and burned them on the altar, and defiled it, according to the word of the LORD that the man of God proclaimed,<sup>e</sup> when Jeroboam stood by the altar at the festival; he turned and looked up at the tomb of the man of God who had predicted

<sup>a</sup> Heb lacks *image of*

<sup>b</sup> Meaning of Heb uncertain

<sup>c</sup> Heb *Asherim*

<sup>d</sup> Heb *Asherah*

<sup>e</sup> Ck: Heb *proclaimed, who had predicted these things*

these things. <sup>17</sup> Then he said, "What is that monument that I see?" The people of the city told him, "It is the tomb of the man of God who came from Judah and predicted these things that you have done against the altar at Bethel." <sup>18</sup> He said, "Let him rest; let no one move his bones." So they let his bones alone, with the bones of the prophet who came out of Samaria. <sup>19</sup> Moreover, Josiah removed all the shrines of the high places that were in the towns of Samaria, which kings of Israel had made, provoking the LORD to anger; he did to them just as he had done at Bethel. <sup>20</sup> He slaughtered on the altars all the priests of the high places who were there, and burned human bones on them. Then he returned to Jerusalem.

### The Passover Celebrated

<sup>21</sup> The king commanded all the people, "Keep the passover to the LORD your God as prescribed in this book of the covenant." <sup>22</sup> No such passover had been kept since the days of the judges who judged Israel, even during all the days of the kings of Israel and of the kings of Judah; <sup>23</sup> but in the eighteenth year of King Josiah this passover was kept to the LORD in Jerusalem.

<sup>24</sup> Moreover Josiah put away the mediums, wizards, teraphim,<sup>a</sup> idols, and all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, so that he established the words of the law that were written in the book that the priest Hilkiah had found in the house of the LORD. <sup>25</sup> Before him there was no king like him, who turned to the LORD with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; nor did any like him arise after him.

<sup>26</sup> Still the LORD did not turn from the fierceness of his great wrath, by which his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations with which Manasseh had provoked him. <sup>27</sup> The LORD said, "I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel; and I will reject this city that I have chosen, Jerusalem, and the

house of which I said, My name shall be there."

### Josiah Dies in Battle

<sup>28</sup> Now the rest of the acts of Josiah, and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah? <sup>29</sup> In his days Pharaoh Neco king of Egypt went up to the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates. King Josiah went to meet him; but when Pharaoh Neco met him at Megiddo, he killed him. <sup>30</sup> His servants carried him dead in a chariot from Megiddo, brought him to Jerusalem, and buried him in his own tomb. The people of the land took Jehoahaz son of Josiah, anointed him, and made him king in place of his father.

### Reign and Captivity of Jehoahaz

<sup>31</sup> Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he began to reign; he reigned three months in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hamutal daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. <sup>32</sup> He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, just as his ancestors had done. <sup>33</sup> Pharaoh Neco confined him at Riblah in the land of Hamath, so that he might not reign in Jerusalem, and imposed tribute on the land of one hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold. <sup>34</sup> Pharaoh Neco made Eliakim son of Josiah king in place of his father Josiah, and changed his name to Jehoiakim. But he took Jehoahaz away; he came to Egypt, and died there. <sup>35</sup> Jehoiakim gave the silver and the gold to Pharaoh, but he taxed the land in order to meet Pharaoh's demand for money. He exacted the silver and the gold from the people of the land, from all according to their assessment, to give it to Pharaoh Neco.

### Jehoiakim Reigns over Judah

<sup>36</sup> Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he began to reign; he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Zebidah daughter of Pedaiah of Rumah. <sup>37</sup> He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, just as all his ancestors had done.

<sup>a</sup> Or household gods

**Read 2 Kings 23:36—24:17**

Judah changes hands from Egyptian to Babylonian control during Jehoiakim's reign. When Jehoiakim rebels, Jerusalem is besieged and Jehoiakim's successor, Jehoiachin, surrenders the city. A large group of hostages is then taken to Mesopotamia.

