

Expansions on Second Book of Kings

Introduction

Because both First and Second Kings are considered as one book, the brief remarks in the former's Introduction apply equally here, that is, from the vantage point of *lectio divina*. The text at hand contains detailed accounts of various kings, wars and the like, some of which will be passed by. It may be considered as posing a problem for the practice of *lectio divina* since the material simply isn't geared for it. Nevertheless, sufficient nuggets are scattered throughout the book which can apply to *lectio*. For example, even with all the killings, wars and intrigue we find constant reference to the "word of the Lord." *Davar* is the word which implies expression and thus is difficult to translate accurately. And so *davar* is an inescapable part of the text and for all the characters involved. If it weren't for this word, Second Kings would be a terribly boring and depressing read, simple as that.

Furthermore, two prophecies hover constantly in the background and may be said to form a basic theme of Second Kings. The first is the Lord's abhorrence to the people's request for a king and the second is the prophecy of Nathan to King David of continued strife in his lineage due to having brought about the death of Uriah (cf. 1Sam 8.7 and 2Sam 12.10). Against this twofold curse, if you will, the drama of Elijah, Elisha, lesser know prophets and various kings unfolds. And then we have, of course, the formidable, foreboding presence of King Ahab's wife Jezebel.

A brief remark is in order as to references of a given verb within Second Kings¹. Although a given verb may be closer to the one noted, generally the reference is to the verb belonging to the same form. That means the second reference can be at another place within Second Kings. For example, the verb *darash* first appears in 1.2. The next time it's similar form is found in 22.13. If this isn't the case, then another reference from Second Kings is noted...and if this isn't found, a reference from another biblical book is given. Also if a verse regardless of its form is found a few verses down, that will be listed but not quoted in full by reason of its proximity.

At the end of each chapter are the transliterated words noted upon which are inserted for easier cross reference. The above mentioned *davar* is not listed because it's so common.

Citations are taken from **The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha (RSV)**, (New York, 1973). Also the **NIV Study Bible** (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1984) has been used chiefly for general information with regard to the text.

¹ This applies to First Kings though it isn't mentioned as specifically as here.

Chapter One

In the document pertaining to First Kings much was made of the conjunctive *v-* translated usually as “and” but also as “when, however, again.” On certain occasions it isn’t translated at all but is more suggestive. The same applies to the current document. In fact, the very first word of Second Kings has the conjunctive *v-* as “and” prefaced to it to show the immediate, seamless connection with First Kings. The context is the death of King Ahab and by way of appendix, his son Ahaziah. Vs. 52 of that book’s last chapter says “He did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and walked in the way of his father and in the way of his mother (etc.).” His mother, of course, is Jezebel whose conniving continues into the present book followed by her long-anticipated demise. For many involved, it couldn’t come quickly enough.

The verse just cited pretty much sums up a basic theme of First Kings, namely the prophecy of Nathan uttered against King David for having brought about the death of Uriah after which he usurped Bathsheba to be his wife. It runs as “Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house because you have despised me” [2Sam 12.10]. This sword, both metaphorical and actual, indeed plagued David, his son Solomon and all other kings. Nothing is said whether they had been conscious of this fact. It was more a tradition of sorts that went unrecorded and thus kept under the rug. Similarly there was no concerted effort to rid the house of David of the curse, for no one knew how to go about it. Thus people became resigned and inured as they watched it play out over and over again. In the case at hand this “tradition” is about to re-introduce itself and simply take up from where it had left off. As we’ve seen to date, only the intervention of a prophet here and there seems to have staved off utter destruction not just for the house of David but for his descendants, the current prophets being Elijah and his successor Elisha.

Pashah is the verb for “rebelled” to which the conjunctive *v-* is prefaced and implies a falling or breaking away as well as committing a transgression. “But when Ahab died, the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel” [3.5]. That means Ahab’s son Ahaziah had to deal with the situation, the one who had done evil in the Lord’s sight and who was no better than his parents. The other half of his parents, of course, is Jezebel who doesn’t come on the scene until 9.30. One may ask where she was and what she was doing, not assisting her newly enthroned son. Given what we’ve seen of her in First Kings, she isn’t far away, behind the scenes watching, waiting and plotting. As for Moab, perhaps with Ahab out of the way and with his untried son on the throne, it was an ideal time to rebel. That may be true, but no one seems to have taken Jezebel into account perhaps because she was a woman.

Within the context of this rebellion vs. 2 presents a freakish accident. King Ahaziah fell through a lattice or *sevakah*, this noun found next in 25.17 where it's called a decorative piece or artwork: "And the second pillar had the like with the network." The verb *chalah* or to be sick describes his condition which you'd think normally would apply to an illness instead of an injury. "Now Elisha came to Damascus, Ben-hadad the king of Syria was sick" [8.7]. Ahaziah was unable to move, perhaps paralyzed, and decided to send messengers to inquire of the god Baal-zebul, the verb being *darash* also as to tread and thus connotes a more earnest or desperate type of inquiry. "Go, inquire of the Lord for me and for the people and for all Judah" [22.13]. As for Baal-zebul, it means "Baal the Prince" and associated with Ekron, the place of worship in vs. 3, the chief rival of the God of Israel. The *darash* at hand is whether or not Ahaziah will recover, *chayah* being the verb to live, implying that the messengers are to offer sacrifices.

At the same time of Ahaziah's accident an angel of the Lord appeared, *mala'k* being the same noun as messenger in vs. 2. In other words, as soon as the divine *mal'ak* saw the human *mal'ak* set off for Ekron, he steps in to contact Elijah who himself will act as a *mal'ak* of sorts. The angel bids Elijah to arise or *qum* (cf. 8.1), implying that he's to leave off what he is doing immediately and meet the messengers, *qum* followed by the verb *halah* (cf. 2.23) to go up...two verbs with regard to ascending, if you will. Actually this rise-going up is more a confrontation where Elijah is to question the reason for their inquiry: *darash* (cf. vs. 2) of Baal-zebul instead of the Lord. He's to put the question squarely and bluntly which turns out to be a competition not unlike the one on Mount Carmel where Elijah had contested with the prophets of Baal.

Next Elijah addresses King Ahaziah though he wasn't present, the messengers being his representatives. The king isn't going to live but will die, the verb *muth* being used twice for emphasis. Elijah didn't stick around waiting for a response. Instead, vs. 4 simply says that he went. In back of his mind was that after the drama of Mount Carmel, Jezebel sent a message to him causing him to take flight at once out of sheer terror. So again Jezebel hovers in the background without her presence or name being mentioned.

Vs. 5 has the messengers returning to their king; whether or not they succeeded in inquiring of Baal-zebul isn't clear due to Elijah's intervention. Apparently they did not because Ahaziah asked why they have returned or in essence, why their mission had been cut short. With a fear quite visible on their faces, they recounted how a man met them, told them to return and pass on as to why he was inquiring of Baal-zebul instead of the God of Israel. These words are prefaced with the tell-tale "Thus says the Lord," a give-away that it was Elijah although the messengers didn't say so. Instead this mystery-man said that the king wouldn't recover. Upon asking the messenger what kind of man they had met, they described him in standard prophet clothing not unlike John the Baptist-like: haircloth and

a leather belt: “John wore a garment of camel’s hair, and a leather girdle around his waist” [Mt 3.4]. As soon as Ahaziah heard this he knew it was Elijah, scourge of his father, and the one whom his mother so earnestly wishes to be dead.

While the exact nature of Ahaziah’s injury isn’t known, he was in too desperate a condition to argue. Vs. 9 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “then” which serves to highlight the fast-paced action about to unfold. The king decides to dispatch a captain or *sar-chamishayn*, literally “prince of fifty” (*sar* meaning prince or leader). In other words, the king preferred an experienced military man who would bring along a substantial contingent of men. Given what had happened on top of Mount Carmel and the fate of the prophets of Baal, they just might be walking into an ambush. Ominously the captain found Elijah sitting on top of a hill which must have reminded him of the Mount Carmel incident...in miniature, if you will. No small wonder the captain told Elijah to come down, come down where it’s safe, addressing him deferentially as “man of God” more to protect himself. Then as feared, Elijah sent fire from heaven as in 1Kg 18.38: “Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt offering” (etc.).

For a second time the king sent another *sar-chamishayn*, possibly concealing from him the fate of the first commander and his men so as to trap them and not to frighten them away. Apparently Ahaziah wasn’t phased; after all he was on the verge of dying and sent this second entourage. He was king and could do whatever he wished. The commander approached Elijah still on the hilltop, ordering him to come down. Like the one before him, he knew of his reputation and likewise wasn’t eager to put himself nor his men in harm’s way. And so predictably Elijah rained fire down upon them and consumed them.

For a third and final time King Ahaziah sent a third contingent led by a *sar-chamishayn*, they too being kept in the dark as to the fate of the previous two groups. By now word must have gotten out, for the commander approached Elijah on his knees, entreating him, *karah* meaning to bow down or entreat. For another use of this verb with the same form, cf. 9.24: “and he sank in his chariot.” Part of this entreaty was that the prophet recognize his men as precious in his sight, the verb being *yaqar*, also as to be esteemed highly. “For the ransom of his life is costly and never can suffice” [Ps 49.8]. This heart-felt appeal wasn’t being seen by Elijah alone, for vs. 15 has the angel of the Lord keeping an eye on the situation, having been moved at his intransigence which resulted in the loss of life. And so the angel told Elijah to rise (*qum*) and go with this *sar-chamishayn*.

Nothing is said of the journey back to King Ahaziah, Elijah possibly fuming that he didn’t destroy this third detachment sent for him yet at the same time focused on what he would say. As for the original intent of fetching him, no clear reason is given but presumably it had to do with healing the king. So the *sar-chamishayn* and those under his command

advanced as quickly as possible, wanting to get Elijah back and be relieved of such a perilous duty. All in all what happened thus far reveals that the Lord is far more merciful through the agent of his angel than his prophet.

Finally the tense little group arrives at the court of their king, not getting there fast enough. Those who saw it approaching were amazed, having expected this third group not to return as with the other two. In fact most people shunned it just in case Elijah planned on pulling a fast one once inside the court. After all, he had done in four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. Predictably Elijah communicated to the king that he wouldn't rise from the bed in which he was confined, using for the third time the comparison of Baal-zebub with the Lord. That was it. Elijah simply left while everyone gave him the widest berth possible. In fact, Ahaziah didn't say a word, too stunned to utter anything.

