

Ben-Hadad's Second Attack on the Northern Kingdom (c. 856n BC)

1 Kings 20:23–43

Ben-Hadad Plans Another Attack

23 The servants of the king of Aram said to him, “Their gods *are* gods of the mountains, therefore they were stronger than we. Let us fight with them in the plain; surely we will be stronger than they.

24 Do this thing: remove the kings each from his post, and put a governor in their place.

25 You must muster an army for yourself as the army you have lost, and horses and chariots as the horses and chariots *you lost*, then we will fight them in the plain. Surely we will be stronger than they.” So he listened to their voice and did so.

Ahab is Vastly Outnumbered

26 It happened at the turning of the year that Ben-Hadad mustered Aram and went up to Aphek for the war with Israel.

27 The Israelites had been mustered and provisioned, and they went to engage them. The Israelites encamped opposite them as two flocks of goats, but the Arameans filled the land.

God Gives Ahab the Victory

28 Then the man of God approached, and he spoke to the king of Israel, and he said, “Thus says Yahweh: ‘Because Aram has said, “Yahweh *is* a god of the mountains and not a god of the valleys,” I will give all this great crowd into your hand that you may know that I *am* Yahweh.”

29 These encamped opposite for seven days, and it happened on the seventh day that the battle began, and the Israelites killed the Arameans, one hundred thousand infantry in one day.

30a Then those who remained fled to Aphek, to the city, and the wall fell on twenty-seven thousand men who had remained,

Ben-Hadad Pleads for His Life

30b so Ben-Hadad fled and went to the innermost rooms of the city.

31 Then his servants said to him, “Please now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are kings of mercy. Let us now put sackcloth on around our waists and ropes on our heads. Then let us go out to the king of Israel. Perhaps he will let you live.”

32a So they tied sackcloth around their waists and ropes on their heads. Then they went to the king of Israel and said, “Your servant Ben-Hadad says, ‘Please let me live.’”

Ahab Spares Ben-Hadad

32b And he said, “*Is* my brother still alive?”

33 The men took this as a good omen and they quickly accepted *it* as true from him, and they said, “Your brother Ben-Hadad *lives*.” So he said, “Go, get him.” Ben-Hadad came out to him, and *Ahab* pulled him up on the chariot.

34 *Ben-Hadad* said to him, “The cities which my father took from your father I shall return. You may set up streets with stalls for yourself in Damascus just as my father set up in Samaria.” *Then Ahab said*, “On these terms I will let you go,” So he made a covenant with him and let him go.

God Sends a Prophet to Rebuke Ahab

35 A certain man from the sons of the prophets said to his fellow countryman, “By the word of Yahweh, please strike me.” But the man refused to strike him.

36 He said to him, “Because you have not obeyed the voice of Yahweh, look, as you now are going from me, a lion will kill you.” When he went from beside him, the lion found him and killed him.

37 Then he found another man and said, “Strike me, please,” so the man struck him sharply and wounded him.

38 Then the prophet went and waited for the king along the road and disguised himself with a headband over his eyes.

39 As the king *was* passing by, he called to the king and said, “Your servant went out in the thick of the battle, and suddenly a man turned and brought a man to me and said, ‘Guard this man. If by any means he should be missed, it will be your life in his place, or you shall pay a talent of silver.’”

40 It happened that your servant was busy here and there, and he disappeared.” Then the king said to him, “Your own judgment has been determined.”

41 He quickly removed the headband from his eyes, and the king of Israel recognized him, that he *was* from the prophets.

42 He said to him, “Thus says Yahweh: ‘Because you have let the man I devoted for destruction go from *your* hand, your life shall be in place of his life and your people in place of his people.’”

43 Then the king of Israel went to his house, sullen and angry, and he came to Samaria.

Naboth's Vineyard (c. 856n BC)

1 Kings 21:1–29

Ahab Asks to Buy Naboth's Vineyard

1 It happened after these things that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard which *was* in Jezreel beside the palace of Ahab king of Samaria.