**Reflect:** Reflect on the political chaos that enmeshes Judah as the superpowers vie for control of the Near East.

**Pray:** Pray for strengthening of faith in those faced with crisis. Ask that they may be guided and cared for in their time of trouble.

**Act:** Learn to accept that some situations are beyond our control. Look for ways to effectively deal with the problems created by national disasters and crises.

**Judah Overrun by Enemies**

**24** In his days King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came up; Jehoiakim became his servant for three years; then he turned and rebelled against him. <sup>2</sup> The LORD sent against him bands of the Chaldeans, bands of the Arameans, bands of the Moabites, and bands of the Ammonites; he sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke by his servants the prophets. <sup>3</sup> Surely this came upon Judah at the command of the LORD, to remove them out of his sight, for the sins of Manasseh, for all that he had committed, <sup>4</sup> and also for the innocent blood that he had shed; for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and the LORD was not willing to pardon. <sup>5</sup> Now the rest of the deeds of Jehoiakim, and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah? <sup>6</sup> So Jehoiakim slept with his ancestors; then his son Jehoiachin succeeded him. <sup>7</sup> The king of Egypt did not come again out of his land, for the king of Babylon had taken over all that belonged to the king of Egypt from the Wadi of Egypt to the River Euphrates.

**Reign and Captivity of Jehoiachin**

<sup>8</sup> Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he began to reign; he reigned three months in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Nehushta daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem. <sup>9</sup> He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, just as his father had done.

<sup>10</sup> At that time the servants of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came up to Jerusalem, and the city was besieged. <sup>11</sup> King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came to the city, while his servants were besieging it; <sup>12</sup> King Jehoiachin of Judah gave himself up to the king of Babylon, himself, his mother, his servants, his officers, and his palace officials. The king of Babylon took him prisoner in the eighth year of his reign.

**Capture of Jerusalem**

<sup>13</sup> He carried off all the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house; he cut in pieces all the vessels of gold in the temple of the LORD, which King Solomon of Israel had made, all this as the LORD had foretold. <sup>14</sup> He carried away all Jerusalem, all the officials, all the warriors, ten thousand captives, all the artisans and the smiths; no one remained, except the poorest people of the land. <sup>15</sup> He carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon; the king's mother, the king's wives, his officials, and the elite of the land, he took into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon. <sup>16</sup> The king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon all the men of valor, seven

### Read 2 Kings 24:18—25:30

Zedekiah's rebellion has led to the final destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of much of Judah's population by Nebuchadnezzar's army. Gedaliah is appointed governor over the people who remain, but he is assassinated. Jehoiachin spends the rest of his life in exile in Babylon.

**Reflect:** Consider how the people must have felt when faced with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple of Solomon, the end of the Davidic monarchy, and their exile to Mesopotamia.

**Pray:** Pray for exiles and those in need. Ask that they may be comforted, their fear calmed, and their suffering reduced.

**Act:** Work for the relief of those who are suffering, the displaced, and those in need. Encourage those who are afraid and give them hope that, with God's help, their lives can be restored.

thousand, the artisans and the smiths, one thousand, all of them strong and fit for war. <sup>17</sup> The king of Babylon made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle, king in his place, and changed his name to Zedekiah.

### Zedekiah Reigns over Judah

18 Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he began to reign; he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hamutal daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. <sup>19</sup> He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, just as Jehoiakim had done. <sup>20</sup> Indeed, Jerusalem and Judah so angered the LORD that he expelled them from his presence.