Vs. 17 has Ahaziah dying according to the word or the *davar* of the Lord which as pointed out in the text dealing with First Kings means something more like word-as-expression, not unlike the New Testament idea of *logos*. There's no mention of his mother Jezebel though we can be certain she's lurking in the background waiting to make her next move. What follows at the conclusion of this chapter is a brief notation as to his brother becoming king, a co-regency if you will, along with Jehoshaphat of Judah. The reason is that Ahaziah had no son. Chapter One concludes with a rhetorical question echoed later in 8.23 with regard to the Book of the Chronicles in which the lives and deeds of kings were recorded for posterity. As for the noun, it's *davar*...Book of the *Davar*, if you will.

1) pashah, 2) sevakah, chalah, darash, chayah, 3) mal'ak, qum, halah, darash, muth, 9) sar-chamishayn, 13) karah, yaqar, 15) qum

Chapter Two

The conjunctive *v-* beginning this new chapter translated as “now” in the RSV serves to shift attention away from the drama surrounding the death of King Ahaziah to the ascension of the prophet Elijah into heaven as well as clearing the way for his successor Elisha. *Halah* is the verb for take up which here is prefaced with the preposition *b-* (literally as ‘in’). Associated with this *halah* is the noun *seharah* or whirlwind, the verbal root meaning to be shaken violently, to be tossed about. The same preposition *b-* is prefaced to *seharah*, literally “in a whirlwind” meaning that Elijah will be in its very center. This word is found next in vs. 11, but another reference is given here: “Fire and hail, snow and frost, stormy wind fulfilling his command” [Ps 148.8]! The context is the two prophets leaving Gilgal which isn't mentioned in either First or Second Kings. In other

words, we have no information as to what the two had been doing there which is incidental compared with setting the stage for the arrival of this *seharah*.

Somewhere along the way Elijah told Elisha to hold up for a while, *yashav* (cf. vs. 4) also meaning to sit down and wait. It's connected the participle *na'* and thereby intimates a wish, not a command. The reason? The Lord sent him as far as Bethel which means that Elisha had an intimation something momentous was about to take place. Elisha objected saying that he won't leave the master, *hazav* being a strong verb meaning to abandon or to forsake. "So they fled away in the twilight and forsook their tents" [7.7]. Unlike what we've seen with Elijah, he softens up and allows Elisha to accompany him to Bethel. Chances are that en route the two pretty much kept silent, each reluctant to tell the other what was on their minds.

In vs. 3 the phrase "sons of the prophets" refers to a kind of brotherhood (cf. 1Sam 10.5). Many if not most are those who had escaped the wrath of Jezebel by coming under the protection of Obadiah (cf. 1Kg 18.4). Although King Ahab was dead, his wife was still on the rampage, especially since Elijah had slain the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal. Apparently the remainder of the Lord's prophets had taken refuge in Bethel and felt it safe enough to come out and gather with both Elijah and Elisha. This they did with considerable caution knowing that a price was on their head for associating with someone who had a bounty on his head.

Apparently the prophets had been privy to Elijah's ascension and ask if he was aware of this, *yadah* (cf vs 5) being the verb which often connotes intimate knowledge as well as to notice, learn and found. He responds in the affirmative though refrains from going into any details. In fact, he bids the prophets to hold their peace, *chashah* in the sense of being quiet. "If we are silent and wait until the morning light, punishment will overtake us" [7.9]. Perhaps when Elisha said in vs. 2 that he doesn't intend to leave his master he hopes to join him in being taken up into heaven. The manner by which Elijah will be taken (the common verb *laqach*) reads literally as "your master from upon your head," 'adon being the noun as in vs. 16: "Pray, let them go, and seek your master."

On a second occasion Elijah bids Elisha to stay behind (*yashav*, cf. vs. 2), this time claiming that the Lord wants him to go to Jericho. As with the first instance, Elisha protests, saying that he won't leave him. Without putting up a fuss, Elijah consents to bring him along, now fully aware that Elisha knows what is about to happen. Once in Jericho another band of prophets takes Elisha aside and questions him, he responding in similar fashion. So we have two groups of prophets, both knowing Elijah's fate. In sum, all involved were aware of it. However, as of yet the taking or *laqach* also found in vs. 5 isn't spelled out. After all, they are prophets and had insight which wasn't known to anyone else

nor should it be, given the fact that Jezebel was still on the look out for Elijah. When she learned that he had been taken up into heaven, we can be fairly certain that she breathed as sigh of relief. At least he was out of the picture.

In vs. 6 for a third and final time Elijah bids Elisha to tarry (*yashav*, cf. vs. 4) while he goes to the Jordan River most likely with the intent of crossing it. Predictably Elisha responds by saying that he won't leave his master's side, and the two went on in silence as before. This time they are accompanied by fifty of the "sons of the prophets," the same number of men King Ahaziah had sent on three occasions to fetch Elisha. Apparently this is another group that had escaped Jezebel's wrath, the two most likely being in close contact. Note that the fifty stood some distance from the two, respecting any conversation among them while at the bank of the Jordan River. Was Elijah going to perform a miracle similar to Joshua and walk across on the dry riverbed? Given what he had done earlier, certainly he was capable of performing such a miracle.

Indeed Elijah does what the prophets anticipated. He took his mantle or *'adereth*, the same one noted in 1Kg 19.13 with which he had wrapped his face before the Lord. After rolling it up pretty much like a staff in imitation of Moses about to divide the Red Sea, he struck the water which parted allowing the two to cross on dry ground. While the fifty prophets were amazed, they had a premonition Elijah would do this while at the same time without being told they couldn't follow. Chances are that Elijah chose the very spot where Joshua crossed the Jordan River and while crossing, visited the site from which the twelve stones were taken and set up as a memorial. While in the center of the river, the two paused and examined the site from which the twelve stones were removed. Other than that, the crossing was done in haste in order to get on with what lay before them.

Once on the other side and still within sight of the "sons of prophets" but clearly out of ear shot, Elijah asked Elisha if he wanted anything done for him before being taken away, third mention of the verb *laqach* (cf. vs. 5). Without blinking an eye, Elisha asked for a "double share" of his master's spirit, *py* being a form of *peh* or mouth. This request is almost as though he were asking for twice the capacity to speak—*davar*, if you will—in the name of the Lord. As for the noun *ruach* or spirit, it's prefaced with the preposition *b-*, literally as "in your spirit." It's as though Elisha's desire expressed three times earlier not to leave the side of Elijah is more than fulfilled. It's positioned not alongside him but physically in his *ruach*. "The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha" [vs. 15].

Elijah responded predictably to this bold request, that it is a hard thing, the same form of verb *qashah* as in 1Kg 12.4: "Your father made our yoke heavy." He puts the granting of it in terms of seeing, that is, whether Elisha sees this *laqach* or taking away or not. At first this seems improbable because you don't lose sight of someone on whom you're attention is

so fixed. Yet missing this *laqach* can happen as Elijah intimates because in an instant he'll be snatched away. This is reminiscent of 1Cor 15.51-52: "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye."

The eyes of the "sons of prophets" were transfixed on the two men as they continued to walk along on the riverbank. Both knew something momentous was about to happen and were waiting with growing anticipation. During their conversation—and time was running out quickly—we have in vs. 11 *hineh* or "behold" which introduces the sudden appearance of what will snatch away Elijah. This comes in the form of a chariot of fire pulled by horses of fire, *rekev* usually applicable to a vehicle for military purposes, one of the most formidable weapons of the day. "So Naaman came with his horses and chariots and halted at the door of Elisha's house" [5.9]. Thus the chariot and horses parted the two men, this *parad* being all the more violent by reason of the fire involved. "The lot puts an end to disputes and decides between powerful contenders" [Prov 18.18].

During the chariot's brief touchdown on the earth Elisha was pushed aside and perhaps even got singed. It's appearance as a whirlwind or *seharah* noted in vs. 1 rode off into heaven or into the clear blue sky above and quickly was lost to sight. Obviously the prophets on the other side of the Jordan saw something dramatic transpiring but couldn't figure out what it was even though they Elisha was going to be taken away. That's why a bit later they went of a search for him, having seen only the whirlwind which to them could have been a sandstorm or the like. As the chariot swiftly made its way heavenward, Elisha exclaimed (*tsahaq*: "From the youngest to the oldest were called out," 3.21) that the chariot and its horsemen belonged to Israel. Most likely this means that the earthly kingdom is intimately bound up with the one of heaven. As for the driver of the chariot, one is an angel while another angel reached out to grasp Elijah.

The second sentence of vs. 12 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as "then" showing the close connection between what had just happened and the determination of Elisha to take up where his master had left off. He does this by spontaneously tearing his own clothes, *qarah* not unlike the *parad* that just occurred and can be taken as symbolic of it. "And when the king of Israel read the letter, he rent his clothes" [5.7]. Immediately after this gesture vs. 14 begins with another conjunctive *v-* likewise translated as "then," indicative of two actions being performed as one. Elisha takes up the mantle of Elijah which had fallen from him as he was whisked away on the chariot. However, Elijah may have deliberately cast it off so that Elisha may use it in the same prophetic manner.

Armed with this mantle, Elisha walks back toward the Jordan River, strikes the water and says—the simple verb *'amar*, nothing dramatic—"Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?" He wanted to see not so much if the mantle had magic powers but if the Lord was ready to

assist him. So for a brief moment Elisha had some hesitation whether or not the Lord would do the same for him as he had done for Elijah.

Compare the strikes of both prophets with Moses and Joshua. Instead of a mantle or staff, the former stretched his hands over the Red Sea to part it (cf. Ex 14.21). As for the latter, there was no such gesture. Instead, as soon as the priests' feet touched the Jordan, it receded (cf. Jos 3.13). Then as with Elijah, Elisha struck the water, divided it in half, and he crossed over. It was time for one last look at the place from which the twelve stones were taken as a memorial, this being the last time human eyes were able to see it. All the while the "sons of prophets" had their eyes fixed on Elisha, knowing for sure that he had the same power as his master.

Vs. 15 has the "sons of prophets" meeting Elisha at Jericho which is put literally as "from before" or the preposition *min-* prefaced to *neged* or before, this intimating an encounter of some significance. Apparently they didn't wait at the Jordan to meet him but decided, perhaps out of fear at the river's parting, to return to Jericho. There they exclaimed in accord with their prophetic gift of knowing of Elijah's ascent (cf. 1.3) that his spirit or *ruach* (cf. vs. 9) now rests upon Elisha. *Nuach* is the verb connoting a settling down or resting. "And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him" [Is 11.2]. Having pronounced these words, the prophets did obeisance put in turns of bowing to the ground.

