

Ahaziah [Israel] and Elijah (852n BC)

2 Kings 1:2–16

2 Ahaziah fell through a window lattice in his upper chamber in Samaria and was injured. He sent messengers with these orders, “Go, ask Baal Zebub, the god of Ekron, if I will survive this injury.”

3 But the LORD’s angelic messenger told Elijah the Tishbite, “Get up, go to meet the messengers from the king of Samaria. Say this to them: ‘You must think there is no God in Israel! That explains why you are on your way to seek an oracle from Baal Zebub the god of Ekron.’”

4 Therefore this is what the LORD says, “You will not leave the bed you lie on, for you will certainly die!”” So Elijah went on his way.

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

6 They replied, “A man came up to meet us. He told us, ‘Go back to the king who sent you and tell him, ‘This is what the LORD says: ‘You must think there is no God in Israel! That explains why you are sending for an oracle from Baal Zebub, the god of Ekron. Therefore you will not leave the bed you lie on, for you will certainly die.’””

7 The king asked them, “Describe the appearance of this man who came up to meet you and told you these things.”

8 They replied, “He was a hairy man and had a leather belt tied around his waist.” The king said, “He is Elijah the Tishbite.”

9 The king sent a captain and his fifty soldiers to retrieve Elijah. The captain went up to him, while he was sitting on the top of a hill. He told him, “Prophet, the king says, ‘Come down!’”

10 Elijah replied to the captain, “If I am indeed a prophet, may fire come down from the sky and consume you and your fifty soldiers!” Fire then came down from the sky and consumed him and his fifty soldiers.

11 The king sent another captain and his fifty soldiers to retrieve Elijah. He went up and told him, “Prophet, this is what the king says, ‘Come down at once!’”

12 Elijah replied to them, “If I am indeed a prophet, may fire come down from the sky and consume you and your fifty soldiers!” Fire from God came down from the sky and consumed him and his fifty soldiers. [\[Luke 9:54\]](#)

13 The king sent a third captain and his fifty soldiers. This third captain went up and fell on his knees before Elijah. He begged for mercy, “Prophet, please have respect for my life and for the lives of these fifty servants of yours.”

14 Indeed, fire came down from the sky and consumed the two captains who came before me, along with their men. So now, please have respect for my life.”

15 The LORD’s angelic messenger said to Elijah, “Go down with him. Don’t be afraid of him.” So he got up and went down with him to the king.

16 Elijah said to the king, “This is what the LORD says, ‘You sent messengers to seek an oracle from Baal Zebub, the god of Ekron. You must think there is no God in Israel from whom you can seek an oracle! Therefore you will not leave the bed you lie on, for you will certainly die.’”

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

2 Kings 1:17–18

17 He died just as the LORD had prophesied through Elijah. In the second year of the reign of King Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat over Judah [*Jehoram’s coregency with Jehoshaphat*], Ahaziah’s brother Jehoram replaced him as king of Israel, because he had no son.

18 The rest of the events of Ahaziah’s reign, including his accomplishments, are recorded in the scroll called the Annals of the Kings of Israel.

Elijah Ascends to Heaven (852n BC)

2 Kings 2

Elijah Tests Elisha

1 Just before the LORD took Elijah up to heaven in a windstorm, Elijah and Elisha were traveling from Gilgal.

2 Elijah told Elisha, “Stay here, for the LORD has sent me to Bethel.” But Elisha said, “As certainly as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you.” So they went down to Bethel.

3 Some members of the prophetic guild in Bethel came out to Elisha and said, “Do you know that today the LORD is going to take your master from you?” He answered, “Yes, I know. Be quiet.”

4 Elijah said to him, “Elisha, stay here, for the LORD has sent me to Jericho.” But he replied, “As certainly as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you.” So they went to Jericho.

5 Some members of the prophetic guild in Jericho approached Elisha and said, “Do you know that today the LORD is going to take your master from you?” He answered, “Yes, I know. Be quiet.”

6 Elijah said to him, “Stay here, for the LORD has sent me to the Jordan.” But he replied, “As certainly as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you.” So they traveled on together.

7 The fifty members of the prophetic guild went and stood opposite them at a distance, while Elijah and Elisha stood by the Jordan.

8 Elijah took his cloak, folded it up, and hit the water with it. The water divided, and the two of them crossed over on dry ground.

9 When they had crossed over, Elijah said to Elisha, “What can I do for you, before I am taken away from you?” Elisha answered, “May I receive a double portion of the prophetic spirit that energizes you.”

10 Elijah replied, “That’s a difficult request! If you see me taken from you, may it be so, but if you don’t, it will not happen.”

