

**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 advisers of the king of Syria said to him: "Their God is a god of the mountains. That's why they overpowered us. But if we fight them in the plains, we will certainly overpower them.

24 So do this: Dismiss the kings from their command, and replace them with military commanders.

25 Muster an army like the one you lost, with the same number of horses and chariots. Then we will fight them in the plains; we will certainly overpower them." He approved their plan and did as they advised.

**Ahab is Vastly Outnumbered**

26 In the spring Ben Hadad mustered the Syrian army and marched to Aphek to fight Israel.

27 When the Israelites had mustered and had received their supplies, they marched out to face them in battle. When the Israelites deployed opposite them, they were like two small flocks of goats, but the Syrians filled the land.

**God Gives Ahab the Victory**

28 The prophet visited the king of Israel and said, "This is what the LORD says: 'Because the Syrians said, "The LORD is a god of the mountains and not a god of the valleys," I will hand over to you this entire huge army. Then you will know that I am the LORD.'"

29 The armies were deployed opposite each other for seven days. On the seventh day the battle began, and the Israelites killed 100,000 Syrian foot soldiers in one day.

30a The remaining 27,000 ran to Aphek and went into the city, but the wall fell on them.

**Ben-Hadad Pleads for His Life**

30b Now Ben Hadad ran into the city and hid in an inner room.

31 His advisers said to him, "Look, we have heard that the kings of the Israelite dynasty are kind. Allow us to put sackcloth around our waists and ropes on our heads and surrender to the king of Israel. Maybe he will spare our lives."

32a So they put sackcloth around their waists and ropes on their heads and went to the king of Israel. They said, "Your servant Ben Hadad says, 'Please let me live!'"

**Ahab Spares Ben-Hadad**

32b Ahab replied, "Is he still alive? He is my brother."

33 The men took this as a good omen and quickly accepted his offer, saying, "Ben Hadad is your brother." Ahab then said, "Go, get him." So Ben Hadad came out to him, and Ahab pulled him up into his chariot.

34 Ben Hadad said, "I will return the cities my father took from your father. You may set up markets in Damascus, just as my father did in Samaria." Ahab then said, "I want to make a treaty with you before I dismiss you." So he made a treaty with him and then dismissed him.

**God Sends a Prophet to Rebuke Ahab**

35 One of the members of the prophetic guild, speaking with divine authority, ordered his companion, "Wound me!" But the man refused to wound him.

36 So the prophet said to him, "Because you have disobeyed the LORD, as soon as you leave me a lion will kill you." When he left him, a lion attacked and killed him.

37 He found another man and said, "Wound me!" So the man wounded him severely.

38 The prophet then went and stood by the road, waiting for the king. He also disguised himself by putting a bandage down over his eyes.

39 When the king passed by, he called out to the king, "Your servant went out into the heat of the battle, and then a man turned aside and brought me a prisoner. He told me, 'Guard this prisoner. If he ends up missing for any reason, you will pay with your life or with a talent of silver.'

40 Well, it just so happened that while your servant was doing this and that, he disappeared." The king of Israel said to him, "Your punishment is already determined by your own testimony."

41 The prophet quickly removed the bandage from his eyes and the king of Israel recognized he was one of the prophets.

42 The prophet then said to him, "This is what the LORD says, 'Because you released a man I had determined should die, you will pay with your life and your people will suffer instead of his people.'"

43 The king of Israel went home to Samaria bitter and angry.

## Naboth's Vineyard (c. 856n BC)

1 Kings 21:1–29

### Ahab Asks to Buy Naboth's Vineyard

1 After this the following episode took place. Naboth the Jezreelite owned a vineyard in Jezreel adjacent to the palace of King Ahab of Samaria.

2 Ahab said to Naboth, "Give me your vineyard so I can make a vegetable garden out of it, for it is adjacent to my palace. I will give you an even better vineyard in its place, or if you prefer, I will pay you silver for it."

3 But Naboth replied to Ahab, "The LORD forbid that I should sell you my ancestral inheritance." [cf. [Lev 25:23–28](#); [Num 36:7–9](#)]

4 So Ahab went into his palace, bitter and angry that Naboth the Jezreelite had said, "I will not sell to you my ancestral inheritance." He lay down on his bed, pouted, and would not eat.

### Jezebel's Scheme

5 Then his wife Jezebel came in and said to him, "Why do you have a bitter attitude and refuse to eat?"

6 He answered her, "While I was talking to Naboth the Jezreelite, I said to him, 'Sell me your vineyard for silver, or if you prefer, I will give you another vineyard in its place.' But he said, 'I will not sell you my vineyard.'"

7 His wife Jezebel said to him, "You are the king of Israel! Get up, eat some food, and have a good time. I will get the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite for you."