The "sons of prophets" introduce themselves as "fifty strong men" (*beney-chayl*), the latter meaning power or strength (cf. 5.1), indicating that they were more than ready to service Elisha. Obviously this was coupled with a profound reverential fear after what they had just witnessed. Although these men knew of Elijah's ascent as noted in the paragraph above, here they ask their new master to seek (*baqash*; cf. vs. 17 & also as to demand, require) him out. They speculated that the *Ruach* (cf. vs. 15) of Lord may have cast him on some mountain (Carmel is a likely candidate for obvious reasons) or valley; for example, the valley Elijah slew the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal. In other words, their prophetic knowledge of his ascent turned out to be limited compared with Elisha.

Elisha knew full well what had transpired but didn't let them in on it which is why in vs. 3 he says "Yes, I know it; hold your peace." Nevertheless, the prophets persisted, and Elisha relented. So over a three day period they searched every mountain and valley but to no avail. Upon returning to Jericho Elisha reminded them of his command not to search for Elisha. No response is given except embarrassment painted on their faces. Elisha didn't chastize them, knowing that their hearts were in the right place. After all, if they showed such devotion to Elijah, at some time in the future they might do the same to him.

Now it was time for Elisha to strike out on his own but armed with the mantle of his master. Some inhabitants of Jericho approached him asking a favor, prefacing their request by saying that the city is in a pleasant situation, the common adjective *tov* being used, good. However, the water was bad and the land unfruitful, possibly due to a drought. Elisha proceeded to take some salt and cast it in a spring, making it potable, *rapha'* being the verb which fundamentally means to heal. "And King Joram returned to be healed in Jezreel of the wounds which the Syrians had given him at Ramah" [8.29]. Thus the water of this spring which sustained Jericho continued "to this day" in accord with the *davar* of Elisha.

Elisha doesn't have a clearly laid out plan of action nor mission inherited from his predecessor Elijah. For the foreseeable future he was preoccupied with avoiding the schemes of Jezebel although she isn't mentioned thus far. Once she passes off the scene, Elisha would be able to function far more freely, but between now and Jezebel's eventual demise, he engaged in a series of important and sometimes miraculous events. Before these come to pass, however, Elisha goes from Jericho to Bethel; whether he's accompanied by the prophets living in Jericho isn't specified but most likely he went on his own. En route some boys met him and taunted him, calling him a baldhead, simply because he was alone and an easy target. And so the story continues with two she-bears devouring the boys to which the **RSV** has one of its best tongue-in-cheek observations pertaining to Jesus and children, "Mt 19.13-15 (etc) provide a better guide to Biblical teaching on how to treat children."

Finally Elisha goes to Mount Carmel after which he returns to Samaria. We can be fairly certain he spent considerable time on Carmel, pondering what his master Elijah had done there. He walked around the ruins of both the two altars, one to Baal and the other to the Lord, hoping to be informed by the spirit of Elisha and receive guidance as how to exercise the prophetic gift bestowed upon him.

1) halah, seharah, 2) yashav, hazav, 3) yadah, chashah, 'adon, laqach, 4) yashav, 5) laqach, 6) yashav, 8) 'adereth, 9) laqach, ruach, 10) qashah, 11) hineh, rekev, seharah, tsahaq, 12) qarah, 15) ruach, 16) chayl, baqash, ruach, 21) rapha'

Chapter Three

The first few verses of this new chapter deal with a theme begun in First Kings, one all too familiar, where a king...Jehoram...did evil or *rah* (cf. 2.19 but not noted there) in the sight of the Lord, literally "in the eyes" meaning that the Lord had been watching all along and taking note. Here as in earlier cases the Lord must have felt pain at Israel's request for a

king which goes all the way back to Saul: “for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being over them” [1Sam 8.7]. Despite this, Jehoram had a silver lining. Although he had committed *rah*, he wasn’t like his parents, King Ahab and Jezebel, the template for all *rah* as it pertains to the kings of Israel. Jehoram’s redeeming quality was that he put away the pillar of Baal made by his father, *sur* also as to turn aside and found in the next verse. Here *sur* is a rather ambiguous term. It suggests removal but not destruction and the possibility of taking out the pillar at some future date if not by the current king, then by his successor. The actual reference to Ahab hearkens to 1Kg 16.32: “He erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal which he built in Samaria.” This verse is prefaced by something worse...what led him to such action...married Jezebel.

As for a more specific reason for Jehoram’s *rah*, he clung to the sin of Jeroboam who caused Israel to sin, the verb *davaq* implying sticking like glue which can’t be removed. “Therefore the leprosy of Naaman shall cleave to you and to your descendants forever” [5.27]. As for reference to King Jeroboam, it begins with him making golden calves in Bethel to sway the people away from worship of the Lord in the Jerusalem temple as well as reverting to the house of King David. This is detailed in 1Kg 12.26-33 and 13.33-34. The use of *sur* as “did not depart” is the other half of *davaq*, if you will, making King Jehoram inseparable from the past which unfortunately assures continuation of *rah* into the foreseeable future.

The conjunctive *v-* beginning vs. 4 as “now” gets to the meat of this new chapter, war with Moab. At the same time, the verses concerning King Jehoram—the evil he had done—invariably will have an effect on what happens now. Mesha, king of Moab, had to pay annually (in RSV but not Hebrew text) some hundred thousand lambs and the wool of a hundred thousand rams to the king of Israel. Details aren’t given, but it must have been some kind of tribute. Upon the death of Ahab, King Mesha rebelled against Jehoram, the verb being *pashah* also as to act in a criminal fashion. “In his days Edom revolted from the rule of Judah and set up a king of their own” [8.20]. Jehoram was reluctant to engage Mesha on his own, so he sent word to King Jehoshaphat of Judah who agreed to assist. He put it in terms of his people and horses being the same as Jehoram which indicates that despite the division between Israel and Judah, the two are united against a common threat. Also, Mesha may have his own allies which would make matters worse.

The two kings decided to make an attack by passing through Edom, that king casting his lot in on the alliance. Their route turned out to be circuitous resulting in their supply of water being used up, this making the three kings and their respective armies an easy target. The reason for taking this route must have been a ploy to surprise King Mesha, attacking him from an angle least expected. The dire situation made the king of Israel cry out that the Lord was responsible for bringing them to this place that they may fall prey to

the king of Moab. Then as is almost always the case someone—in this case King Jehoshaphat—asks if there might be a prophet among the retinue. It turns out that Elisha was present. A footnote in the NIV explains his presence as “It seems that Elisha accompanied the armies on this campaign as the representative of the aged Elijah.”

Elisha is described as having poured water on the hands of Elijah, not so much acting as his slave but being subject to him as a junior prophet to his senior or master. Jehoshaphat puts it well saying simply in vs. 12 that the “*davar* of the Lord is with him.” Vs. 12 says that two kings—of Israel and Edom—went down to meet Elisha, the king of Judah presumably left behind as in command of the troops. Note that the verse says “went down” which seems to suggest some distance compared with vs. 11, “Elisha the son of Shaphat is here.” Given the later prophetic wonders Elisha would accomplish, it wouldn’t be surprising that he was able to be in two places at once. As to exactly where the two kings went for this meeting, it isn’t specified.

Rightly and brusquely Elisha rebukes King Jehoram for approaching him in a time of need, telling him to go to the prophets of his father and mother, that is, those belonging to Baal which is pretty much like invoking a curse. By mentioning his parents—Ahab and Jezebel—Elisha puts Jehoram in the same category of apostates as they. To this the king responds that the Lord himself had assembled the three kings in an alliance against the king of Moab, nothing of this having been noted earlier. Obviously it was a desperate ploy to get Elisha’s assistance. After assessing the situation, Elisha consents but only because he has regard for King Jehoshaphat of Judah and couches his response by saying that he is in the service of the Lord of hosts. That is to say, neither would he look at him nor see him, the two verbs being *navat* and *ra’ah*. The former is less familiar (only occurrence in Second Kings) and implies beholding or having regard whereas the latter is far more common. A reference to both (reverse order) is Ps 10.14: “You see; yes, you note trouble and vexation.”

Despite his misgivings, Elisha gets right down to business. He summons a minstrel to play (*menagan* and *nagan*) or more specifically to play on a stringed instrument. Since King Jehoram subscribed to Baal, the minstrel in his company was associated with that god. Nothing is said about what he played for Elisha and may have been familiar with songs pertaining to the Lord. In a desperate situation like this, anything would work. This incident is reminiscent of David before King Saul: “And whenever the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, David took the lyre and played it with his hand; so Saul was refreshed and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him” [1Sam 16.23]. What the minstrel plays induced the “power of the Lord” to come upon Elisha, *yad* or hand being the noun. Obviously everyone had their eyes fixed on Elisha to see what he would utter.

After some time Elisha used the typical prophetic phrase “Thus says (*‘amar*, cf. 2.14) the Lord.” In place of the desert which in which the three kings and their respective armies found themselves, the Lord will transform it into pools, *gev* also as ditches as well as beams with three other biblical references, one of which is 1Kg 6.9: “And he made the ceiling of the house of beams and planks of cedar.” While everyone is astonished as well as delighted, Elisha adds quickly that it’s a “light thing” in the Lord’s eyes. *Qalal* is a verb (also as to be swift as well as vile) as found in 20.10: “It is an easy thing for the shadow to lengthen ten steps; rather let the shadow go back ten steps.” Not only does the Lord provide water in abundance, more importantly the three kings shall conquer the Moabites. After this prophecy aided by the minstrel the prophecy of Elisha comes true, that is, not immediately but on the morrow. Despite the dubious characters making up this threefold royal alliance Elisha sees beyond it, the continuance of the nation of Israel and eventual reunion with Judah thus healing the rift of the two kingdoms.

Obviously the Moabites were stunned at this sudden appearance of water. Although they summoned every able-bodied man “from the youngest to the oldest,” they knew their fate was sealed. As for their knowledge of Elisha among this alliance, nothing is said although word of his presence must have reached them earlier. The Moabites caught sight of the water, but it was red as blood which made them think that the three kings had fought each other and any survivors disbanded.

The rest of this incident is pretty much straight-forward, a conventional destruction of enemies we’d expect from the Bible. What stands out towards the end of this chapter is the Moabite king’s desperation. He offers his eldest son as a burnt offering on the wall of a city under siege for all the three kings and their armies to behold. The Israelites were taken back completely put in terms of a “great wrath” or *qetseph* which connotes a breaking out...in other words, a violent display of anger. “O Lord, rebuke me not in your anger nor chasten me in your wrath” [Ps 38.1]! Apparently the people took this as a manifestation of the Moabite deity Chemosh. The sight of this horror made them stop completely in their tracks that they failed to take the city. As for what happened next, nothing is said. The same applies to Elisha’s reaction. Chapter Four moves on to another miracle performed by Elisha.

