

Ahaziah [Israel] and Elijah (852n BC)

2 Kings 1:2–16

2 Ahaziah had fallen through the lattice in his upper room, which *was* in Samaria, and he was injured. So he sent messengers, and he said to them, “Go, inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron, if I will survive this injury.”

3 Then the angel of Yahweh spoke to Elijah the Tishbite, “Get up, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria and speak to them, ‘Is it because there is no God in Israel that you *are* going to inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron?’

4 Therefore, thus says Yahweh, ‘The bed upon which you have gone, you will not come down from it, but you shall surely die.’” So Elijah went.

5 When the messengers returned to him, he asked them, “Why have you returned?”

6 Then they said to him, “A man came up to meet us, and he said to us, ‘Go, return to the king who sent you and speak to him, “Thus says Yahweh, ‘Is it because there is no God in Israel that you *are* sending to inquire of Baal-Zebub the god of Ekron? Therefore the bed upon which you have gone, you will not come down from it, for you will surely die.’”’”

7 Then he spoke to them, “What *was* the manner of the man who came up to meet you and spoke to you all these things?”

8 They answered him, “A hairy man with a leather belt girded around his waist.” And he said, “It *is* Elijah the Tishbite.”

9 So Ahaziah sent to him the commander of fifty with his fifty *men*, and he went up to him while he was sitting on the top of the hill. He said to him, “O man of God, the king says, ‘Come down.’”

10 Then Elijah answered and said to the commander of the 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 So he again sent another commander of fifty and his fifty *men*. He answered and said to him, “O man of God, thus says the king, ‘Come down quickly!’”

12 Then Elijah answered and said to them, “If I *am* a man of God, then 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. [[Luke 9:54](#)]

13 So he again sent a third *time* a commander of fifty and his fifty, and the commander of the third fifty went up and came and knelt down on his knees before Elijah and entreated him. He said to him, “O man of God, please let my life and the lives of your servants, these fifty, be precious in your eyes.

14 Behold, fire from heaven came down and consumed the first two commanders of fifty and their fifties, so then let my life be precious in your eyes.”

15 Then the angel of Yahweh spoke to Elijah, “Go down with him. Do not be afraid because of him.” So he got up and went down with him to the king,

16 and he said to him, “Thus says Yahweh, ‘Because you have sent messengers to inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron—is it because there is no God in Israel *from whom* to inquire his word?—therefore the bed upon which you went, you shall not come down from it, for you shall surely die.’”

The Death of Ahaziah [Israel] (852n BC)

2 Kings 1:17–18

17 So he died, according to the word of Yahweh which Elijah had spoken, and Joram became king in his place in the second year of Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah [*Jehoram’s coregency with Jehoshaphat*], because he had no son.

18 The remainder of the acts of Ahaziah which he did, *are* they not written in the scroll of the events of the days of the kings of Israel?

Elijah Ascends to Heaven (852n BC)

2 Kings 2

Elijah Tests Elisha

1 When Yahweh was about to take Elijah up in the storm *to* heaven, Elijah and Elisha went from Gilgal.

2 Elijah said to Elisha, “Please stay here, for Yahweh has sent me up to Bethel.” Elisha said, “As Yahweh lives and as your soul lives, I will certainly not leave you!” So they went down *to* Bethel.

3 Then the sons of the prophets who *were in* Bethel came out to Elisha, and they said to him, “Do you know that Yahweh *is* going to take your master from you today?” He said, “I also know; be quiet!”

4 Elijah said to him, “Elisha, please stay here because Yahweh has sent me to Jericho.” And he said, “As Yahweh lives and as your soul lives, I will certainly not leave you!” So they came to Jericho.

5 Then the sons of the prophets who *were in* Jericho came near to Elisha, and they said to him, “Do you know that Yahweh *is* going to take your master from you today?” He said, “I also know; be quiet!”

6 Then Elijah said to him, “Please stay here, because Yahweh has sent me to the Jordan.” He said, “As Yahweh lives and as your soul lives, I will certainly not leave you!” So the two of them went on.

