

"Do not let the world squeeze you into its mould" ( Rom. 12:2, Phillips' ) is a command of Scripture. Every disciple knows by experience the wisdom of this instruction, and every disciple also knows the difficulty in obeying it. It is in this very area of discipleship that the period of the Kings provides such valuable assistance. Some of the assistance is easily received by even the casual reader. However, many a gem is yielded only to those who are thorough in their study and diligent in their quest.

The importance with which God regards the period of the Kings may be indicated in the preservation, for the most part, of a dual account in the Kings and Chronicles records. The writer of these notes knows no other section of Scripture better designed to encourage the growth of the "fear of the LORD". The Kings and Chronicles records are an open testimony to the fact that "all things are naked and laid bare to the eyes of him with whom we have to do." ( Heb. 4:13, R. S. V. ).

A study of the historical sections of Scripture often evokes a disinterested response on the part of those whose schooling was unduly preoccupied with the history of the kings of British history. This is a most unfortunate association since there is a world of difference between the two. Biblical history is always moral history. This is shown not only in the way in which Jesus and the New Testament writers refer to the Old Testament events, but in the records of the very lives of the great kings of Judah.

Hezekiah affords an excellent example of moral history. To the historian it is a satisfying conclusion that by piecing the accounts together, it can be discovered that the Babylonian envoys came to Jerusalem, not so much to congratulate him on his miraculous recovery from his illness, but to win an ally against Assyria ( 2 Kings 20:12; Isa. 39:1 ). The morality of the events is indicated by the statement in Scripture that God "left Hezekiah to himself in order to try him and to know all that was in his heart." ( 2 Chron. 32:31 ). This in itself is instructive of the ways of God, but it is not all that is instructive. Hezekiah had "very great possessions" - a mixed blessing which brought its problems. Problems, in fact, so great that "Hezekiah did not make return according to the benefit done to him, for he was proud" ( 2 Chron. 32:25, R. S. V. ).

The man whose sleep departed from him "in the bitterness of his soul" - the man who stood with the Almighty when the Assyrian stood outside the gates of the city - the man who knew that "precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of all his saints" - because he was delivered from death - forgot the benefits of his LORD. Can the lesson be missed by lesser mortals? Hezekiah's life is now history - but "written for our admonition that by steadfastness and encouragement we might have hope." ( Rom. 15:4, R. S. V. ).

"But you, take courage! do not let your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded." ( 2 Chron. 15:7, R. S. V. ).

Ron Abel  
for the Committee

**FAILURE THROUGH PROSPERITY**

Prosperity was a temptation "common to man" in Biblical history, before which the greatest of Judah's kings collapsed. Consider these examples;

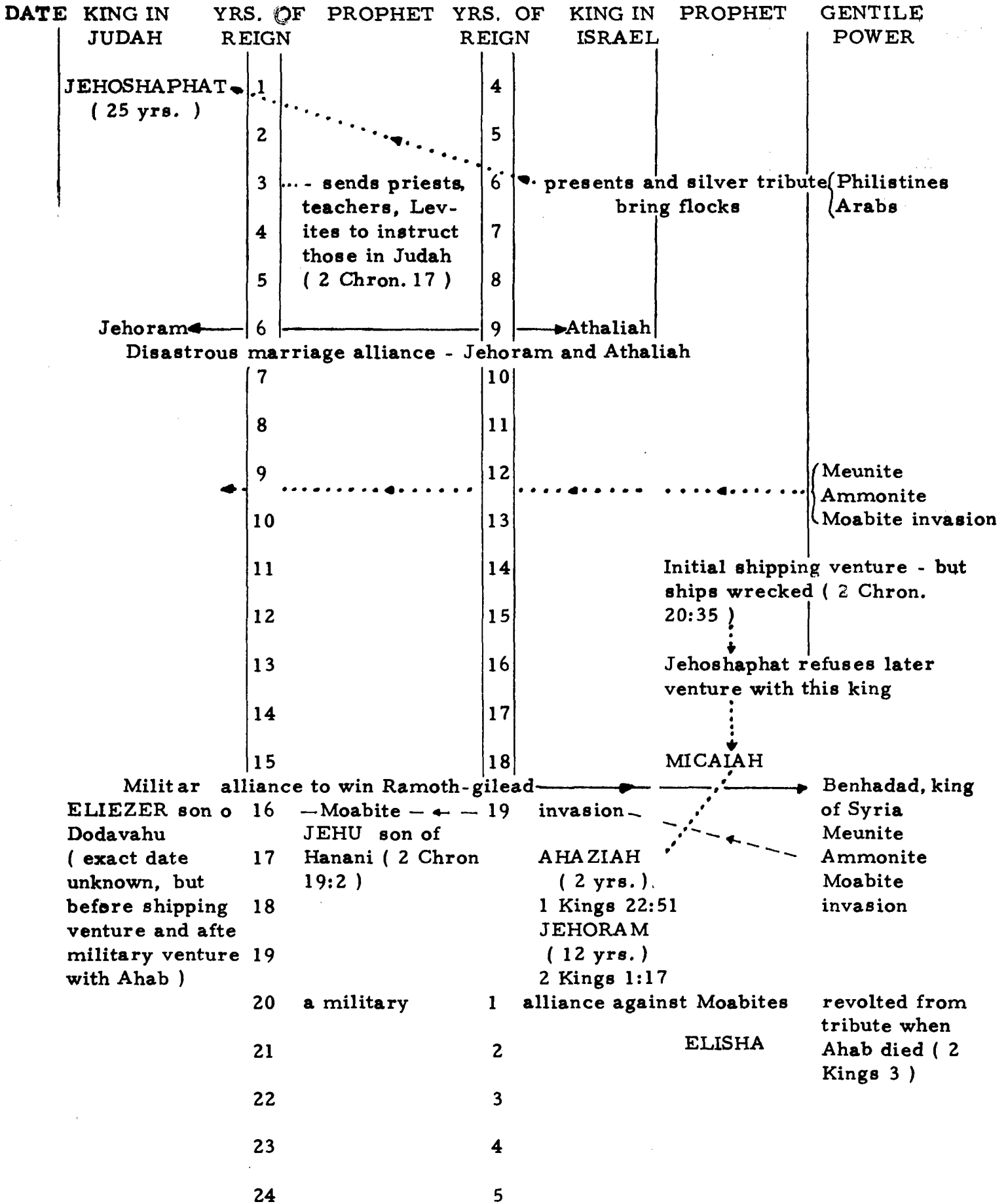
(1) David - his men had won notable victories in war so that peace with Israel was sought by enemies and foreign powers were made subjects. Despite this illustrious kingdom, David sinned tragically. It was "in the spring of the year, the time when kings go forth to battle", but David remained at Jerusalem. He fell into adultery when "late one afternoon . . . he arose from his couch and was walking upon the roof of the king's house" ( 2 Sam. 11:1, 2, R. S. V. ). The description almost suggests ease, luxury and perhaps idleness.

The indictment of Nathan was: "You are the man. Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul; and I gave you your master's house, and your master's wives into your bosom, and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah; and if this were too little, I would add to you as much more. Why have you despised the word of the LORD?' ( 2 Sam. 12:7-9, R. S. V. ), The man who could stand the test of adversity, persecution and suffering, could not stand in the face of prosperity.

