

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

1 Kings 20:23–43

Ben-Hadad Plans Another Attack

23 Now the servants of the king of Aram said to him, “Their gods are gods of the mountains, therefore they were stronger than we; but rather let us fight against them in the plain, *and* surely we will be stronger than they.

24 Do this thing: remove the kings, each from his place, and put captains in their place,

25 and muster an army like the army that you have lost, horse for horse, and chariot for chariot. Then we will fight against them in the plain, and surely we will be stronger than they.” And he listened to their voice and did so.

Ahab is Vastly Outnumbered

26 At the turn of the year, Ben-hadad mustered the Arameans and went up to Aphek to fight against Israel.

27 The sons of Israel were mustered and were provisioned and went to meet them; and the sons of Israel camped before them like two little flocks of goats, but the Arameans filled the country.

God Gives Ahab the Victory

28 Then a man of God came near and spoke to the king of Israel and said, “Thus says the LORD, ‘Because the Arameans have said, “The LORD is a god of *the* mountains, but He is not a god of *the* valleys,” therefore I will give all this great multitude into your hand, and you shall know that I am the LORD.’”

29 So they camped one over against the other seven days. And on the seventh day the battle was joined, and the sons of Israel killed of the Arameans 100,000 foot soldiers in one day.

30a But the rest fled to Aphek into the city, and the wall fell on 27,000 men who were left.

Ben-Hadad Pleads for His Life

30b And Ben-hadad fled and came into the city into an inner chamber.

31 His servants said to him, “Behold now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings, please let us put sackcloth on our loins and ropes on our heads, and go out to the king of Israel; perhaps he will save your life.”

32 So they girded sackcloth on their loins and *put* ropes on their heads, and came 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 he still alive? He is my brother.”

33 Now the men took this as an omen, and quickly catching his word said, “Your brother Ben-hadad.” Then he said, “Go, bring him.” Then Ben-hadad came out to him, and he took him up into the chariot.

34 *Ben-hadad* said to him, “The cities which my father took from your father I will restore, and you shall make streets for yourself in Damascus, as my father made in Samaria.” *Ahab said*, “And I will let you go with this covenant.” So he made a covenant with him and let him go.

God Sends a Prophet to Rebuke Ahab

35 Now a certain man of the sons of the prophets said to another by the word of the LORD, “Please strike me.” But the man refused to strike him.

36 Then he said to him, “Because you have not listened to the voice of the LORD, behold, as soon as you have departed from me, a lion will kill you.” And as soon as he had departed from him a lion found him and killed him.

37 Then he found another man and said, “Please strike me.” And the man struck him, wounding him.

38 So the prophet departed and waited for the king by the way, and disguised himself with a bandage over his eyes.

39 As the king passed by, he cried to the king and said, “Your servant went out into the midst of the battle; and behold, a man turned aside and brought a man to me and said, ‘Guard this man; if for any reason he is missing, then your life shall be for his life, or else you shall pay a talent of silver.’

40 While your servant was busy here and there, he was gone.” And the king of Israel said to him, “So shall your judgment be; you yourself have decided *it*.”

41 Then he hastily took the bandage away from his eyes, and the king of Israel recognized him that he was of the prophets.

42 He said to him, “Thus says the LORD, ‘Because you have let go out of *your* hand the man whom I had devoted to destruction, therefore your life shall go for his life, and your people for his people.’”

43 So the king of Israel went to his house sullen and vexed, and came to Samaria.

Naboth's Vineyard (c. 856n BC)

1 Kings 21:1–29

Ahab Asks to Buy Naboth's Vineyard

1 Now it came about 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 I may have it for a vegetable garden because it is close beside my house, and I will give you a better vineyard than it in its place; if you like, I will give you the price of it in money."

3 But Naboth said to Ahab, "The LORD forbid me that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers." [cf. [Lev 25:23–28](#); [Num 36:7–9](#)]

4 So Ahab came into his house sullen and vexed because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him; for he said, "I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers." And he lay down on his bed and turned away his face and ate no food.

Jezebel's Scheme

5 But Jezebel his wife came to him and said to him, "How is it that your spirit is so sullen that you are not eating food?"

6 So he said to her, "Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite and said to him, 'Give me your vineyard for money; or else, if it pleases you, I will give you a vineyard in its place.' But he said, 'I will not give you my vineyard.'"

7 Jezebel his wife said to him, "Do you now reign over Israel? Arise, eat bread, and let your heart be joyful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite."

8 So she wrote letters in Ahab's name and sealed them with his seal, and sent letters to the elders and to the nobles who were living with Naboth in his city.