Elijah is Taken Up to Heaven

11 As they were walking along and talking, suddenly a fiery chariot pulled by fiery horses appeared. They went between Elijah and Elisha, and Elijah went up to heaven in a windstorm.

12 While Elisha was watching, he was crying out, “My father, my father! The chariot and horsemen of Israel!” Then he could no longer see him. He grabbed his clothes and tore them in two.

Elisha’s Double Portion

13 He picked up Elijah’s cloak, which had fallen off him, and went back and stood on the shore of the Jordan.

14 He took the cloak that had fallen off Elijah, hit the water with it, and said, “Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?” When he hit the water, it divided and Elisha crossed over.

15 When the members of the prophetic guild in Jericho, who were standing at a distance, saw him do this, they said, “The spirit that energized Elijah rests upon Elisha.” They went to meet him and bowed down to the ground before him.

Elisha Tries to Prevent a Search for Elijah

16 They said to him, “Look, there are fifty capable men with your servants. Let them go and look for your master, for the wind sent from the LORD may have carried him away and dropped him on one of the hills or in one of the valleys.” But Elisha replied, “Don’t send them out.”

17 But they were so insistent, he became embarrassed. So he said, “Send them out.” They sent the fifty men out and they looked for three days, but could not find Elijah.

18 When they came back, Elisha was staying in Jericho. He said to them, “Didn’t I tell you, ‘Don’t go’?”

Elisha Heals the Water of Jericho from Joshua’s Curse

19 The men of the city said to Elisha, “Look, the city has a good location, as our master can see. But the water is bad and the land doesn’t produce crops.”

20 Elisha said, “Get me a new jar and put some salt in it.” So they got it.

21 He went out to the spring and threw the salt in. Then he said, “This is what the LORD says, ‘I have purified this water. It will no longer cause death or fail to produce crops.’”

22 The water has been pure to this very day, just as Elisha prophesied.

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

23 He went up from there to Bethel. As he was traveling up the road, some young boys came out of the city and made fun of him, saying, “Go on up, baldy! Go on up, baldy!”

24 When he turned around and saw them, he called God’s judgment down on them. Two female bears came out of the woods and ripped forty-two of the boys to pieces.

25 From there he traveled to Mount Carmel and then back to Samaria.

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

2 Kings 3:1–3

1 In the eighteenth year of King Jehoshaphat’s reign over Judah, Ahab’s son Jehoram became king over Israel in Samaria; he ruled for twelve years.

2 He did evil in the sight of the LORD, but not to the same degree as his father and mother. He did remove the sacred pillar of Baal that his father had made.

3 Yet he persisted in the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, who encouraged Israel to sin; he did not turn from them.

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 At that time King Jehoram left Samaria and assembled all Israel for war.

7 He sent this message to King Jehoshaphat of Judah: “The king of Moab has rebelled against me. Will you fight with me against Moab?” Jehoshaphat replied, “I will join you in the campaign; my army and horses are at your disposal.”

8 He then asked, “Which invasion route are we going to take?” Jehoram answered, “By the road through the Desert of Edom.”

We Three Kings

9 So the kings of Israel, Judah, and Edom set out together. They wandered around on the road for seven days and finally ran out of water for the men and animals they had with them.

10 The king of Israel said, “Oh no! Certainly the LORD has summoned these three kings so that he can hand them over to the king of Moab!”

11 Jehoshaphat asked, “Is there no prophet of the LORD here that we might seek the LORD’s direction?” One of the servants of the king of Israel answered, “Elisha son of Shapat is here; he used to be Elijah’s servant.”

12 Jehoshaphat said, “The LORD speaks through him.” So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to visit him.

Elisha Prophesies Victory

13 Elisha said to the king of Israel, “Why are you here? Go to your father’s prophets or your mother’s prophets!” The king of Israel replied to him, “No, for the LORD is the one who summoned these three kings so that he can hand them over to Moab.”

14 Elisha said, “As certainly as the LORD who rules over all lives (whom I serve), if I did not respect King Jehoshaphat of Judah, I would not pay attention to you or acknowledge you.

15 But now, get me a musician.” When the musician played, the LORD energized him,

16 and he said, “This is what the LORD says, ‘Make many cisterns in this valley,’

17 for this is what the LORD says, ‘You will not feel any wind or see any rain, but this valley will be full of water and you and your cattle and animals will drink.’

18 This is an easy task for the LORD; he will also hand Moab over to you.

19 You will defeat every fortified city and every important city. You must chop down every productive tree, stop up all the springs, and cover all the cultivated land with stones.”

God Tricks the Moabites

20 Sure enough, the next morning, at the time of the morning sacrifice, water came flowing down from Edom and filled the land.