(2) Solomon - "excelled all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom . . . And the king made silver as common in Jerusalem as stone." ( 1 Kings 10:23, 27 ). But he "loved many foreign women". There was "the daughter of Pharaoh, and Moabite Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian and Hittite women, from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the people of Israel, 'You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods'; Solomon clung to these in love," ( 2 Kings 11:1-2, R. S. V. ). Solomon, although given wisdom superior to any mortal of his day, could not stand the test of prosperity!

(3) Hezekiah - was saved by the LORD "from the hand of Sennacherib, king of Assyria and from the hand of all his enemies". He gave Judah "rest on every side". "And many brought gifts to the LORD to Jerusalem and precious things to Hezekiah, king of Judah, so that he was exalted in the sight of all the nations from that time onward." But alas, it is written, "Hezekiah did not make return according to all the benefit done to him, for his heart was proud." ( 2 Chron. 32:22-25, R. S. V. ), The king who could withstand the taunts of the heathen - like Rabshakeh - fell with the praise of men.

- (4) Uzziah - "set himself to seek God in the days of Zechariah, who instructed him in the fear of God; and as long as he sought the LORD, God made him prosper." ( 2 Chron. 26:5, R. S. V. ). He had an army of over 1,000,000 men and "his fame spread far, for he was marvelously helped, till he was strong. But when he was strong he grew proud, to his destruction. For he was false to the LORD his God . . ." and was smitten in the forehead for entering the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense ( 2 Chron. 26:15,16, R. S. V. ).
- (5) Jehoshaphat - had "great riches and honour" and "much business in the cities of Judah" ( 2 Chron. 17:13 ). Gentile powers paid tribute and brought gifts, and God blessed him with a reign of peace. He had need of nothing more. Yet his very prosperity made him a valued ally of King Ahab who induced him into a foolish military venture which nearly cost him his life. The king who stood with his God in his zeal against heathen worship, experienced the bitterness of failure through compromise in his marriage, military and commercial alliances. A disciple must not only love the truth, he must also hate iniquity. Jehoshaphat's prosperity led him to "help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD" ( 2 Chron. 19:2, R. S. V. ).



BACKGROUND TO KING JEHOSHAPHAT'S REIGN

DATE	KING IN JUDAH	YRS. OF REIGN	PROPHET	YRS. OF REIGN	KING IN ISRAEL	PROPHET	GENTILE POWER
				16			
	ABIJAM	1		17	JEROBOAM		
	( 3 yrs. )	2		18	son of Nebat		
	2 Chron. 13:1	3		19	"who made		
	ASA	1		0	Isr l to sin"		
	( 41 yrs. )	2		1	NADAB ( 2 rs. )		
		3		2	BAASHA		
		4		1	( 24 yrs. )		
	peace	5		2	1 Kings 15:33		
	2 Chron. 14:1	6		3			
		7		4			
		8		5			
		9		6			onfederate with Benhadad of Syria
		10	←.....	7			Zerah the Ethiopian ( 2 Chron. 14:9 )
		11	.....	8	.....migration of many to king-		
		12	.....	9	.....dom in S. ( 2 Chron. 15:9 )		
		13	.....	10			
		14	←.....	11	.....builds Ramah against Judah		uys support from Benhadad to break league with Baasha and attacks in northern Israel to relieve pressure in S. ( 1 Kings 18:18 )
		15	.....	12	.....		
		16		13	.....seals border		
		17		14			
		18		15			
		19		16			
		20		17			
		21		18			
		22		19			
		23		20			
		24		21			
		25		22			
		26		23			
		27		24			
		28		1	ELAH ( 2 yrs. )		
		29		2			
		30					
		31					
		32			OMRI ( 7 yrs. )		
		33			1 Kings 16:24,22		
		34					
		35					
		36					
	became	37					
	diseased in	38					
	his feet ( 2	39		1	AHAB		
	Chron. 16:12 )	40		2	- did more evil than all who were before him ( 1 Kings 16:30 )		
		41		3	- married Jezebel		
					- built a house for Baal in Samaria.		

DATE KING IN JUDAH	YRS. OF REIGN	PROPHET	YRS. OF REIGN	KING IN ISRAEL	PROPHET	GENTILE POWER
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25

6

**JEHORAM**  
(8 yrs.)  
2 Chron. 21

1

2

3

4

..... sends a letter ..... ELIJAH

5

6

diseased in internal organs

7

.....

8

**AHAZIAH**

1

his mother was Athaliah daughter of Jezebel  
..... military alliance with Jehoram

**ATHALIAH RULES**  
2 Chron, 22

- Arabs, Ethiopians, Philistines  
- Libnah, Edom revolted ( 2 Chron. 21:8, 10 )  
- Hazael, king of Syria to win Ramoth-gilead ( 2 Chron. 22:6 )

"He also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab; for his mother was his counsellor in doing wickedly . . . after the death of his father he had . . . the house of Ahab for his counsellors, to his undoing."  
( 2 Chron. 22:4 )

**JOASH**  
(40 yrs.)

## 17: 1-6 ASSESSMENT OF JEHOShAPHAT'S REIGN

17: 1 And Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his stead -

Jehoshaphat - "Yah is judge" (Yg). This was an appropriate name since Jehoshaphat reorganized the judicial system in Judah and admonished the judges "Take heed what ye do; for ye judge not for man, but for the LORD, who is with you in the judgment." (2 Chron. 19: 6)

Jehoshaphat may have ruled as a co-regent with his father Asa for the last two years of his reign. Asa was "diseased in his feet, until his disease was exceedingly great." (2 Chron. 16:12)

and strengthened himself against Israel -

This was a wise policy for two reasons:

a) Military - Intermittent warfare existed between Israel and Judah since the division of the kingdom between Rehoboam and Jeroboam. During the reign of Asa, Baasha (the contemporary king in Israel) sealed the border and "built Ramah, to the intent that he might let none go out or come in to Asa king of Judah." (2 Chron. 16:1). Jehoshaphat "strengthened himself against Israel, a precautionary step to see that what Baasha attempted was not repeated.

b) Spiritual - To contain apostasy in Israel. Jehoshaphat was "courageous in the ways of the LORD," and set about to destroy idol worship in Judah. This policy would not be viewed with favour by the national Baal worshippers in the kingdom to the north. It should be remembered that God's assessment of Ahab's reign is recorded as follows: "There was none who sold himself to do what was evil in the sight of the LORD like Ahab, whom Jezebel his wife incited." (1 Kings 21:25 R.S.V.) A physical division between the two kingdoms with fenced cities to prevent the flow of Baal worshippers south could only be regarded as a prudent policy.

During the reign of Asa, the Kingdom in the south received "great numbers" of spiritually-minded Israelites who left the nauseating environment of apostasy (and the imminent danger from Baal devotees?). It is recorded of these immigrants that they "entered into a covenant to seek the LORD God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul; that whosoever would not seek the LORD God of Israel should be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman." (2 Chron. 15:12,13). Such an attitude as this would regard Ahab's kingdom as an enemy, not an ally.

17: 2 And he placed forces in all the fenced (fortified, R.S.V.) cities of Judah

Geba and Mizpah were two principal cities built during the reign of Asa. (2 Chron. 16:6). Late in the reign of Asa, (the last 5 yrs.) Baasha king of Israel had made his intentions clear - by building Ramah, a fortified city on the border (2 Chron. 16:1-6).

and in the cities of Ephraim, which Asa his father had taken -

Great numbers had deserted the Kingdom in the north from the tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh and Simeon. Asa apparently annexed some of the cities where these spiritually minded Israelites had lived: "Asa. . . . took courage, and put away the abominable idols out of all the land of Judah and Benjamin, and out of the cities which he had taken from mount Ephraim. . ." (2 Chron. 15:8). Jehoshaphat was consolidating his Kingdom against problems from the northern Kingdom.