7 Then fifty men from the sons of the prophets went and stood opposite *them* at a distance while the two of them stood by the Jordan.

8 Elijah took his cloak, rolled it up, and struck the water. It divided in two, and the two of them crossed over on dry land.

9 After they crossed over, Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask what I may do for you before I am taken away from you." Then Elisha said, "Please let there come to me a double portion of your spirit."

10 He said, "What you ask is difficult. If you see me being taken from you, it will be so for you, but if not, it will not happen."

Elijah is Taken Up to Heaven

11 Then they *were* walking, talking as they went. Suddenly a fiery chariot with horses of fire *appeared* and separated between the two of them. Elijah went up in the storm *to* the heavens

12 while Elisha *was* watching and crying out, "My father, my father; the chariot of Israel and its horsemen!" But he could not see him any longer, and he grasped his clothes and tore them in two pieces.

Elisha's Double Portion

13 Then he picked up Elijah's cloak that had fallen off of him, and he returned and stood on the bank of the Jordan.

14 He took Elijah's cloak that had fallen from upon him and struck the water. Then he said, "Where is Yahweh, the God of Elijah?" So he also struck the water, and it divided in two, and Elisha crossed over.

15 When the sons of the prophets who *were* at Jericho saw him from *the* other side, they declared, "The spirit of Elijah rests upon Elisha," and they came to meet him and bowed down to him to the ground.

Elisha Tries to Prevent a Search for Elijah

16 Then they said to him, "Look, there are with your servants fifty able men. Please let them go and look for your master, lest the Spirit of Yahweh has lifted him up and thrown him on one of the mountains or into one of the valleys," but he said, "You must not send them."

17 But they urged him until embarrassing *him*, so he said, "Send them." So they sent fifty men, and they looked for three days, but they could not find him.

18 Then they returned to him while he *was* staying in Jericho. He said to them, "Did I not tell you not to go?"

Elisha Heals the Water of Jericho from Joshua's Curse

19 The men of the city said to Elisha, "Please now, the location of the city *is* good, as my master can see, but the water *is* bad and the land unproductive."

20 So he said, "Bring me a new bowl and put salt in it." So they brought it to him.

21 Then he went out to the spring of waters and threw the salt *into it* there and said, "Thus says Yahweh, 'I hereby purify these waters; let there be no longer any death or unproductiveness from it.'"

22 Then the waters were purified until this very day according to the word of Elisha that he spoke.

Elisha Calls for God's Judgment on the Youth of Bethel

23 Then he went up from there *to* Bethel; as he *was* going up along the way, young boys came out from the city and mocked at him and said to him, "Go up, baldhead; go up, baldhead!"

24 When he turned around and saw them, he cursed them in the name of Yahweh. Then two bears came out of the forest and mauled forty-two boys among them.

25 Then he went from there to Mount Carmel and from there he returned *to* Samaria.

Joram, Ahaziah's Brother, Assumes the Throne of Israel (852n BC)

2 Kings 3:1–3

1 Now Joram the son of Ahab had become king over Israel in Samaria in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah. He reigned twelve years

2 and did evil in the eyes of Yahweh, yet not as his father or his mother, as he removed the stone pillars of Baal that his father had made.

3 But he did cling to the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat who caused Israel to sin, and he did not depart from it.

Joram [Israel] Asks Jehoshaphat to Help Quell the Moabite Rebellion (c. 852n BC)

2 Kings 3:6–27

Joram Enlists the Aid of Judah

6 So King Joram went out on that day from Samaria, and he mustered all of Israel.

7 He went and sent *a message* to Jehoshaphat king of Judah, saying, "The king of Moab has rebelled against me. Will you go with me against Moab for the battle?" And he said, "I will go up. I am like you; my people are like your people; my horses are like your horses."

8 Then he said, "Which way shall we go up?" And he answered, "By way of the wilderness of Edom."

We Three Kings

9 So the king of Israel and the king of Judah and the king of Edom went around, a way of seven days, but there was no water for the army or for the animals which were with them.