9 Now she wrote in the letters, saying, "Proclaim a fast and seat Naboth at the head of the people;

10 and seat two worthless men before him, and let them testify against him, saying, 'You cursed God and the king.' Then take him out and stone him to death." [cf. [Deut 17:6–7](#); [19:15–21](#); [Exod 22:28](#); [Lev 24:13–16](#)]

Naboth and His Sons are Murdered

11 So the men of his city, the elders and the nobles who lived in his city, did as Jezebel had sent *word* to them, just as it was written in the letters which she had sent them.

12 They proclaimed a fast and seated Naboth at the head of the people.

13 Then the two worthless men came in and sat before him; and the worthless men testified against him, even against Naboth, before the people, saying, "Naboth cursed God and the king." So they took him outside the city and stoned him to death with stones.

14 Then they sent *word* to Jezebel, saying, "Naboth has been stoned and is dead."

15 When Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned and was dead, Jezebel said to Ahab, "Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth, the Jezreelite, which he refused to give you for money; for Naboth is not alive, but dead."

16 When Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, Ahab arose 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 Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying,

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

19 "You shall speak to him, saying, 'Thus says the LORD, "Have you murdered and also taken possession?"' And you shall speak to him, saying, 'Thus says the LORD, "In the place where the dogs licked up the blood of Naboth the dogs will lick up your blood, even yours.''" [cf. [2 Kgs 9:24–26](#)]

20 Ahab said to Elijah, "Have you found me, O my enemy?" And he answered, "I have found *you*, because you have sold yourself to do evil in the sight of the LORD.

21 "Behold, I will bring evil upon you, and will utterly sweep you away, and will cut off from Ahab every male, both bond and free in Israel;

22 and 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 of the provocation with which you have provoked *Me* to anger, and *because* you have made Israel sin.

23 "Of Jezebel also has the LORD spoken, saying, 'The dogs will eat Jezebel in the district of Jezreel.'

24 "The one belonging to Ahab, who dies in the city, the dogs will eat, and the one who dies in the field the birds of heaven will eat."

25 Surely there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do evil in the sight of the LORD, because Jezebel his wife incited him.

26 He acted very abominably in following idols, according to all that the Amorites had done, whom the LORD cast out before the sons of Israel.

Ahab Humbles Himself and Yahweh Shows Mercy

27 It came about when Ahab heard these words, that he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and fasted, and he lay in sackcloth and

went about despondently.

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

29 “Do you see how Ahab has humbled himself before Me? Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not bring the evil in his days, *but* I will bring the evil upon his house in his son’s days.” [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 Three years passed without war between Aram and Israel.

Peace With Judah

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

2 Chr 18:1b and he allied himself by marriage with 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 because he had no son, Jehoram became king in his place in the second year of Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah.

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 In the third year

Jehoshaphat the king of Judah came down to the king of Israel.

3 Now the king of Israel said to his servants, “Do you know that Ramoth-gilead belongs to us, and we are still doing nothing to take it out of the hand of the king of Aram?”

4 And he said to Jehoshaphat,

“Will you go with me to battle at Ramoth-gilead?”

And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel,

“I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses.”

Jehoshaphat Makes Ahab Seek Direction from Yahweh

5 Moreover, Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel,

“Please inquire first for the word of the LORD.”

6 Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said to them, “Shall I go against Ramoth-gilead to battle or shall I refrain?” And they said, “Go up, for the Lord will give *it* into the hand of the king.”

7 But Jehoshaphat said, “Is there not yet a prophet of the LORD here that we may inquire of him?”

8 The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “There is yet one man by whom we may inquire of the LORD, but I hate him, because he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil.

He is Micaiah son of Imlah.” But Jehoshaphat said, “Let not the king say so.”

9 Then the king of Israel called an officer and said, “Bring quickly Micaiah son of Imlah.”

10 Now the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah were sitting each on his throne, arrayed in *their* robes,

2 Some years later

he went down to *visit* Ahab at Samaria.

And Ahab slaughtered many sheep and oxen for him and the people who were with him, and induced him to go up against Ramoth-gilead.

3 Ahab king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat king of Judah,

“Will you go with me *against* Ramoth-gilead?”

And he said to him,

“I am as you are, and my people as your people, and *we will be* with you in the battle.”

4 Moreover, Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel,

“Please inquire first for the word of the LORD.”

5 Then the king of Israel assembled the prophets, four hundred men, and said to them, “Shall we go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I refrain?” And they said, “Go up, for God will give *it* into the hand of the king.”

6 But Jehoshaphat said, “Is there not yet a prophet of the LORD here that we may inquire of him?”

7 The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “There is yet one man by whom we may inquire of the LORD, but I hate him, for he never prophesies good concerning me but always evil.

