

THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS

Elisha and the end of the house of Ahab

1¹AFTER AHAB'S DEATH Moab rebelled against Israel. ²Ahaziah fell through a latticed window in his roof-chamber in Samaria and injured himself; he sent messengers to inquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron whether he would recover from his illness. ³The angel of the LORD ordered Elijah the Tishbite to go and meet the messengers of the king of Samaria and say to them, 'Is there no god in Israel, that you go to inquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron?' ⁴This is the word of the LORD to your master: "You shall not rise from the bed where you are lying; you will die." ' Then Elijah departed. ⁵The messengers went back to the king. When asked why they had returned, ⁶they answered that a man had come to meet them and had ordered them to return and say to the king who had sent them, 'This is the word of the LORD: "Is there no god in Israel, that you send to inquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron? In consequence, you shall not rise from the bed where you are lying; you will die." ' ⁷The king asked them what kind of man it was who had met them and said this. ⁸'A hairy man', they answered, 'with a leather apron round his waist.' 'It is Elijah the Tishbite', said the king.

⁹Then the king sent a captain to him with his company of fifty. He went up and found the prophet sitting on a hill-top and said to him, 'Man of God, the king orders you to come down.' ¹⁰Elijah answered the captain, 'If I am a man of God, may fire fall from heaven and consume you and your company!' Fire fell from heaven and consumed the officer and his fifty men. ¹¹The king sent another captain of fifty with his company, and he went up and said to the prophet, 'Man of God, this is the king's command: Come down at once.' ¹²Elijah answered, 'If I am a man of God, may fire fall from heaven and consume you and your company!' God's fire fell from heaven and consumed the man and his company. ¹³The king sent the captain of a third company with his fifty men, and this third captain went up the hill to Elijah and knelt down before him and pleaded with him: 'Man of God, consider me and these fifty servants of yours, and set some value on our lives. ¹⁴Fire fell from heaven and consumed the other two captains of fifty and their companies; but let my life have some value in your eyes.' ¹⁵The angel of the LORD said to Elijah, 'Go down with him. Do not be afraid.' So he rose and went down with him to the king, ¹⁶and he said, 'This is the word of the LORD: "You have sent to inquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron, and therefore you shall not rise from the bed where you are lying; you will die." ' ¹⁷The word of the LORD which Elijah had spoken was fulfilled, and Ahaziah died; and because he had no son, his brother Jehoram succeeded him in the second year of Joram son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah.

¹⁸The other events of Ahaziah's reign are recorded in the annals of the kings of Israel.

2¹The time came when the LORD would take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind. Elijah and Elisha left Gilgal, ²and Elijah said to Elisha, 'Stay here; for the LORD has sent me to Bethel.' But Elisha said, 'As the LORD lives, your life upon it, I will not leave you.' So they went down country to Bethel. ³There a company of prophets came out to Elisha

and said to him, 'Do you know that the LORD is going to take your lord and master from you today?' 'I do know,' he replied; 'say no more.' ⁴Then Elijah said to him, 'Stay here, Elisha; for the LORD has sent me to Jericho.' But he replied, 'As the LORD lives, your life upon it, I will not leave you.' So they went to Jericho. ⁵There a company of prophets came up to Elisha and said to him, 'Do you know that the LORD is going to take your lord and master from you today?' 'I do know,' he said; 'say no more.' ⁶Then Elijah said to him, 'Stay here; for the LORD has sent me to the Jordan.' The other replied, 'As the LORD lives, your life upon it, I will not leave you.' So the two of them went on.