21 Now all Moab had heard that the kings were attacking, so everyone old enough to fight was mustered and placed at the border.

22 When they got up early the next morning, the sun was shining on the water. To the Moabites, who were some distance away, the water looked red like blood.

23 The Moabites said, “It’s blood! The kings are totally destroyed! They have struck one another down! Now, Moab, seize the plunder!”

24 When they approached the Israelite camp, the Israelites rose up and struck down the Moabites, who then ran from them. The Israelites thoroughly defeated Moab.

The Kings Carry Out God’s Command

25a They tore down the cities and each man threw a stone into every cultivated field until they were covered. They stopped up every spring and chopped down every productive tree.

Mesha Survives

25b Only Kir Hareseth was left intact, but the slingers surrounded it and attacked it.

26 When the king of Moab realized he was losing the battle, he and 700 swordsmen tried to break through and attack the king of Edom, but they failed.

27 So he took his firstborn son, who was to succeed him as king, and offered him up as a burnt sacrifice on the wall. [And there came great wrath] against Israel, so they broke off the attack and returned to their homeland.

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

2 Kings 4:1–7

1 Now a wife of one of the prophets appealed to Elisha for help, saying, “Your servant, my husband is dead. You know that your servant was a loyal follower of the LORD. Now the creditor is coming to take away my two boys to be his servants.”

2 Elisha said to her, “What can I do for you? Tell me, what do you have in the house?” She answered, “Your servant has nothing in the house except a small jar of olive oil.”

3 He said, “Go and ask all your neighbors for empty containers. Get as many as you can.

4 Go and close the door behind you and your sons. Pour the olive oil into all the containers; set aside each one when you have filled it.”

5 So she left him and closed the door behind her and her sons. As they were bringing the containers to her, she was pouring the olive oil.

6 When the containers were full, she said to one of her sons, “Bring me another container.” But he answered her, “There are no more.” Then the olive oil stopped flowing.

7 She went and told the prophet. He said, “Go, sell the olive oil. Repay your creditor, and then you and your sons can live off the rest of the profit.”

Elisha and the Shunammite Woman (c. 850 BC)

2 Kings 4:8–17

8 One day Elisha traveled to Shunem, where a prominent woman lived. She insisted that he stop for a meal. So whenever he was passing through, he would stop in there for a meal.
 9 She said to her husband, “Look, I’m sure that the man who regularly passes through here is a very special prophet.
 10 Let’s make a small private upper room and furnish it with a bed, table, chair, and lamp. When he visits us, he can stay there.”
 11 One day Elisha came for a visit; he went into the upper room and rested.
 12 He told his servant Gehazi, “Ask the Shunammite woman to come here.” So he did so and she came to him.
 13 Elisha said to Gehazi, “Tell her, ‘Look, you have treated us with such great respect. What can I do for you? Can I put in a good word for you with the king or the commander of the army?’” She replied, “I’m quite secure.”
 14 So he asked Gehazi, “What can I do for her?” Gehazi replied, “She has no son, and her husband is old.”
 15 Elisha told him, “Ask her to come here.” So he did so and she came and stood in the doorway.
 16 He said, “About this time next year you will be holding a son.” She said, “No, my master! O prophet, do not lie to your servant!”
 17 The woman did conceive, and at the specified time the next year she gave birth to a son, just as Elisha had told 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 His [Jehoram’s] brothers, Jehoshaphat’s sons, were Azariah, Jeziel, Zechariah, Azariahu, Michael, and Shephatiah. All of these were sons of King Jehoshaphat of Israel.

3a Their father gave them many presents, including silver, gold, and other precious items, along with fortified cities in Judah.

Jehoshaphat Gives the Kingdom to Jehoram

3b But he gave the kingdom to Jehoram because he was the firstborn.

Jehoshaphat Dies

45 The rest of the events of Jehoshaphat’s reign, including his successes and military exploits, are recorded in

the scroll called the Annals of the Kings of Judah.

50 Jehoshaphat passed away and was buried with his ancestors in the city of his ancestor David.

His son Jehoram replaced him as king.

20:34 The rest of the events of Jehoshaphat’s reign, from start to finish, are recorded in the Annals of Jehu son of Hanani

which are included in Scroll of the Kings of Israel.

21:1 Jehoshaphat passed away and was buried with his ancestors in the City of David.

His son Jehoram replaced him as king.

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

2 Kings 8:16–17

2 Chronicles 21:5

16 In the fifth year of the reign of Israel’s King Joram, son of Ahab, Jehoshaphat’s son Jehoram became king over Judah.

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

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

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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.