10 Then the king of Israel said, “Aha, Yahweh has called for these three kings to give them into the hand of Moab.”

11 Then Jehoshaphat asked, “Is there no prophet of Yahweh here that we might inquire *guidance* from Yahweh?” One of the servants of the king of Israel answered and said, “Elisha the son of Shaphat is here, who poured water on the hands of Elijah.”

12 Jehoshaphat said, “The word of Yahweh is with him.” So the king of Israel, Jehoshaphat, and the king of Edom went down to him.

Elisha Prophecies Victory

13 Then Elisha said to the king of Israel, “What do we have in common? Go to the prophets of your father and to the prophets of your mother.” Then the king of Israel said to him, “No, for Yahweh has called for these three kings to give them into the hand of Moab.”

14 Then Elisha said, “As Yahweh of hosts lives, before whom I stand, surely if I was not regarding the face of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, I would have not looked at you nor even glanced at you.

15 But now, bring me a musician.” It happened that at the moment the musician played, the hand of Yahweh came upon him.

16 He said, “Thus says Yahweh, ‘Make this wadi full of cisterns,’

17 for thus says Yahweh, ‘You will see neither wind nor rain, yet this wadi will be full of water; and you and all of your livestock and your animals shall drink.’

18 And since this is too trivial in the eyes of Yahweh, he will also give Moab into your hand,

19 and you shall defeat every fortified city, every choice city, and you shall fell every good tree. All of the springs of water you shall stop up, and every tract of good land you shall ruin with the stones.”

God Tricks the Moabites

20 It happened in the morning about the time of the *morning* offering, that water was suddenly coming from the direction of Edom and the land was filled with water.

21 Now all of Moab had heard that the kings had come up to fight against them, and all who were fighting age and up were called up, and they stood at the border.

22 When they arose early in the morning, the sun shone on the waters, and Moab saw the waters from the opposite *side* as red as blood.

23 Then they said, “This *is* blood! Certainly the kings have fought one another, and each has killed his neighbor. Now, to the war booty, O Moab!”

24 But when they came to the camp of Israel, Israel stood up and killed Moab, so that they fled from before them. They came at her and defeated Moab.

The Kings Carry Out God’s Command

25a The cities they tore down, *on* every good tract of land they threw stones until it was filled up, every spring of water they stopped up, and every good tree they felled.

Mesha Survives

25b They let the stone walls at Kir Hareseth remain, but the slingers surrounded and attacked it.

26 When the king of Moab saw that the battle was too heavy for him, he took with him seven hundred men who drew the sword to break through to the king of Edom, but they were not able.

27 He took his firstborn son who was to become king in his place and offered him *as* a burnt offering on the wall. Great wrath came upon Israel, and they withdrew from him and returned to the land.

Elisha and the Prophet’s Widow (c. 850 BC)

2 Kings 4:1–7

1 A certain woman from the wives of the sons of the prophets cried out to Elisha, saying, “Your servant my husband is dead. Now you know that your servant was a fearer of Yahweh, but the creditor came to take two of my children for himself as slaves.

2 Elisha asked her, “What shall I do for you? Tell me, what do you have in the house?” Then she said, “Your servant has nothing in the house except a jar of olive oil.”

3 Then he said to her, “Go, ask for yourself *some* containers from the streets, from all your neighbors. You must collect as many empty containers as you can!

4 You must also go and shut the door behind you and your children, and you must pour out *oil* into all of these containers and set the filled *ones* aside.”

5 So she went from him, and she shut the door behind her and her children. They *were* bringing *containers* to her, and she *kept* pouring.

6 It happened that when the containers were full, she said to her son, “Bring near me another container,” but he said to her, “There

is not another container.” Then the olive oil stopped flowing.

7 So she came and told the man of God, and he said, “Go, sell the olive oil and repay your debt. You and your sons can live on what is left over.”

Elisha and the Shunammite Woman (c. 850 BC)

2 Kings 4:8–17

8 It happened one day that Elisha passed through to Shunem where there *was* a wealthy woman, and she urged him to eat bread; so it happened each time he passed through, he would stop there to eat.