17: 3 And the LORD was with Jehoshaphat - These words epitomize a spiritual law: "The LORD is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you." (2 Chron. 15:2)

because he walked in the first ways of his father David

Although "David" is included in the text of the A.V. and Rotherham's translation, it is deleted from the R.S.V. It is probable that the R.S.V. is correct, since Jehoshaphat is commended in the Kings account for walking "in all the ways of Asa his father." (1 Kgs. 22:43). Furthermore, it was Asa who late in his reign (the 36th year of his 41 years) purchased security from Baasha by taking the silver and gold from the treasures of the house of the LORD and sending them to Benhadad, King of Syria. Asa was punished with wars, and when indicted by God's prophet Hanani, went into a rage and threw the prophet into prison and inflicted cruelties upon some of the people. (2 Chron. 16). Although David sinned in the matter of Bathsheba, it cannot be said of him as it can of Asa, that he walked in the "earlier ways" (R.S.V.) [ of the LORD ] Early in his reign Asa was righteous (2 Chron. 14,15). It matters little however, because even if "his father" refers to Asa, it is said of Asa: "And Asa did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD, as did David his father." (1 Kings 15:11).

and sought not unto Baalim (the Baals, R.S.V.) - Baal = master, possessor.

"The chief male deity of the Phoenicians and Canaanites, as Ashtoreth was their chief female deity. Both these names have the peculiarity of being used in the plural, and of always having the definite article prefixed e.g. The Baalim." (Yg).

Ahab who was reigning in the Kingdom to the north had instituted Baal worship as the national religion. Note the terrible record of 1 Kings 16:30-33:

"And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD above all that were before him.

And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians and went and served Baal, and worshipped him.



And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria.

And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him."

17: 4 But sought to the (LORD) God of his father  
"his father" = Asa (probably) See 17:3

and walked in his commandments, and not after the doings of Israel  
"The doings of Israel" are well set out in 1 Kings 16:30-33  
quoted in 17:3.

17: 5 Therefore the LORD established the kingdom in his hand. The Almighty's angels called his "watchers", his eyes - "which run to and fro throughout the whole earth," were showing his might "in behalf of those whose heart is blameless toward him" (2 Chron. 16:9, R.S.V.). They operated to superintend the welfare of Jehoshaphat.. These angels are "ministering spirits" sent forth specifically to minister for those who are to be heirs of salvation. (Heb. 1:14).

and all Judah brought to Jehoshaphat presents - To bring the King presents when he took the throne appears to have been the practice. (see 1 Sam. 10:27).

and he had riches and honour in abundance - This was a blessing, but not without its problems. Would the king have the wisdom and discretion to overcome the temptations which always accompany riches and honour? Many an otherwise God-fearing Israelite could not stand the test of prosperity. The instruction regarding the administration of justice anticipates one of the problems associated with the acquiring of gifts, riches and honour:

"And thou shalt take no gift: for the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous." (Exod. 23:8, Deut. 16:19).

similarly,

"For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." (1 Tim. 6:10).

17: 6 And his heart was lifted up in the ways of the LORD - "His heart was courageous in the ways of the LORD" R.S.V. This is an example of a God-fearing man who had the same spirit of faith as did Paul and Silas as Philippi: "We had courage in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the face of great opposition". (1 Thess. 2:2) R.S.V. It is a spirit of faith which is not unduly moved by its environment since it recognizes that the things which are seen "are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal." (2 Cor. 4:18, R.S.V.)

moreover he took away the high places and groves (Asherim, R.S.V.) out of Judah - The high places were centres of idolatrous worship. The removal of these is singled out by the prophet Jehu as the reason why Jehoshaphat's life was spared by the Almighty when he otherwise would have perished for his folly in joining wicked King Ahab in a military venture against Ramoth-gilead:

"Nevertheless there are good things found in thee, in that thou hast taken away the groves out of the land, and hast prepared thine heart to seek God." (2 Chron. 19:3).

Not all the high places were removed, however: "Nevertheless the high places were not taken away: for the people offered and burnt incense yet in the high places." (1 Kgs. 22:43). Either there was a resurgence of Baal worship toward the end of Jehoshaphat's reign, or not all the groves were removed during his reign.

17: 7-9

## SPIRITUAL REFORMS IN JUDAH

17: 7 Also in the third year of his reign he sent to his princes . . . to teach in the cities of Judah - This was a commendable decision - especially since the Levites and priests were accompanied by the princes to give the weight and authority of the crown to what was said.

The princes were: Benhail = "strong, valiant" (Yg)  
Obadiah = "servant of Jah" (Yg)

This was probably not the same Obadiah who was governor over Ahab's house and who "feared the LORD greatly" (1 Kgs. 18:3). Ahab was still alive at the time Jehoshaphat was sending out his teaching princes. (See chronological outline of the lives of Jehoshaphat and Ahab).

Zechariah = Yah is renowned (Yg.)

Michaiah = Who is like Yah? (Yg.)

Jehoshaphat's revival is seen to be courageous in view of the statement in 2 Chron. 15:3: "For a long time Israel was without a teaching priest and without law; but when in their distress they turned to the LORD, the God of Israel, and sought him, he was found by them." (2 Chron. 15:3 R.S.V.) Israel was probably without a teaching priest and law during the reigns of Rehoboam - 17 yrs. and Abijam - 3 yrs.

17: 8 and with them the Levites

Shemaiah	= "Yah is fame" (Yg.)	Nethaniah	= "Jah gives" (Yg.)
Zebadiah	= "Yah is endower" (Yg.)	Asehel	= "God is doer" (Yg.)
Shemiramoth	= "Fame of the highest" (Yg.)	Jehonathan	= "Yah gives" (Yg.)
Adonijah	= "Yah is my lord" (Yg.)	Tobijah	= "Yah is good" (Yg.)
Tobadonijah	= "The Lord Yah is good" (Yg.)		

and with them Elishama and Jehoram priests

Elishama = "God is hearer" (Yg.)

Jehoram = "Yah is high" (Yg.)

17: 9 And they taught in Judah, and (had) the book of the law of the LORD with them. - This was the special responsibility of the Levites (2 Chron. 35:3; Deut. 33:10 and esp. Lev. 10:11: "And that ye may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the LORD hath spoken unto them by the hand of Moses.")