He is Micaiah, son of Imla.” But Jehoshaphat said, “Let not the king say so.”

8 Then the king of Israel called an officer and said, “Bring quickly Micaiah, Imla’s son.”

9 Now the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah were sitting each on his throne, arrayed in *their* robes,

at the threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets were prophesying before them.

11 Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah made horns of iron for himself and said, "Thus says the LORD, 'With these you will gore the Arameans until they are consumed.'"

12 All the prophets were prophesying thus, saying, "Go up to Ramoth-gilead and prosper, for the LORD will give *it* into the hand of the king."

13 Then the messenger who went to summon Micaiah spoke to him saying, "Behold now, the words of the prophets are uniformly favorable to the king. Please let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak favorably."

14 But Micaiah said, "As the LORD lives, what the LORD says to me, that I shall speak."

15 When he came to the king, the king said to him, "Micaiah, shall we go to Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall we refrain?" And he answered him, "Go up and succeed, and the LORD will give *it* into the hand of the king."

16 Then the king said to him, "How many times must I adjure you to speak to me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?"

17 So he said,

"I saw all Israel
Scattered on the mountains,
Like sheep which have no shepherd.
And the LORD said, 'These have no master.
Let each of them return to his house in peace.'"

18 Then the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Did I not tell you that he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?"

Micaiah Reveals God's Plan to Ahab

19 Micaiah said, "Therefore, hear the word of the LORD.

I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by Him on His right and on His left.

20 The LORD said, 'Who will entice Ahab to go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?' And one said this while another said that.

21 Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD and said, 'I will entice him.'

22 The LORD said to him, 'How?'

And he said, 'I will go out and be a deceiving spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' Then He said, 'You are to entice *him* and also prevail. Go and do so.'

23 Now therefore, behold, the LORD has put a deceiving spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets; and the LORD has proclaimed disaster against you."

24 Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah came near and struck Micaiah on the cheek and said, "How did the Spirit of the LORD pass from me to speak to you?"

25 Micaiah said, "Behold, you shall see on that day when you enter an inner room to hide yourself."

Ahab Ignores God's Warning

26 Then the king of Israel said, "Take Micaiah and return him to Amon the governor of the city and to Joash the king's son;

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 Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah made horns of iron for himself and said, "Thus says the LORD, 'With these you shall gore the Arameans until they are consumed.'"

11 All the prophets were prophesying thus, saying, "Go up to Ramoth-gilead and succeed, for the LORD will give *it* into the hand of the king."

12 Then the messenger who went to summon Micaiah spoke to him saying, "Behold, the words of the prophets are uniformly favorable to the king. So please let your word be like one of them and speak favorably."

13 But Micaiah said, "As the LORD lives, what my God says, that I will speak."

14 When he came to the king, the king said to him, "Micaiah, shall we go to Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I refrain?" He said, "Go up and succeed, for they will be given into your hand."

15 Then the king said to him, "How many times must I adjure you to speak to me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?"

16 So he said,

"I saw all Israel
Scattered on the mountains,
Like sheep which have no shepherd;
And the LORD said, 'These have no master.
Let each of them return to his house in peace.'"

17 Then the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Did I not tell you that he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?"

18 Micaiah said, "Therefore, hear the word of the LORD.

I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing on His right and on His left.

19 The LORD said, 'Who will entice Ahab king of Israel to go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?' And one said this while another said that.

20 Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD and said, 'I will entice him.'

And the LORD said to him, 'How?'

21 He said, 'I will go and be a deceiving spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' Then He said, 'You are to entice *him* and prevail also. Go and do so.'

22 Now therefore, behold, the LORD has put a deceiving spirit in the mouth of these your prophets, for the LORD has proclaimed disaster against you."

23 Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah came near and struck Micaiah on the cheek and said, "How did the Spirit of the LORD pass from me to speak to you?"

24 Micaiah said, "Behold, you will see on that day when you enter an inner room to hide yourself."

25 Then the king of Israel said, "Take Micaiah and return him to Amon the governor of the city and to Joash the king's son;

<p>27 and say, 'Thus says the king, "Put this man in prison and feed him sparingly with bread and water until I return safely."'"</p> <p>28 Micaiah said, "If you indeed return safely the LORD has not spoken by me." And he said, "Listen, all you people."</p>	<p>26 and say, 'Thus says the king, "Put this <i>man</i> in prison and feed him sparingly with bread and water until I return safely."'"</p> <p>27 Micaiah said, "If you indeed return safely, the LORD has not spoken by me." And he said, "Listen, all you people."</p>
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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):