2) rah, sur, 3) davaq, sur, 5) pashah, 14) navat, ra’ah, 14) ‘amar, 15) menagan, nagan, ‘amar, 16) gev, 18) qalal, 27) qetseph

Chapter Four

A footnote in the RSV calls this chapter an interlude in the miracles of Elisha and begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “now.” As for Elisha, he moves in the company of the

“sons of the prophets” whereas his master functioned on his own. Perhaps Elisha saw the need for being with like-minded people, that despite his master’s fame, operating on your own can lead to unforeseen difficulties. At the time these “sons of the prophets” were subject to persecution by Jezebel which forced them to create a closer knit group than would be the case otherwise. It so happened that the wife of one of the prophets approached Elisha saying that her husband had died. This leaves the dreaded prospect of her and two children at risk of being sold into slavery, a way of paying debts. At the heart of her appeal is Elisha knowing that her deceased husband feared the Lord, *yare*’ being an adjective found next in 17.32: “They also feared the Lord.”

Elisha is eager to help, asking the widow what she has in her house which turned out to be a jar of oil, nothing more, *shemen* (cf. vs. 6) also as ointment as well as fatness. After Elisha bids her to gather as many vessels as possible from her neighbors, she is to pour the oil into them. Note that she must do this secretly, otherwise it might create suspicion: “shut the door upon yourself and your sons.” Having been married to a prophet, she was used to doing such things without asking questions and promptly did what Elisha asked her. The widow must have gathered the utensils gradually, otherwise she would have gotten that unwanted attention. Finally the oil stopped flowing into all the utensils after which Elisha told her to sell the oil and thus pay off her debts. More important than that, she and her two sons were spared being sold off into slavery.

Vs. 8 begins with the conjunctive *v-* which goes untranslated and introduces a miracle which parallels that of Elijah bringing back to life the son of the widow of Zarephath in Chapter Seventeen of First Kings. It takes up the bulk of the current chapter, running through vs. 41. This time Elisha meets a wealthy woman, the adjective *gadol* meaning great. Apparently she knew of the prophet and invites him to eat some food, the verb being *chazaq* suggestive of a strong, almost forced urging. “And when she came to the mountain to the man of God, she caught hold of his feet” [vs. 27].

Judging by her relationship with her husband, it seems this anonymous woman of means was in charge while he is in a rather subservient position. Elisha had passed through Shunem a number of times, the reason for which isn’t given. However, it can be surmised that it was in conjunction with the “sons of the prophets,” ever on the move to escape the clutches of Jezebel. *Tamyd* (continually) is the adverb in vs. 9 the woman uses to describe his frequent visits. “And every day of his life he dined regularly at the king’s table” [25.29]. Judging by the few encounters with Elisha, this woman exclaims to her husband that she perceives him as a “holy man,” *yadah* (cf. 1.3) meaning that she had clear insight as to his character. As for the adjective “holy,” it’s the familiar *qadosh* implying clean as well as being set apart. Although we don’t have Elisha’s assessment of this woman, we can assume he could see her holiness as well. This mutual respect (with the subservient

husband consenting) prompted the woman to prepare a room on the roof for Elisha to stay during his frequent visits.

During one passage through Shunem Elisha takes advantage of his new quarters, this time accompanied by his servant Gehazi, *nahar* usually applied to a child or young man. “Some small boys came out of the city and jeered at him” [2.23]. This is the first mention of Gehazi, someone Elisha could have picked up from the “sons of the prophets” and possibly a candidate in line to succeed him as he had done with Elijah. However, as incidents unfold, he shows himself less than desirable for the job. Elisha was quite taken aback with the woman’s hospitality, saying that she had gone through a lot of trouble for them both. The verb *charad* along with *charadah* or the noun derived from it is used, fundamentally as to tremble or to be afraid; the same applies to the noun. For references: “All the people followed him, trembling” [1Sam 13.7]. “The fear of man lays a snare, but he who trusts in the Lord is safe” [Prov 29.25].

To show his gratitude Elisha asks the woman if he could put in a word or *davar* to either the king or commander of the army to which she replies proudly that she has no need of such a thing. “I dwell among my own people” as vs. 13 puts it succinctly and very well. Such self-reliance and pride is the source of her great wealth as noted in vs. 8, the adjective *gadol* there having a broader meaning of true greatness in being so identified with her own people. It turns out that she and her husband are childless which means her statement was all the more one of self-reliance.

Both Elisha and Gehazi confer as how to repay such a woman, very difficult to do for someone so self-reliant and formidable. It was Gehazi who had done some snooping around or better, eavesdropping on the couple, and discovered that they were childless. This must have contributed to the woman’s identity with her people, for not to have children was pretty much a curse. In fact, the boast of dwelling among her own people may be a kind of compensation of an inner despair and longing shared by her husband. Elisha saw through this which made him prophesy that she will conceive and have a son. He narrows down the time to “this season” and “when the time comes round.” The two terms here are *mohed* and *heth*, the former also as a place for meeting or assembly point and the latter the more common term for time. A reference to *mohed* which is more akin to *kairos* is 1Kg 8.4: “And they brought up the ark of the Lord, the tent of meeting.”

Upon hearing this news which would thrill the woman, as expected she didn’t believe Elisha. In fact, she went so far as tell him not to lie; it would be tantamount to a curse if he intended this. However, Elisha’s prophecy did come true, though when uttering it he doesn’t give further words of encouragement. So until the women felt swelling in her belly she had to live with the agonizing possibility of being the butt of a cruel joke. Nevertheless

there are two key words which kept her hope alive: 1) that she would embrace (*chavaq*) a son. In other words, she would surround him with her whole love. “His right hand embraces me” [Sg 2.6]. 2) That Elisha had spoken to the her about this impending birth, *davar* and the weightiness associated with it. This incident has echoes with Sarah and Abraham: “Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, in the spring, and Sarah shall have a son” [Gn 18.14]. Here the adjective for “hard” is “wonderful” and “appointed time” is *mohed* as with the verse under consideration; same applies to the time of year, the spring.

Nothing is said about the birth of the child nor of any celebration which must have taken place, Elisha presumably was invited along with the “sons of the prophets.” However, that’s incidental to the overall story which as noted in vs. 8 parallels Elijah’s cure of a boy. During the intervening years Elisha continued to visit the family and watch the child grow. All went fine until one day the boy complained of a pain in his head, after which he died. Vs. 20 adds a touching note with the mother holding her son on her lap until this happened, after which she laid him on Elisha’s bed. Perhaps placing him in a place associated with the holy man might revive him. Also she may have heard of the story associated with Elijah which further raised her hopes, for vs. 21 says that after having placed him on the bed, the mother shut the door and went out as if to leave him and Elisha...his spirit...together.

In vs. 22 the woman tells her husband (showing she’s the boss of the house) to summon a servant to prepare an ass that she may hasten Elisha whom she calls the “man of God.” He objects, saying that it’s neither new moon nor Sabbath, those days usually considered more propitious to visit such holy men. The reply? Simply *shalom*, the same response Elisha bids Gehazi to say in vs. 26. Then she and a servant set off and found him at Mount Carmel. Presumably during one of his many visits Elisha told her how he frequents that place. It’s understandable, given the dramatic confrontation between Elijah and the prophets of Baal. He must have returned there many times using it as an inspiration for his prophetic work. Surely Elisha knew of how his master had fled Jezebel’s rather after having slain the prophets of Baal. Would he do the same when the two have their eventual confrontation?

Elisha must have seen the woman making the gradual, arduous ascent to Mount Carmel, and once on top, she greeted Gehazi with *shalom* as noted in the paragraph above. It was, however, superficial, for as soon as she came to Elisha she broke down and grasped (*chazaq*, cf. vs. 8) his feet to which Gehazi objected. It may taken that Gehazi was insensitive, but as a servant he was simply doing his job. *Hadaph* is the verb to thrust aside, rather forceful, as another reference shows: “I will thrust you from your office, and you will be cast down from your station.” Nevertheless Elisha saw plainly that this woman who so often cared for him was in bitter distress which reads literally as “her soul is bitter

to her.” *Nephesh* (cf. 2.2 but not noted there) is the noun for soul along with the verb *marar*. “Lo, it was for my welfare that I had great bitterness” [Is 38.17]. The depth of such sorrow is brought home by the preposition *l-*, literally as “to her.” Elisha admittedly says that the Lord hadn’t informed him of this, a fact that must have puzzled him.

In vs. 28 the woman throws out two rapid-fire questions to Elisha as to her anguish, reprimanding him for apparently deceiving her, *shalah* being the verb with one other reference, 2Chron 29.11: “My sons, do not now be negligent.” Elisha was really on the spot now, too embarrassed to respond. However, right away in her presence he bade Gehazi to act as a surrogate on his behalf possibly because he was too unnerved at going himself. The phrase “gird up your loins” implies not just to get ready but to go as quickly as possible. Gehazi is to take Elisha’s staff, *mashheneth* uses several times in the next few verses not as some kind of magical device but as a representative of himself. “Thy rod and thy staff comfort me” [Ps 23.4]. Gehazi is to place it on the child’s face which hopefully will revive him; he had to act quickly before physical decomposition set in.

The woman, however, continued to persist. She wasn’t convinced that Gehazi would be able to accomplish the deed. In fact, she may have borne him a grudge when he brushed her aside on Mount Carmel (cf. vs. 27). In fact she just about vows to cling to Elisha, forcing him to go with Gehazi leading the way with his master’s staff in hand. The woman confronts Elisha with a not so veiled threat, if you will: “As the Lord lives, and as you yourself (*nephesh*, soul; cf. 27) live.” Elisha had no choice. The text says simply that he arose and followed her. Note the procession: first Gehazi with the staff, the woman and finally (in a state of semi-disgrace) behind, the three not speaking with each other the whole journey, not long but over some rough terrain.

As they approached Shunem, Gehazi walked more quickly, going ahead of both the woman and Elisha so that he may lay the staff on the boy’s face. If he managed to restore him to life, he might be considered a hero, or so he thought. Gehazi did just this but to no effect. He rushed back and informed Elisha with reluctance and embarrassment written all over his face. At least he had the propriety to tell Elisha, not the mother, for that would complicate things.