2 Ahab spoke to Naboth, saying, "Give me your vineyard that it may be mine for a garden of vegetable plants, because it is near, beside my house, and I will give to you a better vineyard in place of it. If it is better in your eyes, I will give you the money of its price."

3 Naboth said to Ahab, "Far be it from me from Yahweh that I should give the inheritance of my ancestors to you." [cf. [Lev 25:23–28](#); [Num 36:7–9](#)]

4 Then Ahab went to his house, sullen and angry because of the word that Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him *when* he had said, "I will not give to you the inheritance of my ancestors." So he lay on his bed, turned away his face, and would not eat *any* food.

Jezebel's Scheme

5 Then Jezebel his wife came to him, and she said to him, "What is this, that your spirit is sullen and you are not eating food?"

6 Then he said to her, "When I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite and asked him, 'Give me your vineyard for money, or it you prefer, I will give you a vineyard in place of it,' he said, 'I will not give you my vineyard.'"

7 Jezebel his wife said to him, "Now, you rule over Israel. Get up, eat food, and let your heart be cheerful. I myself will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite."

8 So she wrote letters in the name of Ahab and sealed them with his seal. She sent the letters to the elders and the nobles who *were* dwelling with Naboth in his city.

9 She had written in the letters, saying, "Call a fast and seat Naboth at the head of the people.

10 Seat two men, scoundrels, opposite him. Let them witness against him saying, 'You cursed God and the king.' Then you shall bring him out and stone him so that he dies." [cf. [Deut 17:6–7](#); [19:15–21](#); [Exod 22:28](#); [Lev 24:13–16](#)]

Naboth and His Sons are Murdered

11 The men of his city and the elders and nobles who were living in his city did according to what Jezebel had sent to them, as *was* written in the letters which she had sent to them.

12 They called a fast, and they seated Naboth at the head of the people.

13 Then the two men, scoundrels, came, sat opposite him, and the scoundrels witnessed against Naboth before the people, saying, "Naboth cursed God and the king," so they brought him outside of the city and stoned him with stones, and he died.

14 They sent to Jezebel saying, "Naboth has been stoned, and he is dead."

15 It happened at the moment Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned and died, Jezebel said to Ahab, "Get up, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite which he had refused to give to you for money, for Naboth is not alive, but dead."

16 When Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, he got up to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite to take possession of it.

Yahweh Sends Elijah to Foretell Ahab's and Jezebel's Punishment

17 The word of Yahweh came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying,

18 "Arise, go down to meet Ahab the king of Israel who is in Samaria. Look in the vineyard of Naboth, where he has gone to take possession of it.

19 You shall say to him, 'Thus says Yahweh: "Have you committed murder and also taken possession?"' You shall also say to him, 'Thus says Yahweh: "In the place where the dogs licked the blood of Naboth, the dogs will also lick your blood." "' [cf. [2 Kgs 9:24–26](#)]

20 Then Ahab said to Elijah, "Have you found me, my enemy?" He said, "I have found you because you have sold yourself to do evil in the eyes of Yahweh.

21 'Look, I *am* bringing disaster on you, and I will sweep away after you. I will cut off for Ahab every male in Israel, bond or free.

22 I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, because you made me angry and have caused Israel to sin.'

23 Moreover, concerning Jezebel, Yahweh has said, 'The dogs will eat Jezebel in the outer rampart of Jezreel.'

24 The one who dies for Ahab in the city, the dogs will eat; the one who dies in the open country, the birds of heaven will eat."

25 Truly, there was no one like Ahab who had sold himself by doing evil in the eyes of Yahweh, whose wife Jezebel urged him on.

26 Also, he acted very abominably by going after idols like all the Amorites had done whom Yahweh had driven out from before the Israelites."

Ahab Humbles Himself and Yahweh Shows Mercy

27 When Ahab heard these words, he tore his clothes and put sackcloth over his flesh, fasted, lay in the sackcloth, and went about dejectedly.