9 She said to her husband, “Please now, I know that he *is* a holy man of God who is passing our way regularly;

10 let us make a small enclosed room *upstairs* and put a bed, table, chair, and lampstand there for him, so that when he comes to us, he can turn and stay there.

11 One day it happened that he came there and went to the upper room and lay down there.

12 He said to Gehazi his servant, “Call to this Shunammite,” so he called to her, and she stood before him.

13 He said to him, “Please say to her, ‘Look, you took all this trouble, showing care for us; what is there *for me* to do for you? To speak for you to the king or to the commander of the army?’” She said, “I *am* living among my people.”

14 Then he said, “What may be done for her?” Gehazi said, “Well, she has no son, and her husband is old.”

15 And he said, “Call for her,” so he called for her and she stood in the doorway.

16 And he said, “At this time next spring, you *will be* embracing a son.” She said, “No, my lord, *O* man of God! You must not tell a lie to your servant!”

17 But the woman conceived, and she bore a son in the spring, which Elisha had promised to her.

The Death of Jehoshaphat (849t BC)

1 Kings 22:45, 50

2 Chr 20:34; 21:1–3

Before His Death, Jehoshaphat Gives Gifts to His Sons

21:2 Now he [Jehoram] had brothers, the sons of Jehoshaphat: Azariah, Jehiel, Zechariah, Azariah, Michael, and Shephatiah.

All these *were* the sons of Jehoshaphat, king of Israel.

3 And their father gave to them many gifts of silver, gold, and valuables, with fortified cities in Judah,

Jehoshaphat Gives the Kingdom to Jehoram

3b but he gave the kingdom to Jehoram, for he *was* the firstborn.

Jehoshaphat Dies

45 The remainder of the acts of Jehoshaphat, his powerful *deeds* he did, and how he fought, are they not written in

the scroll of the events of the days of the kings of Judah?

50 And Jehoshaphat slept with his ancestors and was buried with his ancestors in the city of David his ancestor, and Joram his son became king in his place.

20:34 Now the rest of the words of Jehoshaphat, *from* the first to the last, behold,

they *are* written in the chronicles of Jehu the son of Hanani, which *are* recorded in the scroll of the kings of Israel.

21:1 And Jehoshaphat slept with his ancestors and was buried with his ancestors in the city of David, and Jehoram his son reigned in his place.

Jehoram, Jehoshaphat’s Son, Begins Sole Reign of Judah (848n/848t BC)

2 Kings 8:16–17

2 Chronicles 21:5

16 Now in the fifth year of Joram son of Ahab, king of Israel, and Jehoshaphat king of Judah, Joram son of Jehoshaphat became the king of Judah.

17 He was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem.

5 Jehoram *was* thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem.

Chronological Notes

- 1) Establishing a Chronological Framework for Elisha's Ministry.
 - A) *Elijah's Translation* (2 Kgs 2). Elisha's sole ministry began with the translation of Elijah.¹ The story itself gives no chronological data—it simply notes that Elijah and Elisha were traveling from Gilgal when Yahweh was about to take Elijah up to heaven (Gilgal was approx. 10 miles south of Samaria). However, the canonical arrangement places the story immediately after the death of Ahaziah (2 Kings 1:15b–18; 852n BC) and before Joram's [Israel] campaign with Jehoshaphat [Judah] to quell the Moabite rebellion (2 Kings 3:6–27; c. 852 BC). Assuming this placement to be chronological, we can fix an upper bound on Elisha's sole ministry of 852 BC.
 - (1) There is one potential reason to reject the placement of 2 Kings 2 as chronological—the letter from Elijah to Jehoram [Judah] as recorded in 2 Chronicles 21:12–15.² The letter comes as a surprise to the reader of Chronicles. As Selman observes: "Elijah makes no other appearance in Chronicles, is only known to have prophesied in Israel (though cf. 1 Kgs 19:3, 8), wrote no other letters, and is thought by many to have been dead by this time!"³ Solutions to this issue include:
 - (a) Coregency Solution: Elijah wrote the letter during the early years of Jehoram's [Judah] coregency⁴ with his father Jehoshaphat (2 Kgs 1:17; 854t–849t BC).⁵
 - (i) The data in 2 Chronicles 21:1–11 does not support this solution. In the letter, Elijah makes specific mention of the fact that Jehoram murdered his brothers (2 Chr 21:13). This action was not taken until *after* Jehoshaphat's death (cf. 2 Chr 21:2–4).
 - (b) Prophetic Solution: Elijah wrote the letter prophetically before his translation and it was delivered to Jehoram [Judah] after he murdered his brothers (c. 848t BC).⁶
 - (i) Dillard is dismissive: "It is not probable that the Chronicler intends us to think the letter was written 'prophetically' before Elijah's death or that it was in some way transmitted from heaven."⁷ However, we should not be too quick to dismiss this solution. As Mabie comments: "While nothing in the text indicates this was the case, nothing in the text precludes the possibility either."⁸
 - (c) Scribal Error Solution: The name "Elijah" in 2 Chronicles 21:12 is a scribal error—the intended name was "Elisha." This error requires only the two final consonants to be altered.⁹
 - (d) Anachrony Solution: 2 Kings 2 is out of place chronologically and Elijah was not translated until after the beginning of Jehoram's sole reign over Judah in 848n/848t BC.¹⁰