17: 10-19

## JEHOSHAPHAT'S GREATNESS

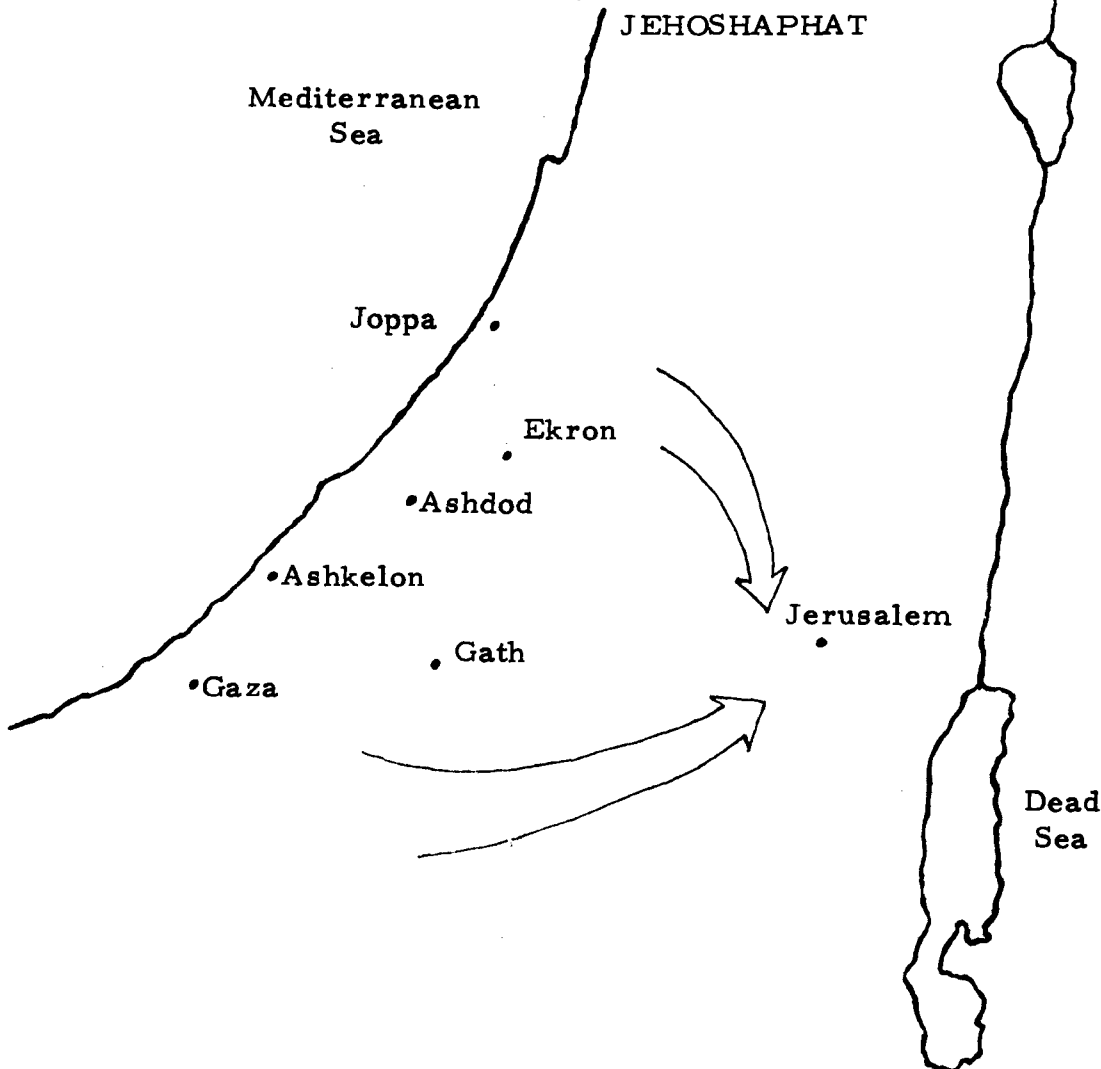
- 17: 10 And the fear of the LORD fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that (were) round about Judah, so that they made no war against Jehoshaphat - This commentary illustrates the truth of the proverb: "When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." (Prov. 16:7).

"The fear of the LORD" = "the terror of God" (Gen. 35:5) which fell upon the cities through which Jacob and his sons passed on their way to Bethel from Shechem. It should be remembered that wars disturbed the Kingdom during Asa's and Abijam's reigns (2 Chron. 16:9). Note the description:

"And in those times there was no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in, but great vexations were upon all the inhabitants of the countries. . . for God did vex them with all adversity." (2 Chron. 15:5,6).

- 17: 11 Also (some) of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat presents, and tribute silver - as they had done during Solomon's reign (1 Kgs. 4:21), but they later revolted during the wicked reign of Jehoram, Jehoshaphat's son who married Atholiah (2 Chron. 21:16).

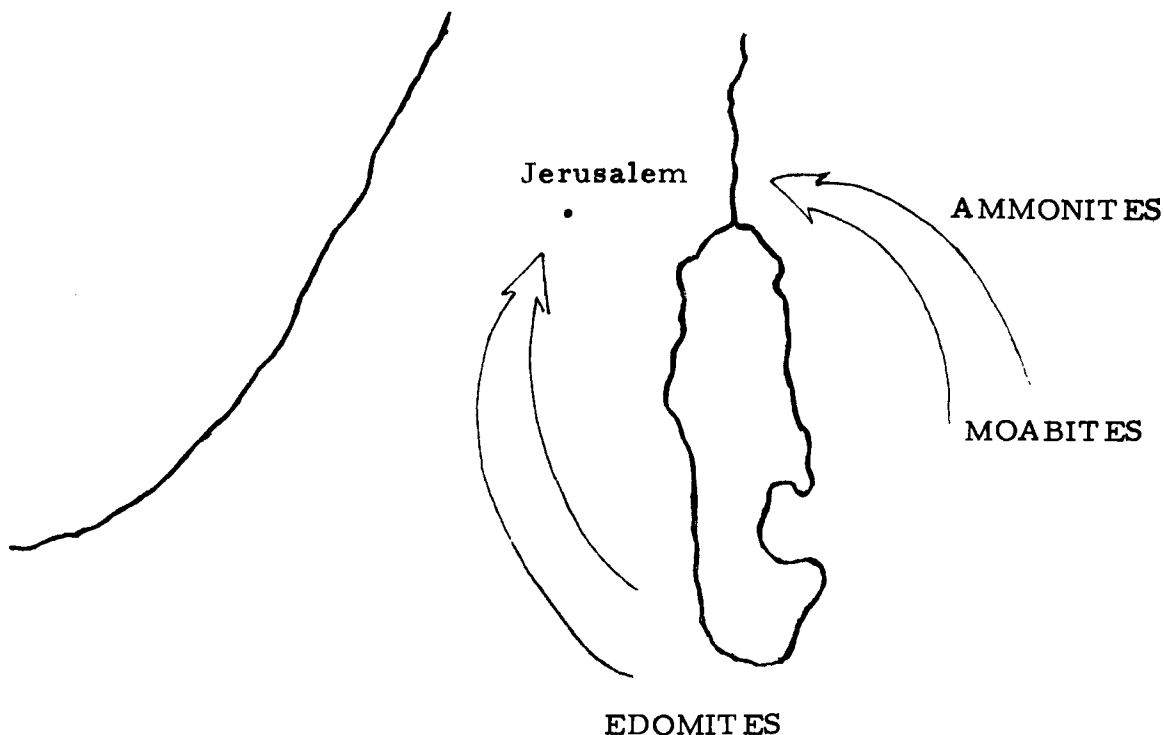
THE PHILISTINES BROUGHT PRESENTS AND TRIBUTE TO  
JEHOSHAPHAT



and the Arabians brought him flocks, seven thousand and seven hundred rams, and seven thousand and seven hundred he goats -

When a neighbouring power grew in military power it was expedient to make friendly gestures with tribute money and presents to secure one's own kingdom against plunder and war. Mesha king of Moab, for example, paid king Ahab in Israel 100,000 lambs and 100,000 rams, but when his son, Jehoram came to the throne (an apparently weaker king) the Moabites rebelled - refusing to pay tribute (2 Kgs. 3:4-5).