28 Then the word of Yahweh came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying,

29 "Have you seen how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has humbled himself before me, I will not bring disaster in his days. I will bring the disaster on his house in the days of his son." [cf. [2 Kgs 22:8–20](#); [Jer 18:7–8](#)]

Three Years of Peace (855n–853n BC)

1 Kings 22:1, 44; 2 Chronicles 18:1b

Peace With Syria

1 Kgs 22:1 They lived three years, and there was no war between Aram and Israel.

Peace With Judah

1 Kgs 22:44 But, Jehoshaphat made peace with the king of Israel.

2 Chr 18:1b and he became son-in-law to Ahab. [*Jehoshaphat's son Jehoram married Ahab's daughter Athaliah*]

Jehoram [Judah] Begins His Coregency With Jehoshaphat (854t BC)

2 Kings 1:17b

17b and Joram became king in his place in the second year of J[eh]oram the son of Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, because he had no son.

Ahab, Jehoshaphat, Micaiah and the Lying Prophets (853n BC)

1 Kings 22:2–28

2 Chronicles 18:2–27

Ahab Asks Jehoshaphat to Help Him Reclaim Ramoth Gilead

2 It happened in the third year, Jehoshaphat king of Judah went down to the king of Israel,

3 and the king of Israel said to his servants, “Do you know Ramoth-Gilead belongs to us, and we *are* doing nothing about taking it from the hand of the king of Aram?”

4 Then he said to Jehoshaphat, “Will you go with me to the battle for Ramoth-Gilead?” Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, “I am like you; my people are like your people; my horses are like your horses.”

Jehoshaphat Makes Ahab Seek Direction from Yahweh

5 Jehoshaphat also said to the king of Israel, “Please inquire for the word of Yahweh today.”

6 Then the king of Israel assembled the prophets, about four hundred men, and he said to them, “Shall I go against Ramoth-Gilead for the battle, or should I refrain?” Then they said, “Go up, for the Lord will give it into the hand of the king.”

7 So Jehoshaphat said, “Is there no prophet of Yahweh here that we might still inquire from him?”

8 Then the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “*There is* still one man to inquire from Yahweh, but I despise him, for he never prophesies *anything* good concerning me, but only bad: Micaiah the son of Imlah.” Then Jehoshaphat said, “The king should not say so.”

9 The king of Israel summoned a certain court official, and he said, “Quickly fetch Micaiah son of Imlah.”

10 The king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah *were* each sitting on his throne, dressed *in their robes*, at the threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria, *with* all the prophets prophesying before them.

11 Zedekiah son of Kenaanah made horns of iron for himself and said, “Thus says Yahweh: ‘With these you shall gore the Arameans until finishing them.’”

12 All of the prophets *were* likewise prophesying, saying, “Go up to Ramoth-Gilead and triumph, and Yahweh will give it into the

2 And after some years he went down to Ahab in Samaria. And Ahab slaughtered many sheep and cattle for him and for the people who *were* with him, and urged him to go up against Ramoth-Gilead.

3 And Ahab the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, “Will you go up with me to Ramoth-Gilead?” And he answered him, “*I am* as you *are*, and my people *are* as your people with you in war.”

4 Then Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, “Seek first of all the word of Yahweh.”

5 Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets, four hundred men. And he said to them, “Shall we go to Ramoth-Gilead to battle, or shall we cease?” And they said, “Go up, since God will give *it* into the hand of the king.”

6 Then Jehoshaphat said, “Is there not here another prophet of Yahweh that we might inquire of him?”

7 Then the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “*There is* yet one man by whom to seek Yahweh, but I hate him, because he never prophesies good concerning me, but always disaster. He *is* Micaiah the son of Imlah.” Then Jehoshaphat said, “Let not the king say thus.”