¹ I assume an actual translation to heaven (e.g., Enoch). This understanding is contested by Roy E. Knuteson in "Elijah's Little-Known Letter in 2 Chronicles 21:12–15," *BSAC* 162:645 (Jan 2005), but I do not find his argument convincing.

² Scholars who see the letter as the Chronicler's own invention and thus having no implications for the chronology of Elisha's ministry include: H. G. M. Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, 306–7; E. L. Curtis and A. A. Madsen, "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Chronicles," *ICC* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1910), 415; W. Rudolph, *Chronikbücher* (HAT 21; Tübingen 1955), 267; Jacob M. Myers, "II Chronicles," *The Anchor Bible*, 122.

³ Martin J. Selman, "2 Chronicles: An Introduction and Commentary," *TOTC*, 455.

⁴ Rodger C. Young, "Tables of Reign Lengths from the Hebrew Court Records," *JETS* 48/2 (June 2005) 225–48.

⁵ Suggested by Selman (456), Thompson (John A. Thompson, "1, 2 Chronicles," *NAC*, 299), and Merrill (cf. Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, 351 n. 78).

⁶ Frederick J. Mabie, "1 and 2 Chronicles," *EBC*, Rev. Ed., 251; J. Barton Payne, "1 & 2 Chronicles," *EBC*, 505.

⁷ Raymond B. Dillard, "2 Chronicles," *WBC*, 168.

⁸ Mabie, 251.

⁹ This solution is preferred by Alberto R. Green, "Regnal Formulas in the Hebrew and Greek Texts of the Books of Kings," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* Vol. 42, No. 3, Jul., 1983, 176.

¹⁰ This view is suggested by Dillard (167–8), Payne (505) and the *Chronological Life Application Study Bible*.