#### ARABIAN TRIBUTE FROM THE SOUTH



17: 12 And Jehoshaphat waxed great exceedingly - "grew steadily greater" R.S.V.

and he built in Judah castles - "Castles", Heb. "biraniyoth" - "fortresses" Roth; R.S.V.

and cities of store - A common practice to ensure adequate food supplies for armies in times of dearth. The Israelites built store cities for the Egyptians. (Exod. 1:11).

17: 13-19

#### JEHOSHAPHAT'S ARMY

17:13-18 And he had much business in <sup>the</sup> cities of Judah - Inherent in such a magnificent kingdom was the preoccupation with the "much business" at the expense of spiritual matters which God viewed as more important. What kind of priorities would Jehoshaphat set?

and the men of war, mighty men of valour, (were) in Jerusalem - These men of war were enlisted according to their family's house and tribe, as was done in the official census which took place as recorded in Num. 1.

- The size of Jehoshaphat's army:

Judah -	300,000
	280,000
	200,000
Benjamin -	200,000
	180,000
	<u>1,160,000</u>

Jehoshaphat's army of over a million men was twice as large as Asa's army. (2 Chron. 14:8). In addition to this figure were the soldiers which "the king had placed in the fortified cities throughout all Judah." (2 Chron. 17:19).

the DISASTROUS MARRIAGE ALLIANCE

Kingdom of Judah

Kingdom of Israel

ASA

basically a good king ( 2 Chron. 15:16-18 )

his 41 year reign ended with a state of war with Israel ( 2 Chron. 16 )

OMRI

did "that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, more than all who were before him." ( 1 Kings 16:25 )

JEHOSHAPHAT — AZUBAH

AHAB — JEZEBEL

makes a marriage alliance with Ahab which secured peace between the two kingdoms ( 2 Chron. 18 )

"There was none who sold himself to do what was evil in the sight of the LORD like Ahab, whom Jezebel his wife incited." ( 1 Kings 21:25 )

JEHORAM

ATHALIAH

"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." ( 2 Kings 18:18 )

destroyed all the royal family ( 2 Kings 11 ) except Jehoash

AHAZIAH

military alliance

JEHORAM

"He also walked in the way of the house of Ahab, and did 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." ( 2 Kings 8:27 )



2 CHRONICLES CHPT. 18

18:1

## THE MARRIAGE ALLIANCE

Now Jehoshaphat had riches and honour in abundance -

This is a repetition of what was stated earlier in 17:5. The point can hardly be missed that there is a connection between the "riches and honour in abundance" and the tragic events which follow in the chapter.

and joined affinity with Ahab - "he made a marriage alliance with Ahab" R.S.V. Ahab gave his daughter, Athaliah in marriage to Jehoram, Jehoshaphat's eldest son. (22:2 cf. 2 Kgs. 8:26).

There is not the slightest indication that the marriage was undertaken because Jehoram loved Athaliah, and that Jehoshaphat reluctantly yielded to the pressure of his son. The affinity - or alliance was deliberately undertaken by Jehoshaphat for his own reasons. It is a matter of some conjecture as to what these might have been. The following are possibilities:

- a) To effect a era of peaceful co-existence between the two kingdoms. Intermittent warfare existed since the division of the kingdom.
- b) To reunite the two kingdoms politically.
- c) To obtain an ally in Israel against possible military threats from Syria, Assyria, Egypt or a confederacy of Arabian peoples.

It does not really matter which of these reasons affords the right explanation for such an unwise undertaking, the alliance was a tragedy which nearly eliminated all of the royal seed when Athaliah assumed the throne. (2 Chron. 22:10; 21:6). The alliance was in disobedience of a command of God that has always been in force:

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? . . . therefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord." (2 Cor. 6:14-17).

Marriage alliances between countries in ancient times <sup>was a</sup> politically effective way to establish peaceful ties between powers which might otherwise regard each other as enemies. E.g. Ahab secured his relationship with Phoenicia by taking Jezebel to wife. (1 Kgs. 16:30,31). Pharaoh of Egypt gave his daughter to be Solomon's wife. (1 Kgs. 9:16).

18:2

And after (certain) years "at the end of some years," Roth; "at the end of years," A.V.mg. This visit was in Jehoshaphat's 17th yr. (1 Kgs. 22:51). The marriage alliance therefore was contracted some time before this, (probably after his 3rd year as King. - cf. 2 Chron. 17:7).

he went down to Ahab to Samaria - Jehoshaphat went down in every sense. Whenever one left Jerusalem, it is idiomatic in the Bible to refer to the journey as "going down" - irrespective as to whether the direction is north or south, or whether the journey is "up hill" or "downhill". Samaria was established as the capital city in the Kingdom of the north by Omri (Ahab's father). It was located in the hill country of Ephraim about 42 miles north of Jerusalem.

And Ahab killed sheep and oxen for him in abundance, and for the people that (he had) with him - This great public feast and fanfare was intended to dispose Jehoshaphat to a venture against Syria.

and persuaded him to go up (with him) to Ramoth-gilead - Persuaded - "induced him" R.S.V.

Ramoth-gilead - was a city of God in Gilead (Ramoth = "heights", Yg. ), It is sometimes called "Ramoth" in Scripture, and was one of the cities on the eastern side of the Jordan River which was named by Moses as a city of refuge. (Deut. 4:41-43). During Solomon's reign the city was the residence of one of his 12 officers (1 Kgs. 4:13). It became the centre of the surrounding district which had "sixty great cities with walls and bronze bars." Later the city was taken by Benhadad, king of Syria and retained by him through the folly of Ahab (1 Kgs. 20).

The venture against Syria had few advantages for Jehoshaphat. There had been peace between Israel and Syria for three years before this military venture (1 Kgs. 22:1) and God had given peace to Judah. With a standing army of 1 million men, action against Syria in Ramoth-gilead must have seemed a very minor undertaking to Jehoshaphat - an opportunity to flex his military muscles.

18: 3 And Ahab king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat king of Judah, Wilt thou go with me to Ramoth-gilead?

Ahab's chief motive in the venture is stated in the King's account: "Do you know that Ramoth-gilead belongs to us, and we keep quiet and do not take it out of the hand of the king of Syria?" (1 Kgs. 22:3, R.S.V.)

And he answered him, I (am) as thou (art), and my people as thy people; and (we will be) with thee in the war - The Kings account adds: "my horses as thy horses" (1 Kgs. 22:4). This is a good example of failure through compromise. Jehoshaphat's spiritual sensibilities were dulled. The sin of the marriage alliance led to the sin of the military alliance. What real communion "has light with darkness" - what accord "hath he that believeth with a infidel?" (cf. 2 Cor. 6:14,15).

18: 4-27 THE ENCOUNTER OF THE TRUE AND FALSE PROPHETS

18: 4 And Jehoshaphat said unto the king of Israel, Enquire, I pray thee, at the mind of the LORD today. - The man of God percolates through - a twinge of conscience remains: Did you notice that the request to hear the direction of God through a prophet is made after Jehoshaphat has already committed himself to the venture? This, in itself, suggests Jehoshaphat had already made up his mind and only sought additional confirmation.

18: 5 Therefore the king of Israel gathered together of prophets four hundred men, and said unto them, Shall we go to Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I ('we' in 1 Kgs. 22:15) forbear? Who were these 400 men? - Certainly not true prophets of Yahweh - they were almost



certainly the prophets of Baal - servants of Jezebel (1 Kgs. 18:19). The true prophets of Yahweh had nearly been exterminated in the kingdom of the north. (Note the words of Elijah's in his lament to God: "and slain thy prophets with the sword, and I, even I only am left, and they seek my life, to take it away." 1 Kgs. 19:10).