8 Then the king of Israel called to a eunuch and said, “Quickly bring Micaiah the son of Imlah.”

9 Now the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah *were* each sitting on his throne, clothed in robes. And they were sitting at the threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria, and all the prophets were prophesying before them.

10 And Zedekiah the son of Kenaanah made for himself horns of iron, and he said, “Thus says Yahweh: ‘With these you will gore Aram to their destruction.’”

11 And all the prophets prophesied thus, saying, “Go up to Ramoth-Gilead and triumph! Yahweh will give it into the

hand of the king.”

13 Then the messenger who had gone to summon Micaiah said to him, “Please now, the words of the prophet are unanimously favorable to the king. Please let your words be as one word with them, and speak favorably.”

14 Then Micaiah said, “As Yahweh lives, surely only as Yahweh speaks to me, that will I speak.”

15 When he came to the king, the king asked him, “Micaiah, shall we go to Ramoth-Gilead to the battle, or shall we refrain?” He said to him, “Go up and triumph, and Yahweh will give *it* into the hand of the king.”

16 Then the king said to him, “How many times must I make you swear that you shall not tell me *anything* but truth in the name of Yahweh?”

17 So he said, “I saw all of Israel scattering to the mountains, like the sheep without a shepherd. Yahweh also said, ‘There are no masters for these, let them return in peace, each to his house.’”

18 Then the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “Did I not say to you that he would not prophesy good concerning me, but disaster?”

Micaiah Reveals God’s Plan to Ahab

19 And he said, “Therefore, hear the word of Yahweh. I saw Yahweh sitting on his throne with all the hosts of heaven standing beside him from his right hand and from his left *hand*.”

20 And Yahweh said, ‘Who will entice Ahab so that he will go up and fall at Ramoth-Gilead?’

Then this one was saying one thing and the other one was saying another.

21 Then a spirit came out and stood before Yahweh and said, ‘I will entice him,’ and Yahweh said to him, ‘How?’

22 He said, ‘I will go out and I will be a false spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.’ And he said, ‘You shall entice and succeed, go out and do so.’

23 So then, see that Yahweh has placed a false spirit in the mouth of all of these your prophets, and Yahweh has spoken disaster concerning you.”

24 Then Zedekiah son of Kenaanah came near and slapped Micaiah on the cheek and said, “When did the Spirit of Yahweh pass from me to speak with you?”

25 Then Micaiah said, “Behold, you *are about to* see on that day when you go from room to room to hide.”

Ahab Ignores God’s Warning

26 The king of Israel said, “Take Micaiah and return him to Amon the commander of the city and to Jehoash the son of the king;

27 and say, ‘Thus says the king: “Put this *fellow in* the house of imprisonment and feed him reduced rations of food and water until I come in peace.” ’”

28 Then Micaiah said, “If you indeed return in peace, then Yahweh has not spoken with me.”

Then he said, “Let all the peoples hear!”

hand of the king.”

12 Then the messenger who went to call Micaiah said to him, “Behold, the words of the prophets *are* good with one voice to the king. Please let your word be as one with them and speak good.”

13 But Micaiah said, “As Yahweh lives, only what my God has said, that will I speak.”

14 And when he had come to the king, the king said to him, “Micaiah, shall we go to Ramoth-Gilead to war or shall I cease?” And he said, “Go up and triumph! They shall be given into your hand.”

15 But the king said to him, “How many times shall I make you swear that you speak nothing except the truth in the name of Yahweh?”

16 Then he said, “I saw all Israel scattered upon the mountains like sheep that had no shepherd. And Yahweh said, ‘These have no masters; let them return to his own house in peace.’”

17 Then the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “Did I not say to you he would not prophesy good concerning me, but only disaster?”

18 Then Micaiah said, “Therefore hear the word of Yahweh: I saw Yahweh sitting upon his throne with all the host of heaven standing on his right and on his left.

19 And Yahweh said, ‘Who will entice Ahab the king of Israel that he would go up and fall at Ramoth-Gilead?’

And one said this, and another said that.