Finally this unique procession arrives at Shunem, and Elisha sees the child dead which cause so many thoughts to flood his mind. He had observed him grow up from a baby to approaching the threshold of manhood. The conjunctive *v-* of vs. 33 translated as “so” shows Elisha’s resolve upon entering the upper room even though his instincts tell him otherwise. Similarly the conjunctive beginning vs. 34 translated as “then” intensify this resolve as he places himself fully upon the dead child. This act bordering on near desperation took some courage, the child having been dead for a while with corruption

already setting in. To his great relief it worked. Warmth came back to the child though as yet he hadn't moved. In vs. 35 Elisha gets up and walks around the room mostly to release such tension before laying again upon the child. When he sneezed and opened his eyes, Elisha summoned the mother to come upstairs (no mention is made of her seemingly subservient husband) after which she prostrated herself before Elisha. He left hurriedly, wanting to leave mother and child alone. Surely he would visit them again in the near future as he had done so often in the past.

In Vs. 38 Elisha returns to Gilgal where a famine gripped the land. One of "sons of the prophets" had prepared pottage and accidentally prepared unsuitable ingredients making them cry out to Elisha, "there is death in the pot!" Without batting an eye he nullified this so-called poison by throwing in some meal.

Chapter Four concludes with yet another miracle, a kind of multiplication of loaves which suggests manna in the Sinai wilderness and a kind of prefigure of Jesus feeding those who came out to hear him.

1) yare', 2) shemen, 8) gadol, chazaq, 9) yadah, qadosh, tamyd, 12) nahar, 13) charad, charadah, 16) mohed, heth, chavaq, 23) shalom, 27) hadaph, nephesh, marar, 28) shalah, 29) mashheneth, 30) nephesh

Chapter Five

This new chapter begins with the conjunctive *v-* which goes untranslated, and serves to introduce Naaman described as a "great man" and "in high favor." The first is the adjective *gadol*, the same as with the "wealthy woman" of 4.8. The second consists of the verb *nasa'* (to raise) along with the noun *panym* or literally "raised before" or in the face of. The same phrase is found in Is 3.3: "The captain of fifty and the man of rank." Also the verse at hand has the preposition *liphny* or "with," that is, before Naaman's master, the king of Syria. The reason for such an honor rests not so much upon his military prowess, great as it is, but due to the Lord's intervention which clearly is out of place, given that Syria and Israel are mortal enemies. The noun for victory is *teshuhah*, also as deliverance. "A parallel reference is 13.17: "The Lord's arrow of victory, the arrow of victory over Syria!"

As for this seemingly incompatible relationship, refer to 1Kg 19.15-16 concerning Elijah after his experience on Mount Horeb. The Lord sent him to anoint Hazael king over Syria followed by Jehu as king over Israel. In other words, the Lord has designs that transcend the interests of both countries traditionally at each other's throat. As for Naaman and the

king of Syria, both must have had knowledge of Elijah's role in anointing Hazael and Jehu, even if remotely.

After Naaman is described as *gadol*, vs. 1 says he was a "mighty man" or *gibor chayl* which reads literally as "mighty in valor." The adjective also means strong and energetic and the noun as strength or might. In other words, he's someone of outstanding military valor. A reference to the former is 15.2 and for the latter, 2.14 but not noted there. Naaman, however, suffered from a serious affliction which at least until now doesn't hinder his ability to function. That is to say, he was a leper, the verb *tsarah* being used and found next in vs. 11.

Vs. 2 speaks of a raid on Israel the Syrians made, the noun *gedod* meaning more specifically a troop or band of soldiers compared with a more formal military unit. "And the Syrians came no more on raids into the land of Israel" [6.23]. The verse at hand intimates small, regular incursions into Israelite territory designed to harass and keep the inhabitants off guard, this preferable to an all-out conflict. Although Israel is presented as a victim of sorts, most likely it did the same though on a more limited scale. During the raid at hand the Syrians captured a small girl, *naharah* being the equivalent of *nahar* as applied to Gehazi in 4.12. Chances are they slew her parents and took her off to wait upon the wife of Naaman, this being rendered literally as "to be before the wife of Naaman." Surely Naaman and his wife kept apart, given his leprosy which meant that this *naharah* got a more intimate view of her than most of her servants.

The little girl apparently got along well with Naaman's wife, learned of her husband's leprosy and spoke about Elisha who just might cure him. Such an anonymous person as this *naharah* plays a pivotal role, setting in motion a whole series of events which will have profound impact later on. She disappears from the scene as quickly as she appears. The motive to offer a cure for one of Israel's hated and most feared enemies may be attributed not so much to her being naive or trying to worm herself into greater favor. Rather, she had the insight to bring about a major change in events. Another scenario is that if the wife of Naaman can convince him, the little girl just might be returned home or her family...what's left of it. Apparently Naaman listened and approached the king for permission to seek out Elisha. He even went so far as to mention this girl and amazingly consented by writing a letter of recommendation to the king of Israel. Such is the boldness and resourcefulness of this child though it's not inconceivable that Naaman's wife had something to do with persuading the king. This, of course, was a risky proposition given the fact that the two countries were on a continuous low-grade state of war.

As noted above, Syria was accustomed to made raids on Israel. Naaman had this clearly in mind as he set out laden with a whole load of coins and ten festal garments, the noun

chalyphah meaning change as in change of clothes. “But to Benjamin he gave three hundred shekels of silver and five festal garments” [Gn 45.22]. A footnote in the RSV estimates this totals to around \$80,000. Those in such a retinue had to make sure they displayed themselves to people and places they passed through in a peaceful manner, not coming of yet another raid. Most likely Naaman sent envoys to the king of Israel who in turn kept a keen eye on the progress of these Syrians. Naaman reached his destination safely, presented the letter from his master, and once the king read it he became very upset. The Syrian king asked that the Israelite king cure Naaman of leprosy. Apparently he misread what the little girl had communicated to Naaman’s wife. And so the king of Israel rightly became agitated, showing this by renting his clothes and thinking that the king of Syria was baiting him for a fight, ‘*anah* fundamentally as to beseech, entreat. “I beseech you, deliver my soul” [Ps 116.4].

Luckily for Naaman, the Syrian king’s best general who now was at the very heart of enemy territory, Elisha got wind of his visit by having heard that the king of Israel had rent his clothes. It’s as though the sound of this ripping was so loud that it reached Elisha’s ears. This prompted him to action. The text says that he “sent (*shalach*) to the king,” words which seems not to come in person but either by letter or by Gehazi. Instead of going to the royal palace, Elisha asks that Naaman come to him. He does so in rather dramatic fashion: horses and chariots, halting at the door of Elisha’s house, the verb *hamad* being used which means to stand. The image conjured up is Naaman and his retinue galloping full tilt and coming to a sudden, screeching halt. “He went in and stood before his master” [5.25].

Note that upon arrival Naaman didn’t find Elisha who sent a messenger to him, *mal’ak* also as angel as found in 1.3 but not noted there. It even could have been Gehazi, his personal servant. Given Elisha’s status as a prophet, we could intimate that this *mal’ak* indeed was an angel. Anyway, it’s unclear whether Elisha was in the house. If so, he wished to test Naaman’s sincerity who just might be putting on a show of showering him with unwanted gifts, etc. In other words, he wanted to get right down to business and show that the Lord was central to all this. The message was clear and simple. Naaman is to wash in the Jordan River seven times, after which he’ll be cured of his leprosy. The reasoning behind it is to show that Elisha is not a healer; only the Lord can work such a cure.

Upon hearing this from Elisha’s messenger, Naaman went away in a huff, *qatsaph* connoting a rage. “Then the man of God was angry with him” [13.19]. When vs. 11 says that Naaman went away, he did so with those horses and chariots which must have created a terrifying noise echoing Naaman’s anger. It’s obvious now that Elisha foresaw this which is why he remained inside his house and had a messenger...angel...deal with Naaman.

When he had gone some distance and calmed down a bit, Naaman exclaimed with disdain that he expected Elisha to perform some grand gesture to cure his leprosy. When thinking that the prophet would call on the Lord and wave his hand over the leprosy, Naaman had in mind something like Elijah on Mount Carmel. Naaman then blurts out that the rivers of his own nation are just as good if not better than the Jordan. He went off in a rage, *chemah* being a good word to describe his mood, for it also means poison or venom. “For great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us” [22.13]. In light of this Elisha feared—and rightly so—that Naaman might take out his wrath not just on him but on other Israelites. After all, he was Syria’s best general and now being in Israel, could do some severe damage before being stopped.

Fortunately cooler heads prevailed. Naaman’s servants approached him saying that if the prophet commanded something difficult to do, he would have gone through with it. So without waiting further, Naaman returned to the Jordan River and washed in it seven times “according to the *davar* of the Lord.” Each of the six times he must have entertained some doubts which were dispelled upon emerging from the water the seventh time. Now his flesh was that of a little child or *nahar* (cf. 4.12). This openness to suggestions is Naaman’s strong point and ended by saving his life.

As with many verses, vs 15 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “then.” It’s important insofar as it shows the excitement that overtook Naaman and his desire to contact Elisha. This reveals another positive side to his character. Instead of rushing home as he could have done, Naaman wanted to give thanks to the man responsible for his cure as well as to acknowledge his sudden spurt of anger. With some flair Naaman returns to Elisha with “all his company” or *machaneh* also as camp, army and host (cf. 3.24 but not noted there). The verb *hamad* (cf. vs. 9) or stood is used suggesting that this formidable military array took up its position with awe at the entrance to Elisha’s house. This time, of course, Elisha knew it was safe to come outside...i.e., no need for a messenger/angel.

Naaman begins his address grandly with *hineh* (cf. 2.11) or “behold” followed immediately by an acknowledgment of the God of Israel, music to Elisha’s ears. If Syria’s greatest general says this, indeed raids into Israelite territory just might come to a stop and eventually peace be established between the two nations. Now Naaman gives a present or *berakah* which usually translates as blessing could apply in this instance. “Make your peace with me and come out to me” [18.31]. As for the present/blessing at hand, nothing is said, but it must have quite grand. As expected, Elisha declines the offer despite Naaman’s urging, *patsar* being the verb which connotes force. It’s found in 2.17 but not noted there. While obviously done in the name of the Lord, Elisha must be thinking of the “sons of the prophets” with whom he’s associated, wanting to set an example. Though there’s no

mention of him here, Gehazi must have been present and burning with rage and jealousy. What happens to him follows shortly.