And they said, Go up; for God will deliver (it) into the King's hand - A flattering, but unfounded prediction.

- 18: 6 But Jehoshaphat said, (Is there) not here a prophet of the LORD besides, that we might enquire of him? - The appearance of these 400 prophets, their conduct or their "prophecies" were unimpressive to Jehoshaphat. They had all spoken with "one accord" words which were "favourable to the king" (2 Chron. 18:12, R.S.V.).
- 18: 7 And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat (There is) yet one man, by whom we may enquire of the LORD: but I hate him; for he never prophesied good unto me, but always evil. The same (is) Micaiah the son of Imla. - Perhaps Micaiah is the unnamed prophet of 1 Kings 20:35? If so, there could be a special reason why Micaiah's prophecy was unwelcomed. The unnamed prophet predicted Ahab's death at the hands of the same Benhadad king of Syria:  
 "Thus saith the LORD, Because thou hast let go out of thy hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore thy life shall go for his life, and thy people for his people. And the king of Israel went to his house heavy and displeased."  
 (1 Kgs. 20:42,43).

Micaiah = "who is like Jah" (Yg.)

And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so - An optimistic note on the part of Jehoshaphat.

- 18: 8 And the king of Israel called for one (of his) officers ('eunuchs', A.V. mg. cf. also 1 Sam. 8:15) and said, Fetch quickly Micaiah the son of Imla. - The true prophets of Yahweh were despised and afflicted in Ahab's kingdom.
- 18: 9 And the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah sat either of them on his throne, clothed in (their) robes, and they sat in a void place at the entering in of the gate of Samaria - Jehoshaphat was basking in the sun of the Baal worshipping apostates.

and all the prophets prophesied before them - No doubt these Baal worshippers would attempt to whip-up popular enthusiasm for the war effort. The prophecies would be regarded as "safe" in view of the huge army Jehoshaphat was able to muster.

- 18 :10 And Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah had made him horns of iron, and said Thus saith the LORD, With these thou shalt push Syria until they be consumed - Horns are frequently symbols of strength (cf. Deut.33:17; Amos 6:13). The performance of Zedekiah, as spokesman for the 400, was a graphic presentation before the two kings and their attendants.

- 18: 11 And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, Go up to Ramoth-gilead, and prosper: for the LORD shall deliver (it) into the hand of the king. - Was the fact that these apostates claimed to give the verdict of Yahweh an appeal to win the support of Jehoshaphat for the venture?
- 18: 12 And the messenger that went to call Micaiah spake to him, saying, Behold, the words of the prophets (declare) good to the king with one assent; (Heb. 'with one mouth') let thy word therefore, I pray thee, be like one of their's, and speak thou good. - This appeal meant little to the God-fearing Micaiah who sought to please God rather than men. The reply which follows is ironical - the fools are being reprov'd according to their folly.
- 18: 13 And Micaiah said, As the LORD liveth, even what my God saith, that will I speak - As Balaam put it: "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the LORD my God, to do less or more." (Num. 22:18).
- 18: 14 . . . And he said, Go ye up, and prosper, and they shall be delivered into your hand - The irony - saying opposite to what is intended was readily perceived by Ahab.
- 18: 15 And the king said unto him, How many times shall I adjure thee that thou say nothing but the truth to me in the name of the LORD? - Ahab recognizing that Micaiah had only reiterated in mocking words the utterances of the false prophets, demands a straight forward answer.
- 18: 16 Then he (Micaiah) said, I did see all Israel scattered upon the mountains - This was a parable depicting the defeat of Israel. Ramoth-gilead means "heights". It would be on these "heights" that Israel would be scattered.

as sheep that have no shepherd - This would be a stinging indictment of Ahab. Israel (the sheep) indeed had no shepherd in Ahab. He was a wolf whose claws and teeth had torn the nation to shreds. It was the command of God to David, "feed my people Israel" (2 Sam. 7:7 cf. 5:2), and this was the role of every king over God's people.

and the LORD said, These have no master, let them return (therefore) every man to his house in peace - It was true before and after the battle that Israel "had no master." He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God." (2 Sam. 23:3) - Ahab lacked both these characteristics as his treatment of Micaiah indicated.

- 18: 17 And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat. Did I not tell thee that he would not prophesy good unto me, but evil? - This might be taken as a reproof of Jehoshaphat. The attitude of Ahab is revealed in the treatment of Micaiah - "Put this fellow in prison, and feed him with scant fare of bread and water." (2 Chron. 18:26, R.S.V.)

18:18-22 MICAIAH DENOUNCES THE FALSE PROPHETS THROUGH A PARABLE

18:18 Again he said / Micaiah /, Therefore hear the word of the LORD  
What follows is an indictment of the false prophets of Ahab. The point of the parable was not missed by Zedekiah, the chief spokesman for the 400.

I saw the LORD sitting upon his throne - Not literally. "No man hath seen God at any time" ( John 1:18 ); ". . . which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see" ( 1 Tim. 6:16 ). Micaiah was telling a vision he had received.

all the host of heaven standing on his right hand and on his left - "the host of heaven" = angels.

18:19 And the LORD said, Who shall entice Ahab king of Israel, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? - This is not of course, the literal way God conducts his affairs in heaven. The point of the parable is that Ahab was enticed just as he had induced Jehoshaphat. Furthermore, Ahab's imminent death is prophesied: "that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead." His death had been the subject of prophecy by the unnamed prophet ( Micaiah? ) and Elijah ( 1 Kings 20:42; 21:19 ).

And one spake saying after this manner, and another saying after that manner.

18:20 Then there came out a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will entice him / Ahab / - It may be questioned as to whether God would condone the enticing of Ahab. In this connection the whole of Ezekiel 14 should be read.

18:21 And he said, I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And the LORD said, Thou shalt entice him, and thou shalt also prevail: go out, and do even so - The lying spirit = a spirit of falsehood. When a man refuses to heed divine instruction God may "give him up" ( e.g. Rom. 1:21-32 ) or allow ( cause? ) a working of error ( e.g. 2 Thess. 2:10-12 ). See the O.T. examples in Isa. 19:14; Ezek. 14:4 - "Thus saith the Lord GOD; Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet; I the LORD will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols . . ."

18:22 Now therefore, behold, the LORD hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of these thy prophets, and the LORD hath spoken evil concerning thee. - Not only did Micaiah expose the folly of Ahab in taking counsel from the 400 false prophets, the effect of the parable was to say that the 400 were liars.

18:23 Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaiah came near, and smote Micaiah upon the cheek - The chief spokesman for the 400, indignant at the exposure, seeks to humiliate the prophet Micaiah with an insulting blow ( cf. Micah 5:9 ).

and said, Which way went the Spirit of the LORD from me to speak unto thee? - Zedekiah attempts to parody Micaiah. The effect of what Zedekiah said was to imply that if an evil spirit from the LORD has overtaken him - what kind of spirit do you think has overtaken you, Micaiah?

18:24 And Micaiah said, Behold, thou shalt see on that day when thou shalt go into an inner chamber to hide thyself - Micaiah refers to the day of battle when Israel and Judah are defeated. Sons whose fathers died in the battle and fathers whose sons were slain would seek to find Zedekiah for his false predictions. Zedekiah would seek refuge by hiding in an "inner chamber". Benhadad had sought the chambers for refuge after his defeat by Ahab ( 1 Kings 20:30 ).