20 Then a spirit came forth and stood before Yahweh and said, ‘I will entice him.’ Then Yahweh said to him, ‘By what means?’

21 Then he said, ‘I will go forth and will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.’ And he said, ‘You will entice him and will also succeed. Go out and do so.’

22 So now, behold, Yahweh has put a spirit of deception into the mouths of these your prophets. Yahweh has spoken disaster against you.”

23 Then Zedekiah the son of Kenaanah came near and struck Micaiah on the cheek and said, “Which way did the Spirit of Yahweh come from me to speak to you?”

24 Then Micaiah said, “Behold, you will see on that day when you go into a private room to hide yourself.”

25 Then the king of Israel said, “Take Micaiah and return him to Amon the commander of the city and to Jehoash the son of the king,

26 and say, ‘Thus says the king: “Put this one into the prison house, and let him eat a meager ration of bread and water until I return in peace.” ’”

27 And Micaiah said, “If you surely return in peace Yahweh has not spoken with me.”

Then he said, “Hear, peoples, all of them!”

Chronological Notes

- 1) A coregency between Jehoram and Jehoshaphat is implied in 2 Kings 1:17b, where it is said that Joram of Israel began in the second year of Jehoram of Judah. This same year is called the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat in 2 Kings 3:1; the eighteenth year was 853t whether measured from the death of his father Asa in an accession sense or non-accession sense. 853t overlaps Joram's known beginning year, 852n, in 852n/852t. The "second of Jehoram" (2 Kgs 1:17) is thus 852n/852t. If this number is taken in a non-accession sense, Jehoram's coregency began in 854t.¹
 - A) 2 Kings 1:17 – Jehoram's (Israel) first year = Jehoram's (Judah) second year (of his coregency) = 852 BC.
 - B) 2 Kings 3:1 – Jehoram's (Israel) first year = Jehoshaphat's eighteenth year (of his sole reign, i.e., 871t) = 852 BC.
 - C) 2 Kings 8:16 – Jehoram's (Israel) fifth year = Jehoram's (Judah) first year (of sole reign) = 848t BC.
- 2) During Ahab's reign, Shalmaneser III (the fourth of the neo-Assyrian kings) made it clear "that Assyria's objective was to extend her hegemony over the entire western world."² He conquered Carchemish in 857, one year before Ben-Hadad and Ahab made their treaty at Aphek (this may be the military and political context that helps make sense of Ahab's mercy to Ben-Hadad). "By 853 Shalmaneser pushed as far south as Qarqar (Khirbet Qerqur) on the Orontes River, not much more than a hundred miles from Damascus. There, according to his own annals, he engaged a great coalition of kings led by Ben-Hadad and including Ahab. In true Assyrian fashion he claims to have achieved a smashing victory, but the truth is surely something less than that. The very fact that he pressed no farther and, in fact, retreated to Calah, his capital, indicates that at best the affair was a stalemate. Moreover, Ben-Hadad and Ahab, following Qarqar, felt so free of Assyrian pressure that they broke their treaty and renewed hostilities."³ Thus the battle at Qarqar is the recent military and political backdrop against which the story of Ahab, Jehoshaphat, Micaiah and the lying prophets takes place.

¹ Rodger C. Young, "When Did Solomon Die?" *JETS* 46.4 (Dec 2003): 597.

² Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, 348.

³ Merrill, 348–349. From more data related to the dating of the Battle of Qarqar, see Kenneth A. **Strand**, "Thiele's Biblical Chronology as a Corrective for Extrabiblical Dates," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 34.2 (1996): 295–317; Rodger C. **Young**, "Evidence for Inerrancy from an Unexpected Source: OT Chronology," *Bible and Spade* 21.2 (2008): 54–64, and Bryant G. **Wood**, "Israelite Kings in Assyrian Inscriptions," *Bible and Spade* 24.2 (Spring 2011):