Now Naaman asks Elisha's permission to take home with him two mule loads of earth, *'adamah* found next in 17.23 with its other meaning as land. For a general who posed such a serious threat to Israel no better gesture could be carried out. Naaman then states that he'll offer burnt offerings or sacrifices (*holah* and *zevach*, 3.27 and 10.19 respectively) only to the Lord. Although the text doesn't mention it, Naaman will do this on the *'adamah* itself, an island surrounded, if you will, by the sea of Syria and its pagan deities. The appealing, straight-forward, honest way of how Naaman comports himself is revealed further by requesting from Elisha one concession, that when his master (i.e., the king of Syria) worships Rimmon, he'll have to bow down along with him. In other words, he asks through Elisha that the Lord pardon him for this, *salach* also as to forgive. "For he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and the Lord would not pardon" [24.4]. Elisha concurs which shows his willingness to help in such an awkward situation. After the brief incident with Gehazi which follows Naaman disappears from the scene altogether. We're left wondering how he got along with the king of Syria such as going through a *pro forma* worship of Rimmon. Also he must have cherished and protected those two mule loads of *'adamah* with his life.

Naaman heads back home, cherishing the two mule loads of *'adamah* far more than the expensive gifts he had brought for Elisha. As soon as he departed we have Gehazi revealing his true colors. His innate greed prevented him from despising his master for refusing Naaman's generous gifts and simply was incapable of getting over it. So if Naaman is returning with these gifts, why not run after him and ask for some? Surely to Gehazi's greedy eyes the Syrian general was a fool lugging that *'adamah* back home. If he had his way, he'd rip open the bags and let the *'adamah* flow out. Anyway, Naaman saw Gehazi running after him which made him alight from his chariot, asking if all was well. Now Gehazi came off with his prepared lie about two "sons of the prophets" who had just arrived, and that they could use a talent of silver and two festal garments. Obviously Naaman was glad to comply, throwing in an extra talent of silver.

Naaman dispatched two of his servants to follow Gehazi with the gifts. Having reached a hill or just out of the general's sight, Gehazi snatched them from their hands, sent them back to their master and brought them to Elishah. Elishah knew Gehazi was up to no good but wanted to make sure he had proof, asking where he had been all the while. Gehazi said he hadn't been anywhere, coming off with this blatant lie confident he'd get away with it. Unknown to Gehazi Elishah had accompanied him in spirit, *lev* being used here instead of *ruach*, commonly translated as heart, implying one's inner self. "And the mind of the king of Syria was greatly troubled because of this thing" [6.11].

Being Elisha's servant, Gehazi was familiar with the way his master functioned, yet this didn't prevent greed from getting in the way. The price to pay? Naaman's leprosy shall cling to him, *davaq* connoting something sticky and unable to be removed. "For he held fast to the Lord" [18.6]. If this weren't bad enough, the leprosy will cling to Gehazi's descendants forever. Chances are Naaman got word of this not immediately but upon return to Syria. Being noble-minded and at the same time a military man, he must have felt both pity and disgust at such greed. He may have wondered why Elisha had tolerated this person for so long, something any reader would pick up early on. As for Gehazi, he's mentioned next in 8.4-5 as though nothing were wrong and afterwards drops off the scene.

1) gadol, nasa', panym, teshuhah, gibor, chayl, tsarah, 2) gedod, naharah, 5) chalyphah, 7) 'anah, 9) shalach, hamad, 10) mal'ak, 11) qatsaph, 12) chemah, 14) nahar, 15) machaneh, hamad, hineh, berakah, 16) patsar, 17) 'adamah, 17) holah, zevach, 18) salach, 26) lev, 27) davaq

Chapter Six

Both in this document and in the one dealing with First Kings a lot had been said about Queen Jezebel, how she terrified the prophets and put to flight Elijah after he had slain over four hundred of her own prophets. In sum, she's a more than formidable force to be reckoned with. Despite the interlude between then and her death toward the end of Chapter Nine, Jezebel must have been bent upon revenge. Although there's no mention of seeking out the "sons of the prophets," we can assume that she was intent on it. At the same time it's amazing to hear that these prophets are growing in number, this being presented in the opening verse which has the conjunctive *v-* translated as "now."

Some of this group tell Elisha that their current dwelling place is too small, *yashav* also meaning to sit and can apply to a meeting hall of some kind. "At the beginning of their dwelling there they did not fear the Lord" [17.25]. As for the adjective "small," *tsar* is a noun in Hebrew which meanings adversary or enemy as well as connoting straitness. "Many are rising against me" [Ps 3.1]. As for the verse at hand, obviously the charismatic leadership of Elisha, his predecessor Elijah and the original band of prophets were attractive to many, especially the way they held up under Jezebel's persecution. Although admired, few dared to follow in their footsteps which didn't prevent them from following closely their adventures.

So the "sons of the prophets" asked permission from Elisha to establish a place to dwell (*yashav* again) and to come along with them to which he agreed. Once they arrived at a

place near the Jordan River they set to work building living quarters. One of the prophets lost his axe head in the water and cried out that had been borrowed. As for the water, nothing is said whether it was in the Jordan River or some place else. The reason why this incident caused such a commotion was that such an implement was very expensive; perhaps it had been loaned out to the prophets by one of their secret admirers. To lose it would be a great misfortune and could jeopardize a source of income for the entire group. Once Elisha was informed in a matter-of-fact way, he brings it to the surface and returns it to the man.

This story designed to show the miraculous power of their leader is followed by the Syrian invasion of Israel followed by the one into Samaria which takes up the rest of the chapter, the conjunctive *v-* of vs. 8 translated as “once.” The king of Syria isn’t identified nor the precise reason for such an invasion. One wonders if Naaman, commander of the army, had taken part but presumably did not, given his cure of leprosy. Perhaps he was sacked by reason of having taken those two mule loads of earth from Israel, not wishing to partake in an invasion. In many ways this soil had converted him even though as stated earlier, he was bound to accompany his master when worshipping Rimmon.

The invasion of Israel was full-fledged, not one of those familiar incursions as noted in 5.2 and led by the king himself. Once underway and somewhere within the country he consulted his servants as where to set up camp, these men most likely familiar with the local territory from earlier raids. However, with his gift of clairvoyance Elisha knew the location of the Syrian camp and warned the king of Israel to avoid the place. He, in turn, sent someone else...a prophet, perhaps...to check out the situation and verify it thereby avoiding a military disaster.

Naturally the Syrian king was outraged at having been discovered and believed a traitor was among his army. The verb *sahar* is used for “troubled” and means to be shaken violently. “And I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations which they had not known” [Zech 7.14]. In the verse at hand *sahar* is used with *lev*...“mind (heart) of the king” relative to the *davar* or report he had received. In his outrage the king asked those around him—and their *lev* were just as *sahar* as his—who was responsible. All claimed innocence. Then one servant well informed about Elisha told the king that this prophet could hear even in his bedchamber. Such news really frightened the king who immediately sent a “great army” to Dothan where supposedly Elisha was and laid siege to the city.

A servant of Elisha (he must have replaced Gehazi) informed him of the invasion force and as expected, the man of God was unperturbed. He opened the eyes of this servant called a *nahar* (cf. 5.14) who saw the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire. Chances are the leader of this heavenly host was the one which snatched Elijah into heaven (cf. 2.11) with the great prophet himself being present. And so while this great host surrounded Elisha, he

and Elijah exchanged some words. With this invisible force present, the Syrians attacked while Elisha prayed, *palal* meaning to intercede (cf. 4.33 but not noted there).

Elisha didn't pray for the destruction of the Syrians as one might expect but for the Lord to blind them which he did in accord with the prayer of Elisha, *davar* being used here. He then led the Syrian army into Samaria guiding them all the way. When the king of Israel saw them there he asked Elisha whether or not to slay them. Instead, Elisha asked that they be fed and given drink after which they returned home. Such an act of generosity, unexpected for the time, had the long range advantage of putting an end to further raids into Israel.

In vs. 24 the king of Syria is identified as Ben-hadad who may have been the same anonymous person mentioned earlier or his successor. If the latter, it's understandable, given the failure of the previous king to capture Israel. Ben-hadad forgot completely the generosity shown by Elisha and besieged Samaria. During the time Samaria experienced a severe famine which caused one particular woman to inform the king that she had cannibalized her son. He recoiled in horror and blamed this incident caused by the famine on Elisha even though earlier they were on good terms. In fact, the king demanded Elisha's head. And so he dispatched someone to behead Elisha who seemed unperturbed as he remained in his house accompanied by elders of the city. He shut the door when this assassin approached. The RSV in vs. 33 has the king approach right behind him while the Hebrew reads *mal'ak* or messenger (cf. 5.10). Regardless of this person's identity, he exclaimed to Elisha that the trouble (*rah*, cf. 3.2) everyone experiencing comes from the Lord. He then exclaims both rhetorically and out of despair that there's no reason to wait for divine assistance.

1) *yashav*, *tsar*, 2) *yashav*, 11) *sahar*, *lev*, 17) *nahar*, *palal*, 33) *mal'ak*, *rah*

Chapter Seven

This new chapter begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as "but" with the intent of showing that the action of the previous chapter flows into this new one, the two basically as one unit. Just a few verses earlier the king-messenger (*mal'ak*)-came to Elisha's house, he being in the company of the city elders. After all, just before he arrived he had dispatched someone to kill Elisha, so the situation is far from amicable. Furthermore, the elders were just as guilty as Elisha, co-conspirators if you will. In response to the king's frustration of waiting Elisha replies but begins first with the typical prophetic introductory words "Hear the *davar* of the Lord."

The *davar* of which Elisha was a spokesman will come into effect on the very next day when meal and barley will be sold at a fraction of the cost during the intense famine which had been gripping the land. In other words, famine begat inflation. Given the current dire circumstances, to have it disappear overnight (literally speaking), seemed impossible. Most likely that's what Elisha was trying to communicate to the elders in his house, preparing them to deal with the response from this within the city. To this *davar* we have the captain who had accompanied the king described in terms of a staff, someone on whom the king leaned, *shahan* (cf. 5.18 but not noted there) also as to rely upon. His name isn't given; could it be Naaman? Chances are not. However, he summed up the general mood using the words "If the Lord himself" which has *hineh* or behold to express both astonishment and contempt. He speaks of the Lord making windows in heaven, '*arubah* as with regard to Noah's flood: "And the windows of the heavens were opened" [Gn 7.11]. To this Elisha replies ominously that the captain—and by inference, perhaps the king—shall see this rain but not enjoy eating what it produces.

While this drama was transpiring, another one was taking part at the city gate where four lepers were gathered. They were doing what such unfortunates do, waiting on the generosity of those passing by. However, they were out of luck and new it. Because a famine gripped the land, nobody gave them alms; they were as good as dead and realized it. This is reflected in one asking what they were doing there; better to go to the Syrians besieging the city who may or may not spare their lives. In their situation, why not? They had no option which served to free them up as to their ultimate fate. In fact, we can detect a certain joy beneath their resignation. Upon reaching the Syrian camp at evening twilight, they found it deserted. Immediately they thought that the king of Israel had made some kind of alliance the Hittites and kings of Egypt (the **RSV** is that they probably are a small country near the Hittites) "to come upon us." Regardless, the four lepers decided to take advantage of the situation, going from tent to tent eating, drinking and gathering as much booty as they could and hiding it for later on.