⁷Fifty of the prophets followed them, and stood watching from a distance as the two of them stopped by the Jordan. ⁸Elijah took his cloak, rolled it up and struck the water with it. The water divided to right and left, and they both crossed over on dry ground. ⁹While they were crossing, Elijah said to Elisha, 'Tell me what I can do for you before I am taken from you.' Elisha said, 'Let me inherit a double share of your spirit.' ¹⁰'You have asked a hard thing', said Elijah. 'If you see me taken from you, may your wish be granted; if you do not, it shall not be granted.' ¹¹They went on, talking as they went, and suddenly there appeared chariots of fire and horses of fire, which separated them one from the other, and Elijah was carried up in the whirlwind to heaven. ¹²When Elisha saw it, he cried, 'My father, my father, the chariots and the horsemen of Israel!', and he saw him no more. Then he took hold of his mantle and rent it in two, ¹³and he picked up the cloak which had fallen from Elijah, and came back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. ¹⁴There he too struck the water with Elijah's cloak and said, 'Where is the LORD the God of Elijah?' When he struck the water, it was again divided to right and left, and he crossed over. ¹⁵The prophets from Jericho, who were watching, saw him and said, 'The spirit of Elijah has settled on Elisha.' So they came to meet him, and fell on their faces before him ¹⁶and said, 'Your servants have fifty stalwart men. Let them go and search for your master; perhaps the spirit of the LORD has lifted him up and cast him on some mountain or into some valley.' But he said, 'No, you must not send them.' ¹⁷They pressed him, however, until he had not the heart to refuse. So they sent out the fifty men but, though they searched for three days, they did not find him. ¹⁸When they came back to Elisha, who had remained at Jericho, he said to them, 'Did I not tell you not to go?'

¹⁹The people of the city said to Elisha, 'You can see how pleasantly our city is situated, but the water is polluted and the country is troubled with miscarriages.' ²⁰He said, 'Fetch me a new bowl and put some salt in it.' When they had fetched it, ²¹he went out to the spring and, throwing the salt into it, he said, 'This is the word of the LORD: "I purify this water. It shall cause no more death or miscarriage." ' ²²The water has remained pure till this day, in fulfilment of Elisha's word.

²³He went up from there to Bethel and, as he was on his way, some small boys came out of the city and jeered at him, saying, 'Get along with you, bald head, get along.' ²⁴He turned round and looked at them and he cursed them in the name of the LORD; and two she-bears came out of a wood and mauled forty-two of them. ²⁵From there he went on to Mount Carmel, and thence back to Samaria.

3¹In the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, Jehoram son of Ahab became

king of Israel in Samaria, and he reigned for twelve years. ²He did what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD, though not as his father and his mother had done; he did remove the sacred pillar of the Baal which his father had made. ³Yet he persisted in the sins into which Jeroboam son of Nebat had led Israel, and did not give them up.

⁴Mesha king of Moab was a sheep-breeder, and he used to supply the king of Israel regularly with the wool of a hundred thousand lambs and a hundred thousand rams. ⁵When Ahab died, the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel. ⁶Then King Jehoram came from Samaria and mustered all Israel. ⁷He also sent this message to Jehoshaphat king of Judah: 'The king of Moab has rebelled against me. Will you join me in attacking Moab?' 'I will,' he replied; 'what is mine is yours: myself, my people, and my horses.' ⁸'From which direction shall we attack?' Jehoram asked. 'Through the wilderness of Edom,' replied the other. ⁹So the king of Israel set out with the king of Judah and the king of Edom. When they had been seven days on the march, they had no water left for the army or the pack-animals. ¹⁰Then the king of Israel said, 'Alas, the LORD has brought together three kings, only to put us at the mercy of the Moabites.' ¹¹But Jehoshaphat said, 'Is there not a prophet of the LORD here through whom we may seek guidance of the LORD?' One of the officers of the king of Israel answered, 'Elisha son of Shaphat is here, the man who poured water on Elijah's hands.' ¹²'The word of the LORD is with him', said Jehoshaphat. So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to Elisha. ¹³Elisha said to the king of Israel, 'Why do you come to me? Go to the prophets of your father and your mother.' But the king of Israel said to him, 'No; the LORD has called us three kings out to put us at the mercy of the Moabites.' ¹⁴'As the LORD of Hosts lives, whom I serve,' said Elisha, 'I would not spare a look or a glance for you, if it were not for my regard for Jehoshaphat king of Judah. ¹⁵But now, fetch me a minstrel.' They fetched a minstrel, and while he was playing, the power of the LORD came upon Elisha and he said, ¹⁶'This is the word of the LORD: "Pools will form all over this ravine." ¹⁷The LORD has decreed that you shall see neither wind nor rain, yet this ravine shall be filled with water for you and your army and your pack-animals to drink. ¹⁸But that is a mere trifle in the sight of the LORD; what he will also do, is to put Moab at your mercy. ¹⁹You will raze to the ground every fortified town and every noble city; you will cut down all their fine trees; you will stop up all the springs of water; and you will spoil every good piece of land by littering it with stones.' ²⁰In the morning at the hour of the regular sacrifice they saw water flowing in from the direction of Edom, and the land was flooded.