### The Fall and Captivity of Judah

**25** Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon. <sup>1</sup> And in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came with all his army against Jerusalem, and laid siege to it; they built siegeworks against it all around. <sup>2</sup> So the city was besieged until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah. <sup>3</sup> On the ninth day of the fourth month the famine became so severe in the city that there was no food for the people of the land. <sup>4</sup> Then a breach was made in the city wall;<sup>a</sup> the king with all the soldiers fled<sup>b</sup> by night by the way of the gate between the two walls, by the king's garden, though the Chaldeans were all around the city. They went in the direction of the Arabah. <sup>5</sup> But the army of the Chaldeans pursued the king, and overtook him in the plains of Jericho; all his army was scattered, deserting him. <sup>6</sup> Then they captured the king and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah, who passed sentence on him. <sup>7</sup> They slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, then put out the eyes of Zedekiah; they bound him in fetters and took him to Babylon.

<sup>8</sup> In the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month—which was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon—Nebuzaradan, the captain of the bodyguard, a servant of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. <sup>9</sup> He burned the house of the LORD, the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem; every great house he burned down. <sup>10</sup> All the army of the Chaldeans who were with the captain of the guard broke down the walls around Jerusalem. <sup>11</sup> Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried into exile the rest of the people who were left in the city and the deserters who had defected to the king of Babylon—all the rest of the population. <sup>12</sup> But the captain of the guard left some of the poorest people of the land to be vinedressers and tillers of the soil.

<sup>a</sup> Heb lacks *wall*

<sup>b</sup> Gk Compare Jer 39.4; 52.7: Heb lacks *the king* and lacks *fled*



13 The bronze pillars that were in the house of the LORD, as well as the stands and the bronze sea that were in the house of the LORD, the Chaldeans broke in pieces, and carried the bronze to Babylon. 14 They took away the pots, the shovels, the snuffers, the dishes for incense, and all the bronze vessels used in the temple service, 15 as well as the firepans and the basins. What was made of gold the captain of the guard took away for the gold, and what was made of silver, for the silver. 16 As for the two pillars, the one sea, and the stands, which Solomon had made for the house of the LORD, the bronze of all these vessels was beyond weighing. 17 The height of the one pillar was eighteen cubits, and on it was a bronze capital; the height of the capital was three cubits; latticework and pomegranates, all of bronze, were on the capital all around. The second pillar had the same, with the latticework.

18 The captain of the guard took the chief priest Seraiah, the second priest Zephaniah, and the three guardians of the threshold; 19 from the city he took an officer who had been in command of the soldiers, and five men of the king's council who were found in the city; the secretary who was the commander of the army who mustered the people of the land; and sixty men of the people of the land who were found in the city. 20 Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard took them, and brought them to the king of Babylon at Riblah. 21 The king of Babylon struck them down and put them to death at Riblah in the land of Hamath. So Judah went into exile out of its land.

### **Gedaliah Made Governor of Judah**

22 He appointed Gedaliah son of Ahi-

kam son of Shaphan as governor over the people who remained in the land of Judah, whom King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had left. 23 Now when all the captains of the forces and their men heard that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah as governor, they came with their men to Gedaliah at Mizpah, namely, Ishmael son of Nethaniah, Johanan son of Kareah, Seraiah son of Tanhumeth the Netophathite, and Jaazaniah son of the Maacathite. 24 Gedaliah swore to them and their men, saying, "Do not be afraid because of the Chaldean officials; live in the land, serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you." 25 But in the seventh month, Ishmael son of Nethaniah son of Elishama, of the royal family, came with ten men; they struck down Gedaliah so that he died, along with the Judeans and Chaldeans who were with him at Mizpah. 26 Then all the people, high and low,<sup>a</sup> and the captains of the forces set out and went to Egypt; for they were afraid of the Chaldeans.

### **Jehoiachin Released from Prison**

27 In the thirty-seventh year of the exile of King Jehoiachin of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, King Evil-merodach of Babylon, in the year that he began to reign, released King Jehoiachin of Judah from prison; 28 he spoke kindly to him, and gave him a seat above the other seats of the kings who were with him in Babylon. 29 So Jehoiachin put aside his prison clothes. Every day of his life he dined regularly in the king's presence. 30 For his allowance, a regular allowance was given him by the king, a portion every day, as long as he lived.

<sup>a</sup> Or young and old

BLANK PAGE 522