After indulging themselves, the four lepers realized they weren't "doing right," *ken* commonly as "thus" and exclaimed that this is a day of good news, *besorah* also as tidings. "And thought he was bringing me good news" [1Sam 4.10]. They feared that some kind of punishment will overtake them, *havon* also as iniquity or evil. "I was blameless before him, and I kept myself from guilt" [Ps 18.23]. This shows that despite their affliction, the four indeed had a conscience. To avoid any punishment, they decided to head off and tell the king. En route they thought that by informing him of such a miracle they might be considered heroes. Later they could enjoy the spoils they had taken from the Syrian camp and even get more for passing on such a report. Even if it didn't work out this way, their leprosy was fatal and so were resigned to whatever might happen. So upon reaching the

king's household in the middle of the night, they informed the gatekeepers who in turn told the king who got up immediately.

Naturally the king was skeptical, thinking that the Syrians had withdrawn so as to lure the Israelites into an ambush. After having sent two men on horseback to scout the situation, they found a whole train of equipment littering the road all the way to the Jordan River. That encouraged the people to inspect the abandoned Syrian camp, albeit cautiously. Once satisfied that indeed the Syrians had fled, they indulged themselves with what they had found there. This fulfilled Elisha's prophecy made a mere twenty-four hours ago about meal and barley being sold for a shekel. Furthermore, the king's captain who had scorned the prophecy of Elisha paid the ultimate price. Word got out quickly that he mistreated the beloved prophet resulting in the people treading upon him in the gate. The somewhat ironical words conclude this chapter with "and he died."

As for the four lepers, the real heroes of this chapter by reason of their conscience despite their affliction, nothing is said. Possibly Elisha healed them, but nothing is said of this nor do we learn of their ultimate fate. As with several key persons in the Bible (the young girl who informed Naaman of Elisha, the latest, for example), they faded off the scene as quickly as they had appeared. At least they could enjoy the booty they had hidden.

2) *shahan, hineh, 'arubah, 9) besorah, havon*

Chapter Eight

The conjunctive *v-* beginning this new chapter translated as "now" shows (as it usually does) the close connection between what had just transpired and the current situation...a series of rapid fire events, if you will. Elisha returns to the woman whose son he had brought back to life and tells her to leave with her household as quickly as possible, going to wherever she can, the verb *gur* being used which also means to go into exile. Actually she was quite wealthy, so that didn't pose so great a problem, given the gravity of the situation. As for the verb *gur*, cf. Gn 26.3: "Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you and will bless you." The reason for such a hasty departure? The Lord is about to bring a famine, *qara'* being the verb which means to call, summon (cf. 5.11 but not noted there). This is the third mention of a famine or *rahav* (cf. 4.38 and 6.25) which was quite common, the one at hand being summoned (*qara'*) which makes it all the more personal.

This anonymous woman did as Elisha wished, acting upon his *davar* coupled with the verb *qum*, to arise (also in vs. 1) which indicates that she will get going at once. She decides upon the Philistines and remains there for seven long years after which she returns home

almost as though nothing had transpired; the conjunctive *v*- beginning vs. 3 translated as “and” intimates this.

Faced with the problem of reclaiming her house and land, she approached the king for his assistance. She meets him speaking with Gehazi who makes one last appearance as called by his original designation “servant” or *nahar* (cf. 4.12). It so happened that Gehazi was telling the king all he knew about his master, including this woman’s son. This made such an impression on the king that on the spot he restored everything belonging to her together with any produce since she had left seven years earlier. Most likely that wasn’t much, given the lengthy famine. Also the property may have been abandoned or occupied from time to time with no permanent owner. As for Gehazi’s appearance, a footnote in the NIV explains that this incident happened in the early days of Jehu rather than in the time of Joram. Regardless, it reveals the lasting care and interest by Elisha for this woman and her family who had been generous in providing a place for him to stay.

In vs. 7 Elisha enters enemy territory, Damascus, and visits King Ben-hadad with no immediate explanation as to why. However, he must have had in mind Elijah when at the Lord’s request he anointed Hazael as king (cf. 1Kg 19.15). Actually Hazael was very much alive, and Ben-hadad (Hazael’s son) asks him to meet Elisha “the man of God” and inquire (*darash*, cf. 1.3) of the Lord as to his illness. It so happens that Elisha tells him that Ben-hadad will recover even though the Lord had shown him that he will die. This of course, was the most difficult mission in Elisha’s life, wishing so much that his master Elijah had been present. He then gives the reason for his coming, namely, that Hazael will bring evil (*rah*, cf. 6.33) upon Israel which troubles him greatly. He continues by saying that Hazael will take over from his father and carry out this *rah* even though Hazael protests at such a prophecy. Shortly afterwards Hazael approaches his father, tells him what Elisha had communicated and promptly smothers him with the added “until he died.”

One wonders how Elisha’s involvement in Syria’s royal intrigues played back home among the Israelites...traitorous, to be sure. Elisha was an instrument in the Lord’s hands, perhaps not comprehending fully what he was doing and fearful of returning home to face certain death. And then there’s the specter of Jezebel always lurking in the background. Almost mysteriously Elisha disappears with the brief exception in 9.1 and dies in 13.14. At least he was able to hear of her death.

Vs. 16 begins with the untranslated conjunctive *v*- introducing the reign of Joram, son of Ahab (and Jezebel) who “walked in the way of the kings of Israel,” not an especially flattering way of putting it. Vs. 18 puts it in familiar terms, “he did what was evil (*rah*, cf. vs. 12) in the sight of the Lord.” The only restraint exercised by the Lord from killing him and destroying Judah is put again in familiar terms, “for the sake of David whose example is a lamp for succeeding generations.” Next vs. 19 puts it in both promising and consoling

words, “and to his sons forever.” The noun *nyr* (lamp) occurs four other times in the Bible, one of which being in the same vein: “that David my servant may always have a lamp before me in Jerusalem” [1Kg 11.36].

The remainder of Chapter Eight deals with the revolt of Edom and reign of Ahaziah of Judah described in still more familiar though unsavory terms as “He also walked in the way of the house of Ahab and did what was evil (*rah*, cf. vs. 18) in the sight of the Lord” [vs. 27]. Note the phrase “house of Ahab,” a kind of catch-phrase to sum up the evil of that entire family encapsulated and played out by 1Kg 21.25: “There was none who sold himself to do what was evil (*rah*) in the sight of the Lord like Ahab whom Jezebel his wife incited.” Besides the well-known *rah* we have the verb *soth* which means to entice as well as to mislead. And so there comes full circle—at least up to this point in Israelite history—of Nathan’s fateful prophecy, “Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife” [2Sam 12.10].

1) gur, qara’, rahav, 2) qum, gur, 4), nahar, 8) darash, 12) rah, 18) rah, 19) nyr, 27) rah

Chapter Nine

A new chapter, a new conjunctive *v-* translated here as “now” which introduces Elisha for the last time before his death some five chapters later in 13.20. After having anointed Hazael as king of Syria, now it’s time to do the same with regard to Jehu as king of Israel. There’s an important difference, however. Elisha delegates one of the “sons of the prophets” for the task. The reason isn’t explicit but perhaps it lay in the fact that he had anointed the king of Israel’s chief enemy, Syria (cf. 1Kg 19.15-16). Thus he had a price on his head despite the fame garnered from earlier exploits and popularity among the people.

Note that when Elijah is sent to anoint the two as rulers in First Kings he does the same to Elisha who is the one who seems to have actually carried out the task. In the situation at hand Elisha bids this delegate to gird up his loins which as in 4.29 implies mans not just to get ready but to leave as quickly as possible. At Ramoth-Gilead he is to anoint Jehu within an inner chamber, *cheder* being used twice to indicate the secrecy involved (cf. 6.12 but not noted there). Once done, this delegate is to flee as quickly as possible. So on his way to Ramoth-Gilead he must have rehearsed over and over what he was about to do and how he was going to do it. What puzzled him was why all the secrecy and quick departure after having anointed Jehu. At the same time he must have felt honored at having been chosen for such an important mission. If he pulls it off successfully, his fortunes will rise among his confreres.

In vs. 4 the one about to fulfil this mission is called a young man or *nahar* (cf. 8.4) as well as a prophet, the former term used twice reading literally “the young man, the young man, the prophet.” He arrives at Ramoth-Gilead and meets the military commanders gathered for council. The Hebrew has two words for them, *sar* and *chayl* (1.9 and 5.1 respectively) being rendered more literally as “captains of the host.” He approaches Jehu saying that he has an errand, *davar* being the noun. Right away they entered the *cheder* of vs. 2 though the word “house” is used. The commanders thought the two leaving the council was nothing special, Jehu being interrupted often for various matters.

Once the two were alone, the young man does as Elisha commanded but doesn't mention his master's name. Jehu, of course, knew him but to his credit neither balks nor questions the young man's credentials. And so the young man pours oil over Jehu's head along with the formulaic words “Thus says the Lord.” Before leaving as quickly as possible, the young man explains to Jehu why he had been anointed king. His primary job is to strike down the house of Ahab, *nakah* (cf. 3.19 but not noted there) often associated with a rod. Note the use of “house” which means each and every person associated with Ahab. Chief among them, of course, is Jezebel upon whom the Lord intends to have vengeance by reason of her having slain the prophets. *Naqam* is the verb as in Jer 51.36: “Behold, I will plead your cause and take vengeance for you.” Finally, dogs shall eat the corpse of Jezebel which won't be buried. Then without further ado, the young man bolted, leaving Jehu to ponder what had happened, the verb *nod* fundamentally as to be agitated. “Let not the foot of arrogance come upon me, nor the hand of the wicked drive me away” [Ps 36.11].

After this sudden and remarkable event Jehu returns to his military commanders who ask if all went well. After all, his hair was dripping with oil. Most likely the young man who had anointed him left undetected through a back door. Apparently he is familiar to the group or at least known as belonging to the “sons of the prophets.” That's why they called him mad or *shagah* being a participle as in Hos 9.7 which can be applicable here: “The prophet is a fool, the man of the spirit is mad.” Jehu, however, disagreed, informing them that the young man just anointed him as king of Israel. So despite the hesitancy based on previous experiences with prophets, the military commanders acknowledged Jehu as king. To have such a powerful group behind him assured Jehu that his rule was established.