²¹Meanwhile all Moab had heard that the kings had come up to fight against them, and every man, young and old, who could carry arms, was called out and stationed on the frontier. ²²When they got up next morning and the sun had risen over the water, the Moabites saw the water in front of them red like blood ²³and cried out, 'It is blood. The kings must have quarrelled and attacked one another. Now to the plunder, Moab!' ²⁴When they came to the Israelite camp, the Israelites turned out and attacked them and drove the Moabites headlong in flight, and themselves entered the land of Moab, destroying as they went. ²⁵They razed the cities to the ground; they littered every good piece of land with stones, each man casting one stone on to it; they stopped up every spring of water; they cut down all their fine trees; and they harried Moab until only in Kir-hareseth were any buildings left standing, and even this city the slingers surrounded

and attacked.

²⁶When the king of Moab saw that the war had gone against him, he took seven hundred men with him, armed with swords, to cut a way through to the king of Aram, but they failed in the attempt. ²⁷Then he took his eldest son, who would have succeeded him, and offered him as a whole-offering upon the city wall. The Israelites were filled with such consternation at this sight [The Israelites ... sight: *or* There was such great anger against the Israelites], that they struck camp and returned to their own land.

4¹The wife of a member of a company of prophets appealed to Elisha. 'My husband, your servant, has died', she said. 'You know that he was a man who feared the LORD; but a creditor has come to take away my two boys as his slaves.' ²Elisha said to her, 'How can I help you? Tell me what you have in the house.' 'Nothing at all', she answered, 'except a flask of oil.' ³'Go out then', he said, 'and borrow vessels from all your neighbours; get as many empty ones as you can. ⁴Then, when you come home, shut yourself in with your sons, pour from the flask into all these vessels and, as they are filled, set them aside.' ⁵She left him and shut herself in with her sons. As they brought her the vessels she filled them. ⁶When they were all full, she said to one of her sons, 'Bring me another.' 'There is not one left', he said. Then the flow of oil ceased. ⁷She came out and told the man of God, and he said, 'Go and sell the oil and redeem your boys who are being taken as pledges [redeem ... pledges: *or* pay off your debt], and you and they can live on what is left.'

⁸It happened once that Elisha went over to Shunem. There was a great lady there who pressed him to accept her hospitality, and so, whenever he came that way, he stopped to take food there. ⁹One day she said to her husband, 'I know that this man who comes here regularly is a holy man of God. ¹⁰Why not build up the wall to make him a little roof-chamber, and put in it a bed, a table, a seat, and a lamp, and let him stay there whenever he comes to us?' ¹¹Once when he arrived and went to this roof-chamber and lay down to rest, ¹²he said to Gehazi, his servant, 'Call this Shunammite woman.' He called her and, when she appeared before the prophet, ¹³he said to his servant, 'Say to her, "You have taken all this trouble for us. What can I do for you? Shall I speak for you to the king or to the commander-in-chief?" ' But she replied, 'I am content where I am, among my own people.' ¹⁴He said, 'Then what can be done for her?' Gehazi said, 'There is only this: she has no child and her husband is old.' ¹⁵'Call her back', Elisha said. When she was called, she appeared in the doorway, ¹⁶and he said, 'In due season, this time next year, you shall have a son in your arms.' But she said, 'No, no, my lord, you are a man of God and would not lie to your servant.' ¹⁷Next year in due season the woman conceived and bore a son, as Elisha had foretold.