- (i) This solution assigns an upper bound on Elisha's sole ministry of 848 BC. Note that Elijah's absence from the 2 Kings 3:11–19 narrative does not necessarily imply his absence from earth at the time (although the wording of 3:11 suggests that Elisha's interaction with Elijah was past).¹¹
- (2) After rejecting the coregency solution, we are left with two solutions which retain a date of 852 BC for the beginning of Elisha's sole ministry (prophetic and scribal error), and one solution which reduces this date to 848 BC (anachrony). At this point, we need more data before coming to a conclusion. We will come back to this issue after we have examined the rest of Elisha's ministry.¹²
- B) *Elisha Prophesies Victory for Joram [Israel] and Jehoshaphat* (2 Kgs 3:11–19). Given the synchronism with Jehoshaphat, this event is associated with the beginning of Joram's [Israel] reign (c. 852n BC).
- C) *Elisha and the Prophet's Widow* (2 Kgs 4:1–7). We are given no chronological data for this story. The canonical arrangement places it early in Elisha's ministry (c. 852 BC).
- D) *Elisha Asks God to Give the Shunammite Woman a Son* (2 Kgs 4:8–17). We are not told when Elisha first met the prominent woman who lived in Shunem (cf. "one day" in 2 Kgs 4:8). Their friendship began at her insistence and grew over some period of time ("whenever he was passing through, he would stop there for a meal"). Eventually, Elisha wanted to repay her kindness and when she refused his gratitude, Gehazi pointed out that she had no children. Elisha, at God's direction, foretold the birth of a son, and "at the specified time the next year she gave birth to a son" (2 Kgs 4:17). From this, we can reasonably conclude that the story involves a 15–21 month period (6 to 12 months of friendship plus a 9 month pregnancy).¹³
- E) *Elisha Raises the Shunammite Woman's Son from the Dead* (2 Kings 4:18–37). The story of the woman of Shunem continues with the words "the boy grew and one day he went out to see his father who was with the harvest workers." Obviously, a period of several years had gone by—the question is, how many? Clearly, he was old enough to speak (>2 years) and old enough to go out into the field alone (>5 years), so a conservative estimate is that the boy is around 6 years old when he died and was raised to life by Elisha. Thus the time period involved in the Shunammite woman narrative of 2 Kings 4:8–37 totals around 8 consecutive years.
- F) *Elisha Cures the Stew* (2 Kings 4:38–41). The canonical arrangement places this story after the raising from the dead of the Shunammite woman's son. Further, it tell us that it took place "when there was a famine in the land" (2 Kgs 4:38).
- (1) There are several famines recorded in the book of Kings: Elijah's famine (1 Kgs 18:2), the poisoned stew famine (2 Kgs 4:38), Samaria's famine (2 Kgs 6:25; 7:4), Elisha's seven-year famine (2 Kgs 8:1) and the Jerusalem famine (2 Kgs 25:3). It is likely that the poisoned stew famine and Elisha's seven-year famine are the same (and the Samaria famine, while primarily the result of Ben-Hadad's siege, was likely exacerbated by the seven-year famine).¹⁴ The other famines are far enough removed from Elisha's ministry that they can be excluded from consideration.
- (2) When did Elisha's seven-year famine begin? The only clues we have are found in 2 Kings 8:1–6.
- (a) The text reads, "Now Elisha advised the woman whose son he had brought back to life" (NET; 2 Kgs 8:1). This wording implies that Elisha predicted the famine *after* he raised the woman's son from the dead (cf. 8:1).¹⁵
- (b) Gehazi was recounting the story of Elisha raising the woman's son from the dead to the king when the Shunammite woman returned from Philistia. This implies that Elisha raised her son from the dead *prior* to her

¹¹ Mabie, 251.

¹² Japhet does not take a firm position on any solution: "It seems probable that the Chronicler had a different view of the chronological pattern, which in any case implies a difference of a very few years" (Sara Japhet, "1 & II Chronicles," *OTL*, 812).

¹³ The canonical arrangement implies that Elisha's friendship with the woman formed subsequent to Elijah's translation.

¹⁴ Donald J. Wiseman, "1 and 2 Kings," *TOTC*, 218; Iain Provan, "1 & 2 Kings," *UBCS*, 190 (Provan suggests that: "from here to ch. 8, the whole narrative takes place in the context of famine").

¹⁵ The text could read, "Now Elisha advised the woman to whom God had given a son."

leaving for Philistia.¹⁶

(3) We conclude, then, that the seven-year famine began not long after Elisha raised the woman's son from the dead. When we add this time period to the earlier 2 Kings 4:8–37 narrative, we have around 15 consecutive years from the beginning of Elisha's initial contact with the woman to her return to Israel from Philistia (15 to 21 months + 6 years + 7 years = 14.25 to 14.75 years). Since this block of time exceeds Joram's [Israel] reign of around 11 years (852n–841n BC), we are forced to conclude that either Elisha met the Shunammite woman prior to Elijah's translation (841 + 15 = 856 BC), or that she returned to Israel during the first years of Jehu's [Israel] reign (852 – 15 = 837 BC).¹⁷