From the anointing of Jehu as king of Israel, the rest of Chapter Nine deals with a rapid fire series of assassinations thereby preparing for the ultimate showdown with Jezebel. Jehu meets Joram, son of Ahab and Jezebel, and is called king of Israel in vs. 21 which seems to indicate a co-regency. The meeting ironically takes place on the land of Naboth whom Jezebel persuaded Ahab to have put to death. When Joram asks if this encounter is one of peace, Jehu snaps back that such *shalom* is impossible, laying it on thick by saying

as long as the harlotries and sorceries of Jezebel his mother continue. The two words are *zenunym* and *kashaphym* and have few biblical references: “Go, take to yourself a wife of harlotry and have children of harlotry, for the land commits great harlotry by forsaking the Lord” [Hos 1.2]. “In spite of your many sorceries and the great power of your enchantments” [Is 47.9].

This dramatic encounter reaches its climax where Jehu shoots Joram with an arrow and then cast him on the plot of land having once belonged to Naboth, this in accord with the *davar* of the Lord. Reference to this *davar* is found in 1Kg 21.17-24 which begins with the *davar* of the Lord coming to Elijah. It concerns Ahab taking possession of Naboth’s field and the promise that dogs will lick up the king’s blood. As for Jezebel, dogs won’t simply lick up her blood but will eat her whole body. The king of Judah, Ahaziah, was present and witnessed this, after which he fled. During his escape Jehu gave orders for someone to shoot him with an arrow as in the case of Joram.

Now the stage is set for the climax of the better part of First Kings as well as thus far in the book at hand. Jehu heads off to Jezreel to finish off what he had begun, namely, dealing with Jezebel. She got wind of his coming, sensed her end was near, and adorned herself after which she looked out the window for Jehu’s approach. There doesn’t seem to be even the slightest hint of repentance or regret of her past actions. Jehu storms into the city without resistance, halts outside the palace, looks up while Jezebel looks down full of hatred. Then he commands two eunuchs to cast Jezebel from the window. Once dead, Jehu doesn’t mistreat the corpse of Jezebel but gives her a burial worthy of a king’s daughter. She had been trampled so thoroughly by horses that only a few body parts were recognizable. Those whom Jehu ordered to perform the burial told him that such a fate was foretold by Elijah as the *davar* of the Lord. It’s found in 1Kg 21.23, the same prophecy concerning Ahab as noted in the paragraph above: “The dogs shall eat Jezebel within the bounds of Jezreel.” And so Chapter Nine concludes with the complete disappearance of this scourge of Israel, especially her prophets: “so that no one can say, ‘This is Jezebel.’”

2) cheder, 4) nahar, sar, chayl, 7) nakah, naqam, 10) nod, 11) shagah, 22) shalom, zenunym, kashaphym

Chapter Ten

This new chapter beginning with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “now” introduces a whole series of plots and assassinations centered around the purge of King Ahab and elimination of the real threat—Jezebel—by King Jehu. Although the historical details obviously are

valuable in their own right, they do not pertain directly to the intent of this document which is centered upon the practice of *lectio divina*. For this reason the remaining chapters won't be examined in the way they have been up to now. Instead, certain key points will be made relative to the practice of *lectio*.

Vs.9: With respect to Jehu having slain the sons of King Ahab (and queen Jezebel), he says that the people are innocent of the matter, *tsadyq* meaning righteous. "He attacked and slew with the sword two men more righteous and better than himself" [1Kg 2.32].

Vs. 10: Jehu invokes Elijah, servant of the Lord, *heved* occurring frequently and often applied to being a slave (cf. vs. 5 but not noted there). Elijah is responsible for holding up the *davar* of the Lord which he had *davar*, that is, from preventing it to fall to the ground. Reference is to 1Kg 21.20+ when the prophet confronts Ahab.

Vs. 11: This verse shows the thoroughness of the purge begun by Jehu with respect to the house of Ahab: great men, familiar friends and priests. In sum, none are left, *saryd* "If the Lord of hosts had not left us a few survivors" [Is 1.9].

Vs. 15: Jehu meets Jehonadab who is not a Jew but a supporter of Jehu in his efforts to blot out the house of Ahab. When meeting him (*barak*, commonly as to bless), Jehu asks "Is your heart true to my heart as mine is to yours?" The text reads literally, "Is it right with your heart (*lev*, cf. 6.11) as my heart is with your heart?" The adjective *yashar* means right, just (cf. 10.3 but not noted there).

Vs. 16: The single-mindedness of Jehu and Jehonadab is manifested by them riding in the former's chariot. Jehu invites Jehonadab to witness his zeal for the Lord, *qin'ah* with the preposition *b-* prefaced to it, literally as "in the zeal of the Lord." "The zeal of the Lord will do this" [19.31].

Vs. 17: Jehu comes to Samaria where he slew any remaining people connected to Ahab, *shamad* also as to lay waste, cut off. "Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than the nations had done whom the Lord destroyed before the people of Israel" [21.9]. Once again reference is made to Elijah and the *davar* of the Lord. One can only imagine what was running through Jehonadab's mind as he saw this zeal being played out.

Vs. 18: Jehu summons all the people, *qavats* also as to collect (cf. 6.24 but not noted there) and not like *qahal* which applies more to a solemn religious assembly. He tells everyone that Ahab had served a little, but he will serve a lot, most likely pertaining to that zeal for the Lord as in vs. 16.

Vs. 19: Indeed, Jehu makes good on this zeal by having the people bring to him the prophets, worshipers and priests of Baal, this being reminiscent of Elijah on Mount Horeb. With Jehu making references to how the prophet acted in accord with the *davar* of the Lord, it's clear that he had in mind something quite ominous. Jehu says that he has a "great sacrifice" to offer to Baal which reads literally as "a great sacrifice to me to Baal." Anyone who fails to attend won't live, the verb *paqad* commonly as to summon or to number. "He will not be visited by harm" [Prov 19.23].

Vs. 20: Jehu intends to destroy the worshipers of Baal, *avad* and *heved* (commonly as servant) being similar in sound. To this end he orders the people to sanctify a solemn assembly for Baal, a cunning way of copying Elijah, *haqvah* being a noun in vs. 19, the only use in the Bible. *Qadash* is the verb and *hatsarah* (with regard to keeping of festivals) the noun. For the former, cf. 12.18: “Jehoash, king of Judah, took all the votive gifts that Jehoshaphat and Jehoram and Ahaziah, his fathers, the kings of Judah, had dedicated...and sent these to Hazael, king of Syria.” As for the latter, there three other biblical references, Is 1.13 and Jl 1.14 and 2.15, the former being noted here: “I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly.”

Vs. 21: At Jehu’s command all the worshipers of Baal came to witness the spectacle about to unfold. Surly some must have known that the king had in mind their total elimination but were compelled to come regardless. The text simply has *shalach* (cf. 5.9) or to send; nothing is said about messengers or the like, this sufficiently strong and urgent enough. And so they came, entering the house of Baal, *beyth* also applicable to a place of worship as well as adherents such as “house of Ahab” meaning anyone far and wide associated with him. In the verse at hand, this throng of Baal worshipers is put dramatically as filling the house “from one end to the other.”

Vs. 22: Jehu orders vestments belonging to worship of Baal to be brought out, many those present thinking that he was going to start a service in the name of their god. To make sure only worshipers of Baal were present and no one else, Jehu further orders that no “servant (*heved*, cf. vs. 10) of the Lord is present.” Once this is taken care of, he (the Hebrew has ‘they’) enters with the intent of offering sacrifices and burnt offerings.

Vs. 24: Jehu stations eighty men outside to prevent anyone inside the house of Baal to escape, they most likely being discreet about it so as not to let on what is about to happen. Then upon completing the sacrifices, Jehu orders these men to enter the house and slay everyone.

Vs. 26: Having carried out their orders within the house of Baal, the guards entered what’s described as an inner room or *hyr* being the Hebrew word which also means city. From there they brought out a pillar dedicated to the worship of Baal as they stepped over numerous dead bodies. *Matsevah* is the noun in vs. 27 (cf. 3.2 but not noted there) which also means an image. Once outside, the guards burned the house of Baal, turning it into a latrine, *machar’oth* being the only use of this term in the Bible.

Vs. 28: The verb *samad* as wiped out in vs. 17 describes the total destruction of Baal from Israel. However, as Israel’s history has shown and will demonstrate again, this was not a complete annihilation. Manasseh “erected altars for Baal, and made an Asherah as Ahab king of Israel had done and worshiped all the host of heaven and served them” [21.3]. So it seems that regardless of how total and absolute a reform may be brought against alien gods from Israel, it’s an almost futile enterprise.

Vs. 29: The attempt at religious reform just noted has a glaring defect in its most zealous proponent. That is to say, Jehu failed to turn aside (*sur*, cf. 3.3) from the sins of Jeroboam who had erected golden calves in Bethel and Dan (cf. 1Kg 12.28).

Vs. 30: The Lord speaks with Jehu, namely, that he carried out what was ordered of him with regard to the house of Ahab, that being in the Lord's heart or *lev* (cf. vs. 15). As a rewards, Jehu's sons until the fourth generation shall occupy the throne.

Vs. 31: The persistent ambiguity with regard to worship of the Lord and Baal (as well as other deities) shows that it's virtually impossible to shake. Jehu wasn't careful to walk in the *torah* of the Lord, the verb being *shamar* which in the Psalter often applies to the divine *torah*. References are 14.6 and 11.6 respectively: "According to what is written in the book of the law of Moses." "And guard the palace." Furthermore, the verb *sur* (cf. vs. 29, to turn aside) is used yet again with regard to Jeroboam's sins.

Vs. 32: This verse shows what the Lord does in response to Israel's worship of Baal and Jehu's semi-conversion, if you will. He decides to dismember Israel, *qatsah* also as to cut down. "He who sends a message by the hand of a fool cuts off his own feet and drinks violence" [Prov 26.6]. The text at hand reads literally "cut off in Israel," that is, little by little. Much of this is done at the hand of King Hazael of Syria.

Vs. 34: The customary rhetorical question as to what King Jehu had accomplished and written in the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel, nothing said here whether beneficial or harmful.

9) tsady, 10) heved, 11) saryd, 15) barak, lev, yashar, 16) qin'ah, 17) shamad, 18) qavats, 19) 'avad, heved, paqad, 20) qadash, hatsarah, 23) heved, 26) hyr, matsevah, 27) machar'oth, 28) samad, 29) sur, 30) lev, 31) torah, shamar, sur, 32) qatsah,