8 She wrote out orders, signed Ahab's name to them, and sealed them with his seal. She then sent the orders to the leaders and to the nobles who lived in Naboth's city.

9 This is what she wrote: "Observe a time of fasting and seat Naboth in front of the people.

10 Also seat two villains opposite him and have them testify, '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 The men of the city, the leaders and the nobles who lived there, followed the written orders Jezebel had sent them.

12 They observed a time of fasting and put Naboth in front of the people.

13 The two villains arrived and sat opposite him. Then the villains testified against Naboth right before the people, saying, "Naboth cursed God and the king." So they dragged him outside the city and stoned him to death.

14 Then they reported to Jezebel, "Naboth has been stoned to death."

15 When Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned to death, she said to Ahab, "Get up, take possession of the vineyard Naboth the Jezreelite refused to sell you for silver, for Naboth is no longer alive; he's dead."

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

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

17 The LORD told Elijah the Tishbite:

18 "Get up, go down and meet King Ahab of Israel who lives in Samaria. He is at the vineyard of Naboth; he has gone down there to take possession of it.

19 Say to him, 'This is what the LORD says: "Haven't you committed murder and taken possession of the property of the deceased?"' Then say to him, 'This is what the LORD says: "In the spot where dogs licked up Naboth's blood they will also lick up your blood—yes, yours!"'" [cf. [2 Kgs 9:24–26](#)]

20 When Elijah arrived, Ahab said to him, "So, you have found me, my enemy!" Elijah replied, "I have found you, because you are committed to doing evil in the sight of the LORD.

21 The LORD says, 'Look, I am ready to bring disaster on you. I will destroy you and cut off every last male belonging to Ahab in Israel, including even the weak and incapacitated.

22 I will make your dynasty like those of Jeroboam son of Nebat and Baasha son of Ahijah because you angered me and made Israel sin.'

23 The LORD says this about Jezebel, 'Dogs will devour Jezebel by the outer wall of Jezreel.'

24 As for Ahab's family, dogs will eat the ones who die in the city, and the birds of the sky will eat the ones who die in the country."

25 (There had never been anyone like Ahab, who was firmly committed to doing evil in the sight of the LORD, urged on by his wife Jezebel.

26 He was so wicked he worshiped the disgusting idols, just like the Amorites whom the LORD had driven out from before the Israelites.)

### Ahab Humbles Himself and Yahweh Shows Mercy

27 When Ahab heard these words, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth, and fasted. He slept in sackcloth and walked around dejected.

28 The LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite,

29 "Have you noticed how Ahab shows remorse before me? Because he shows remorse before me, I will not bring disaster on his

dynasty during his lifetime, but during the reign 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 There was no war between Syria and Israel for three years.

#### Peace With Judah

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

2 Chr 18:1b He made an alliance 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 In the second year of the reign of King Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat over Judah, Ahaziah's brother Jehoram replaced him as king of Israel, 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 In the third year King Jehoshaphat of Judah came down to visit the king of Israel.

3 The king of Israel said to his servants, “Surely you recognize that Ramoth Gilead belongs to us, though we are hesitant to reclaim it from the king of Syria.”

4 Then he said to Jehoshaphat, “Will you go with me to attack Ramoth Gilead?” Jehoshaphat replied to the king of Israel, “I will support you; my army and horses are at your disposal.”

#### Jehoshaphat Makes Ahab Seek Direction from Yahweh

5 Then Jehoshaphat added, “First seek an oracle from the LORD.”

6 So the king of Israel assembled about four hundred prophets and asked them, “Should I attack Ramoth Gilead or not?” They said, “Attack! The sovereign one will hand it over to the king.”

7 But Jehoshaphat asked, “Is there not a prophet of the LORD still here, that we may ask him?”

8 The king of Israel answered Jehoshaphat, “There is still one man through whom we can seek the LORD's will. But I despise him because he does not prophesy prosperity for me, but disaster. His name is Micaiah son of Imlah. Jehoshaphat said, “The king should not say such things.”

9 The king of Israel summoned an official and said, “Quickly bring Micaiah son of Imlah.”

10 Now the king of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judah were sitting on their respective thrones, dressed in their robes, at the threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria. All the prophets were prophesying before them.

11 Zedekiah son of Kenaanah made iron horns and said, “This is what the LORD says, ‘With these you will gore Syria until they are destroyed.’”

12 All the prophets were prophesying the same, saying, “Attack

2 and after several years went down to visit Ahab in Samaria. Ahab slaughtered many sheep and cattle to honor Jehoshaphat and those who came with him. He persuaded him to join in an attack against Ramoth Gilead.