- G) *Elisha Feeds 100 People* (2 Kings 4:42–44). The canonical arrangement places this story after the poisoned stew event and during the seven-year famine.
- H) *Elisha Heals Naaman* (2 Kings 5). The canonical arrangement places this story during the seven-year famine (it follows the famine-related events of 2 Kings 4:38–44). Unfortunately, we are not told the name of either the king of Syria or the king of Israel. Do we have reason to believe that Joram was king of Israel and Ben-Hadad was king of Syria?¹⁸
- (1) At the beginning of the story of Naaman's healing, the text records that Syria was sending raiding parties into Israel (2 Kgs 5:2). Later, at the end of the story in which Elisha traps the Syrian army in Samaria, the text says that Syria stopped sending raiding parties into Israel (2 Kgs 6:23). These two verses suggest that 2 Kings 5:1–6:23 forms a single chronological unit that describes events that occurred in series during the time of the Syrian raids.
- (2) Immediately after the end of the Syrian raids (2 Kgs 6:24), King Ben-Hadad besieged Samaria.¹⁹ Note that the verse says, "Afterward" (ESV; lit. "it came to pass after this"). This means that 2 Kings 6:24–7:20 took place sometime after the events of 2 Kings 5:1–6:23. Since Hazael killed Ben-Hadad prior to Jehu becoming king of Israel (cf. 2 Kgs 8:28), we conclude that 2 Kings 6:24–7:20 is associated with Joram's reign. This in turn suggests that 2 Kings 5–7 forms a single chronological unit—all three chapters took place during Joram's reign over Israel (852n–841n BC).
- I) *Elisha Makes an Axhead Float* (2 Kings 6:1–7). This event is part of the 2 Kings 5–7 chronological unit and thus occurred during Joram's [Israel] reign.
- J) *Elisha Traps Syria's Army* (2 Kings 6:8–23). This event is part of the 2 Kings 5–7 chronological unit and thus occurred during Joram's [Israel] reign.
- K) *Elisha Prophesies the End of Ben-Hadad's Siege of Samaria* (2 Kings 6:24–7:20). This event is part of the 2 Kings 5–7 chronological unit and thus occurred during Joram's [Israel] reign.
- L) *Gehazi Recounts the Tale of the Shunammite Woman's Son to the King* (2 Kings 8:1–6). The last we heard of Gehazi, he was afflicted with Naaman's skin disease and had gone out from Elisha's presence (2 Kgs 5:27). He is not mentioned by name again in connection with Elisha (cf. 2 Kgs 6:15–17), and we infer that his service to Elisha had ended. Now we find him chatting with the king of Israel (the king is again unnamed).
- (1) When did this event take place and who was king of Israel at the time?

¹⁶ It could not have happened immediately upon her return—her home and land had been confiscated, and so the father would not have been out in the fields with the harvesters. The entire story falls apart if we try to have the famine concurrent with her sojourning in Philistia.

¹⁷ This idea is not without precedent. Wiseman comments: "...the king might be Jehu, for J(eh)roam knew Elisha well" (Donald J. Wiseman, "1 and 2 Kings," *TOTC*, 205).

¹⁸ This is the standard interpretation. See Iain W. Provan, "1&2 Kings," *UBCS*, pp. 198–200, 204–205 and T. R. Hobbs, "2 Kings," *WBC*, pp. 63, 76.

¹⁹ While there is debate over how many rulers of Syria were called Ben-Hadad, Hazael was never called Ben-Hadad—he is consistently called King Hazael throughout Kings and Chronicles. Thus we infer that the Ben-Hadad of 2 Kings 6:24 was the Ben-Hadad whom Hazael murdered. Since Joram [Israel] fought Hazael, it follows that Joram was king during the siege of Samaria (cf. 2 Kgs 8:28).