18:25 Then the king of Israel said, Take ye Micaiah, and carry him back to Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son - A curt command given by Ahab to an officer.

18:26 And say, Thus saith the king, Put this fellow in the prison and feed him with bread of affliction and with water of affliction - "feed him with scant fare of bread and water", R. S. V. The treatment of God's prophet showed the hardness of Ahab's heart. But how could a Godly man like Jehoshaphat witness such events unmoved? The deceitfulness of sin was having its evil way.

until I return in peace - A defiant remark by Ahab. The battle is no longer Syria vs. Israel and Judah, but Yahweh vs. Ahab and the Baalim.

18:27 And Micaiah said, If thou certainly return in peace, then hath not the LORD spoken by me. And he said, Hearken, all ye people. - The courageous prophet, with none to support his testimony, set out his credentials as a prophet of Yahweh:

"When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him." ( Deut. 18:22 )

Micaiah calls all those assembled in the open-air meeting to witness his words ( Other examples of short-term prophecies which set out the prophet's credentials are found in Jer. 28:16, 17; 1 Kings 13:3 ).

18:28-34 THE BATTLE AT RAMOTH-GILEAD

18:28 So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to

Ramoth-gilead - Jehoshaphat, induced by his host, and probably rationalizing the fact that none of Micaiah's prophecies were personally addressed to him, is well-prepared to assume the reins and lead the battle.

18:29 And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, I will disguise myself, and will go to the battle; but put thou on thy robes. So the king of Israel disguised himself; and they went to the battle - There is every indication here that the words of Micaiah left Ahab with great uneasiness. Two prophets had already predicted his death, and Ahab had previously witnessed God's operation through prophets in an earlier victory over Benhadad, the consumption of the sacrifice during the ministrations of Elijah in the encounter with the prophets of Baal, and the three year famine and its relief. Was the evidence of Yahweh's prophet too convincing?

The disguise was of little avail, however - "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." ( Heb. 4:13 ).

18:30 Now the king of Syria had commanded the captains of the chariots that were with him saying, Fight ye not with small or great, save only with the king of Israel - Perhaps Benhadad realized he could not hope to win a general victory and so decided to kill the king and put the armies in disarray. The plan called for the swift chariots to outflank the Israelite infantry in hope of reaching the king at the rear.

Benhadad may also have desired the death of Ahab in retaliation for the capture and humiliation earlier suffered by him at the hands of Ahab ( 1 Kings 20 ).

18:31 And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, It is the king of Israel. Therefore they compassed him about to fight - This is where Jehoshaphat's military alliance got him!

but Jehoshaphat cried out, and the Lord helped him; and God moved / 'allured', Roth. / them to depart from him - This was the prodigal son coming to himself. Only the kindly providence of the Almighty rescued Jehoshaphat. "He had helped the wicked and loved those who hated the LORD" ( 19:2 ). His rescue was an act of grace, because "some good is found in you, for you have destroyed the Asherahs out of the land, and have set your heart to seek God." ( 19:3, R. S. V. ).

Jehoshaphat learned his lesson for a while. He later entered into another military and commercial alliance with Ahab's sons ( 1 Kings 22; 2 Kings 3 ).

Jehoshaphat, at heart, was a shepherd and not a wolf as was Ahab. Upon his return, after the defeat by Benhadad, no indignation was

shown toward the prophet who publicly reproved him ( 19:1-3 ). No doubt Jehoshaphat would remember the foolish conduct of his father, Asa, who threw the prophet in stocks in prison and inflicted cruelties on the people ( 16:7-10 ).

As a true shepherd to the sheep "Jehoshaphat dwelt at Jerusalem: and he went out again among the people from Beersheba to the hill country of Ephraim, and brought them back to the LORD, the God of their fathers" ( 19:4 ). He reformed the judicial system giving Godly counsel to the judges:

"Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the LORD, who is with you in the judgment." ( 2 Chron. 19:6 ).

18:32 For it came to pass, that, when the captains of the chariots perceived that it was not the king of Israel, they turned back again from pursuing him - From the human point-of-view a mistake in identity. From the divine point-of-view, a direct intervention in the affairs of men.

18:33 And a certain man drew a bow at a venture - I.e., "in his simplicity", A. V. mg. - He did not know he was aiming at Ahab.

and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness - "between the scale armour and the breastplate", R. S. V.; "shoulder joints and coat of mail", Roth.

therefore he said to his chariot man, Turn thine hand, that thou mayest carry me out of the host / 'battle', R. S. V. / for I am wounded - Before he died Ahab had time to reflect upon the folly of his life. His cup of iniquity, however, was full. For him there was no longer any forgiveness.

18:34 And the battle increased that day: howbeit the king of Israel stayed himself / 'propped', R. S. V. / up in his chariot against the Syrians until the even - This was an attempt by Ahab to prevent his soldiers from retreating. He apparently did not lack courage in war.

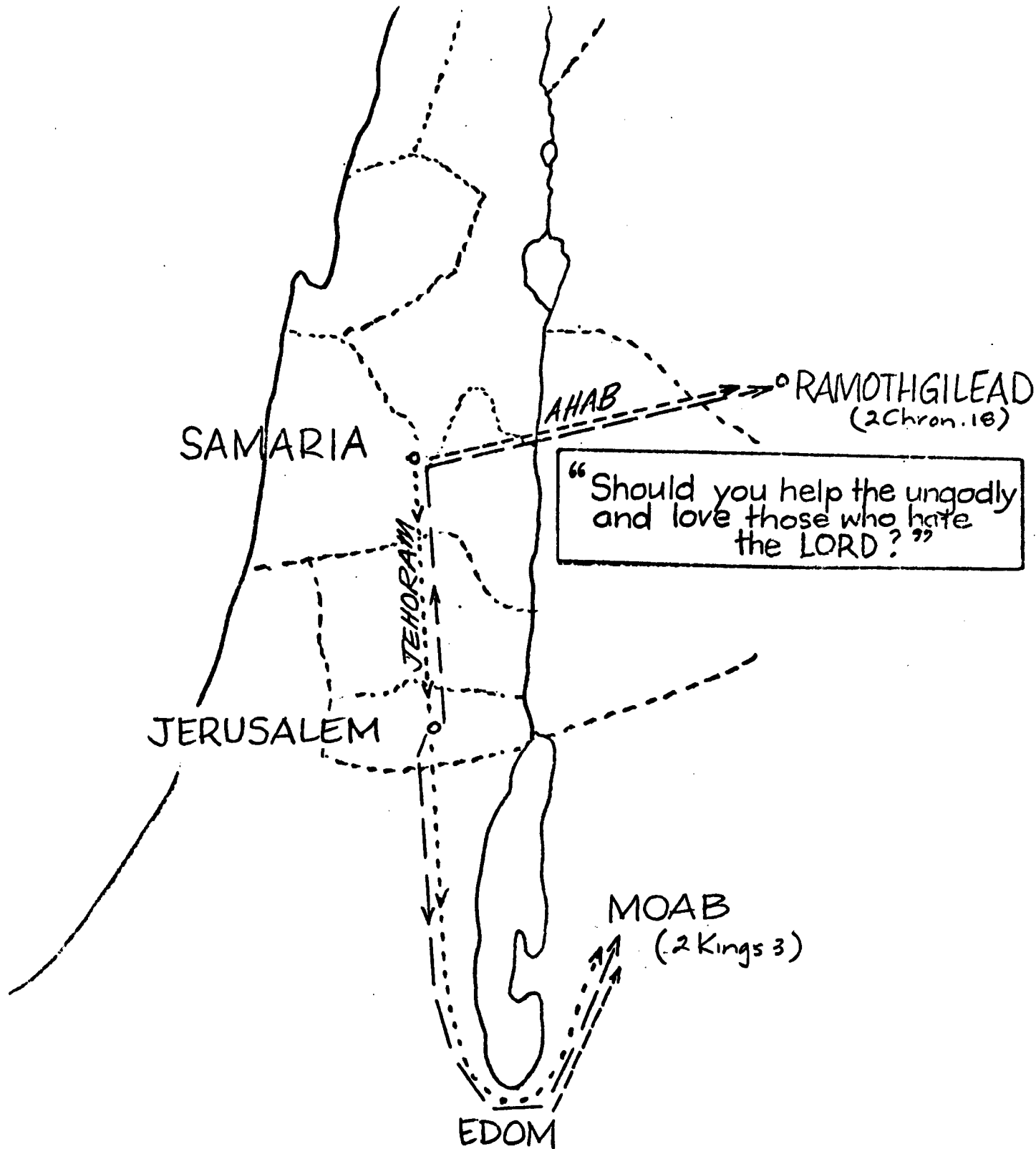
and at about the time of the sun going down he died - The Kings account adds "and the blood ran out of the wound into the midst of the chariot" ( 1 Kings 22:35 ). The midst of the chariot was literally the bosom of the chariot ( A. V. mg. ) - the rounded front and the part of the standing board to which it was attached. Here the blood would collect, forming a pool, in which the king and his charioteer must have stood. Note the additional information in 1 Kings 22:38:

"And one washed the chariot in the pool of Samaria; and the dogs licked up his blood; and they washed his armour; according unto the word of the LORD which he spake. "

THE COMMERCIAL ALLIANCE ( 2 Chron. 20:35-37; 1 Kings 22:47-49 )

Ahaziah, Ahab's son, reigned a short two years. Within this time,

# MILITARY ALLIANCE — JEHOSHAPHAT JOINS AHAB, JEHORAM



Jehoshaphat established a shipping alliance with Ahaziah to operate from Ezion-geber to bring gold and other goods from Ophir and Tarshish. For this alliance Jehoshaphat was indicted by the prophet Eliezer:

"Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, the LORD broken thy works. And the ships were broken, that they were not able to go to Tarshish." ( 2 Chron. 20:37 ).

Ahaziah attempted to revive the project, attributing the shipwrecks to the inept seamanship of Jehoshaphat's men ( 1 Kings 22:49 ) - but Jehoshaphat refused - having learned his lesson!

#### A FURTHER MILITARY VENTURE AGAINST MOAB ( 2 Kings 3 )

Jehoram, who succeeded Ahaziah to the throne in Israel, was not quite as wicked as Ahab: "and he wrought evil in the sight of the LORD; but not like his father and like his mother: for he put away the image of Baal that his father had made." ( 2 Kings 3:2 ). Jehoshaphat may have rationalized this small reform as a reason for a joint venture against Moab.

The battle strategy required Jehoram to journey south to Jerusalem where Jehoshaphat's army would join the effort. When they reached Edom, the king of Edom would likewise join the war effort against Moab.

The arid terrain proved too much for the allies, and after a circuitous march no water could be found for either the armies or the beasts ( 2 Kings 3:9 ). At Jehoshaphat's counsel, prophetic guidance was sought. The words of Elisha have a familiar ring:

"And Elisha said, As the LORD of hosts lives, whom I serve, were it not that I have regard for Jehoshaphat the Judah, I would neither look at you, nor see you / Jehoram /." ( 2 Kings 3:14, R.S. V. ).

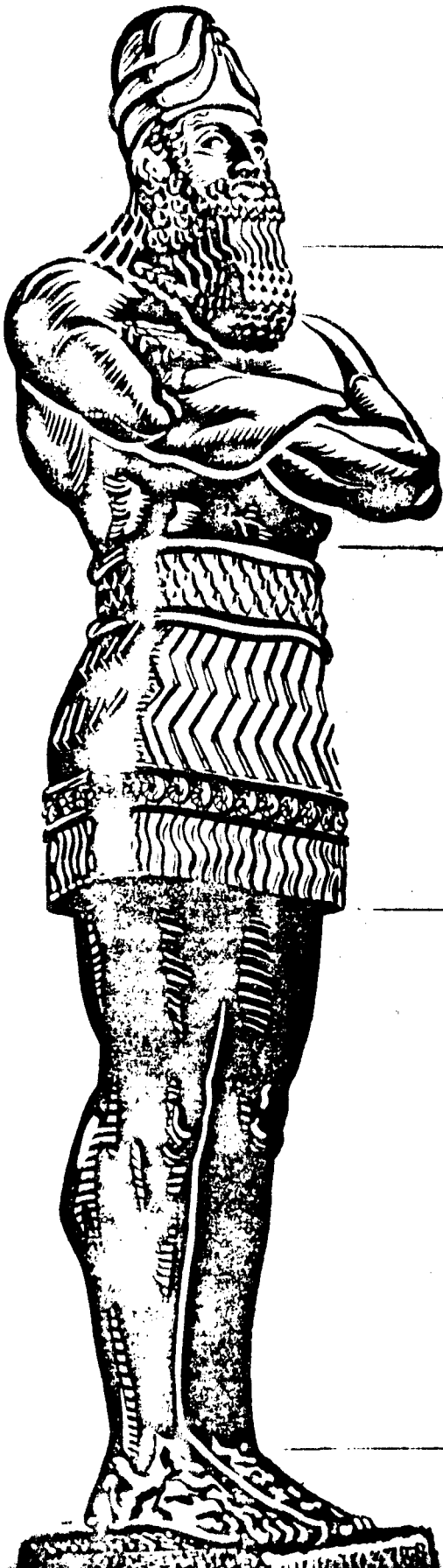
Once again the kindly providence of the Almighty rescued Jehoshaphat from certain death.

May the lessons of Jehoshaphat's life not be forgotten by us, perchance the God of Israel might have regard for us in the day when He judges the secrets of men by the Man of His appointing.



the GREAT IMAGE PROPHECY

This prophecy is the spinal cord of all prophecy, How much do you remember?



part of image	metal	power represented	years of reign ( approx. )

CAN YOU IDENTIFY THEIR MEANING?

Fill in the blanks showing what the symbols represent:

the LION with EAGLE'S WINGS  
Dan. 7:1-4



1. All the beasts came up from the great sea \_\_\_\_\_
2. The beasts were different from each other ( not all the same ) \_\_\_\_\_
3. "Four great beasts" \_\_\_\_\_
4. The lion \_\_\_\_\_
5. Eagle's wings \_\_\_\_\_
6. Eagle's wings plucked off \_\_\_\_\_
7. Lion lifted up from the earth \_\_\_\_\_
8. The lion made to stand on its feet \_\_\_\_\_
9. A man's heart was given to the lion \_\_\_\_\_

the BEAR with 3 RIBS IN MOUTH  
Dan. 7:5



1. The bear \_\_\_\_\_
2. Raised on one side \_\_\_\_\_
3. Three ribs in the mouth between the teeth \_\_\_\_\_
4. Arise, devour much flesh \_\_\_\_\_

the LEOPARD with 4 WINGS  
Dan. 7:6



1. The Leopard \_\_\_\_\_
2. Four wings of a bird on its back \_\_\_\_\_
3. Four heads \_\_\_\_\_