3 King Ahab of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “Will you go with me to attack Ramoth Gilead?” Jehoshaphat replied to the king of Israel, “I will support you; my army is at your disposal and will support you in battle.”

4 Then Jehoshaphat added, “First seek an oracle from the LORD.”  
5 So the king of Israel assembled 400 prophets and asked them, “Should we attack Ramoth Gilead or not?” They said, “Attack! God will hand it over to the king.”

6 But Jehoshaphat asked, “Is there not a prophet of the LORD still here, that we may ask him?”

7 The king of Israel answered Jehoshaphat, “There is still one man through whom we can seek the LORD's will. But I despise him because he does not prophesy prosperity for me, but always disaster. His name is Micaiah son of Imlah. Jehoshaphat said, “The king should not say such things!”

8 The king of Israel summoned an officer and said, “Quickly bring Micaiah son of Imlah.”

9 Now the king of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judah were sitting on their respective thrones, dressed in their royal robes, at the threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria. All the prophets were prophesying before them.

10 Zedekiah son of Kenaanah made iron horns and said, “This is what the LORD says, ‘With these you will gore Syria until they are destroyed!’”

11 All the prophets were prophesying the same, saying, “Attack

Ramoth Gilead! You will succeed; the LORD will hand it over to the king.”

13 Now the messenger who went to summon Micaiah said to him, “Look, the prophets are in complete agreement that the king will succeed. Your words must agree with theirs; you must predict success.”

14 But Micaiah said, “As certainly as the LORD lives, I will say what the LORD tells me to say.”

15 When he came before the king, the king asked him,

“Micaiah, should we attack Ramoth Gilead or not?”

He answered him, “Attack! You will succeed; the LORD will hand it over to the king.”

16 The king said to him, “How many times must I make you solemnly promise in the name of the LORD to tell me only the truth?”

17 Micaiah said, “I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains like sheep that have no shepherd. Then the LORD said, ‘They have no master. They should go home in peace.’”

18 The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “Didn’t I tell you he does not prophesy prosperity for me, but disaster?”

#### **Micaiah Reveals God’s Plan to Ahab**

19 Micaiah said, “That being the case, hear the word of the LORD. I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, with all the heavenly assembly standing on his right and on his left.

20 The LORD said, ‘Who will deceive Ahab, so he will attack Ramoth Gilead and die there?’ One said this and another that.

21 Then a spirit stepped forward and stood before the LORD.

He said, ‘I will deceive him.’ The LORD asked him, ‘How?’

22 He replied, ‘I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouths of all his prophets.’ The LORD said, ‘Deceive and overpower him. Go out and do as you have proposed.’

23 So now, look, the LORD has placed a lying spirit in the mouths of all these prophets of yours; but the LORD has decreed disaster for you.”

24 Zedekiah son of Kenaanah approached, hit Micaiah on the jaw, and said, “Which way did the LORD’s spirit go when he went from me to speak to you?”

25 Micaiah replied, “Look, you will see in the day when you go into an inner room to hide.”

#### **Ahab Ignores God’s Warning**

26 Then the king of Israel said, “Take Micaiah and return him to Amon the city official and Joash the king’s son.

27 Say, ‘This is what the king says, “Put this man in prison. Give him only a little bread and water until I safely return.”’”

28 Micaiah said, “If you really do safely return, then the LORD has not spoken through me.” Then he added, “Take note, all you people.”

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13 But Micaiah said, “As certainly as the LORD lives, I will say what my God tells me to say!”

14 Micaiah came before the king and the king asked him,

“Micaiah, should we attack Ramoth Gilead or not?”

He answered him, “Attack! You will succeed; they will be handed over to you.”

15 The king said to him, “How many times must I make you solemnly promise in the name of the LORD to tell me only the truth?”

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17 The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “Didn’t I tell you he does not prophesy prosperity for me, but disaster?”

18 Micaiah said, “That being the case, hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, with all the heavenly assembly standing on his right and on his left.

19 The LORD said, ‘Who will deceive King Ahab of Israel, so he will attack Ramoth Gilead and die there?’ One said this and another that.

20 Then a spirit stepped forward and stood before the LORD.

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24 Micaiah replied, “Look, you will see in the day when you go into an inner room to hide.”

25 Then the king of Israel said, “Take Micaiah and return him to Amon the city official and Joash the king’s son.

26 Say, ‘This is what the king says: “Put this man in prison. Give him only a little bread and water until I return safely.”’”

27 Micaiah said, “If you really do return safely, then the LORD has not spoken through me!” Then he added, “Take note, all you people.”

### 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.<sup>1</sup>
  - 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."<sup>2</sup> 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."<sup>3</sup> 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.

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

<sup>2</sup> Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, 348.

<sup>3</sup> 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):