- (a) Flashback Solution: 2 Kings 8:1–6 occurred prior to Naaman’s healing.²⁰ This solution places the event subsequent to the Shunammite woman’s son being raised from the dead but before Naaman’s healing. The king of Israel would have been Joram. However, as we have seen above, the block of time involved in the Shunammite narrative is 15 *consecutive* years—thus Naaman’s healing must have already taken place.
- (b) Healed Solution: Gehazi had repented and been healed prior to his talk with the king.²¹ This is, of course, an argument from silence, but it is still possible. By this time, Jehu would have been king of Israel.
- (c) Diseased Solution: Gehazi was still afflicted with Naaman’s skin disease,²² but it was not so serious that he could not interact with others in some limited or controlled fashion. It should be noted that Naaman’s disease did not require complete separation from other people—Naaman was able to command Syria’s army and interact with Ben-Hadad and his own family without fear of contaminating them (cf. his interaction with his wife and servant girl in 2 Kgs 5:2–4). If Gehazi was still afflicted with the disease, then it is probable that he lived a solitary life, but was still able to interact with others. The king would have been Jehu, who by this time has assumed the throne of Israel. If done properly, Jehu could have conversed with Gehazi and still have avoided any concerns about becoming unclean (cf. Lev 13–14).

(2) We conclude that 2 Kings 8:1–6 took place subsequent to the seven-year famine and at the end of the 15 consecutive years involved in the Shunammite narrative. By this time Jehu had killed Joram and assumed the throne of Israel. Note that this conclusion means that 2 Kings 8:1–6 is out of place chronologically—it should be placed after Jehu’s rise to power (after 2 Kgs 10:30). Its canonical placement was likely done for literary reasons; it completes the Shunammite narrative which is a fundamental part of the Elisha cycle of 2 Kings 2–8.

- M) *Elisha Prophesies the Rise of Hazael as King of Syria* (2 Kings 8:7–14). The synchronisms with Ben-Hadad, Hazael, Joram [Israel] and Ahaziah [Judah] date this event to the final year of Joram’s [Israel] reign (841n BC).
- N) *Elisha Anoints Jehu King of Israel by Proxy* (2 Kings 9:1–3). The synchronisms with Ben-Hadad, Hazael, Joram [Israel] and Ahaziah [Judah] date this event to the final year of Joram’s [Israel] reign (841n BC).
- O) *Elisha’s Death* (2 Kings 13:14–20). This event is clearly associated with the reign of Jehoash [Israel] (798n–782n).
- P) We return now to the question of when Elisha’s ministry began: 852 BC or 848 BC. If we go with the anachrony solution, Elisha’s sole ministry began in 848. This means that the seven-year famine began around 8 years later in 840.²³ This creates an issue for 2 Kings 5–7 which is clearly associated with both the seven-year famine and Joram’s [Israel] reign. Since Joram [Israel] was killed by Jehu in 841 BC, we conclude that the better choice is either the prophetic or scribal error solution—thus Elisha’s sole ministry began in 852 BC.

2) Chronological Table of Elisha’s Ministry.

- 852 BC — Ahaziah [Israel] dies; Joram [Israel] becomes king; Elijah is translated; Elisha’s sole ministry begins.
- c. 850 BC — The Shunammite woman gives birth to a son.
- c. 844 BC — The son dies and is raised to life; Elisha predicts a seven-year famine; the Shunammite woman leaves Israel.
- c. 844–841 BC — The events of 2 Kings 5–7
- 841n BC — Elisha predicts Ben-Hadad’s death; Hazael kills Ben-Hadad; Joram [Israel] and Ahaziah [Judah] attack Hazael; Jehu anointed king.
- 841–837 BC — The events of 2 Kings 9:1–10:30.
- c. 837 BC — The seven-year famine ends; the Shunammite woman returns to Israel; Gehazi talks with Jehu.

²⁰ Thomas L. Constable, “2 Kings,” *Bible Knowledge Commentary of the Old Testament*, 552; C. F. Keil & F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, Vol. 3, 235–36.

²¹ Jesse C. Long, *1&2 Kings*, 350; Hobbs, 101–105.

²² Naaman’s disease was almost certainly not modern leprosy (Hansen’s disease), since the lesions of Hansen’s disease are never white (2 Kgs 5:27).

²³ This assumes that Elisha met the Shunammite woman *after* Elijah’s translation.