¹⁸When the child was old enough, he went out one day to the reapers where his father was. ¹⁹All of a sudden he cried out to his father, 'O my head, my head!' His father told a servant to carry him to his mother. ²⁰He brought him to his mother; the boy sat on her lap till midday, and then he died. ²¹She went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God, shut the door and went out. ²²She called her husband and said, 'Send me one of the servants and a she-ass, I must go to the man of God as fast as I can, and come straight back.' ²³'Why go to him today?' he asked. 'It is neither new moon nor sabbath

[Or full moon]. 'Never mind that', she answered. ²⁴When the ass was saddled, she said to her servant, 'Lead on and do not slacken pace unless I tell you.' ²⁵So she set out and came to the man of God on Mount Carmel. The man of God spied her in the distance and said to Gehazi, his servant, 'That is the Shunammite woman coming. ²⁶Run and meet her, and ask, "Is all well with you? Is all well with your husband? Is all well with the boy?"' She answered, 'All is well.' ²⁷When she reached the man of God on the hill, she clutched his feet. Gehazi came forward to push her away, but the man of God said, 'Let her alone; she is in great distress, and the LORD has concealed it from me and not told me.' ²⁸'My lord,' she said, 'did I ask for a son? Did I not beg you not to raise my hopes and then dash them?' ²⁹Then he turned to Gehazi: 'Hitch up your cloak; take my staff with you and run. If you meet anyone on the way, do not stop to greet him; if anyone greets you, do not answer him. Lay my staff on the boy's face.' ³⁰But the mother cried, 'As the LORD lives, your life upon it, I will not leave you.' So he got up and followed her [Or went with her].

³¹Gehazi went on ahead of them and laid the staff on the boy's face, but there was no sound and no sign of life. So he went back to meet Elisha and told him that the boy had not roused. ³²When Elisha entered the house, there was the boy dead, on the bed where he had been laid. ³³He went into the room, shut the door on the two of them and prayed to the LORD. ³⁴Then, getting on to the bed, he lay upon the child, put his mouth to the child's mouth, his eyes to his eyes and his hands to his hands; and, as he pressed [prob. rdg, Heb crouched] upon him, the child's body grew warm. ³⁵Elisha got up and walked once up and down the room; then, getting on to the bed again, he pressed [prob. rdg, Heb crouched] upon him and breathed into him [and breathed into him: or and the boy sneezed] seven times; and the boy opened his eyes. ³⁶The prophet summoned Gehazi and said, 'Call this Shunammite woman.' She answered his call and the prophet said, 'Take your child.' ³⁷She came in and fell prostrate before him. Then she took up her son and went out.

³⁸Elisha returned to Gilgal at a time when there was a famine in the land. One day, when a group of prophets was sitting at his feet, he said to his servant, 'Set the big pot on the fire and prepare some broth for the company.' ³⁹One of them went out into the fields to gather herbs and found a wild vine, and filled the skirt of his garment with bitter-apples [Or poisonous wild gourds]. He came back and sliced them into the pot, not knowing what they were. ⁴⁰They poured it out for the men to eat, but, when they tasted it, they cried out, 'Man of God, there is death in the pot', and they could not eat it. ⁴¹The prophet said, 'Fetch some meal.' He threw it into the pot and said, 'Now pour out for the men to eat.' This time there was no harm in the pot.

⁴²A man came from Baal-shalisha, bringing the man of God some of the new season's bread, twenty barley loaves, and fresh ripe ears of corn [fresh ... corn: prob. rdg, Heb unintelligible]. Elisha said, 'Give this to the people to eat.' ⁴³But his disciple protested, 'I cannot set this before a hundred men.' Still he repeated, 'Give it to the people to eat; for this is the word of the LORD: "They will eat and there will be some left over."' ⁴⁴So he set it before them, and they ate and left some over, as the LORD had said.

5¹NAAMAN, COMMANDER of the king of Aram's army, was a great man highly esteemed

by his master, because by his means the LORD had given victory to Aram; but he was a leper [he was a leper: *or his skin was diseased*]. ²On one of their raids the Aramaeans brought back as a captive from the land of Israel a little girl, who became a servant to Naaman's wife. ³She said to her mistress, 'If only my master could meet the prophet who lives in Samaria, he would get rid of the disease for him.' ⁴Naaman went in and reported to his master word for word what the girl from the land of Israel had said. ⁵'Very well, you may go,' said the king of Aram, 'and I will send a letter to the king of Israel.' So Naaman went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten changes of clothing. ⁶He delivered the letter to the king of Israel, which read thus: 'This letter is to inform you that I am sending to you my servant Naaman, and I beg you to rid him of his disease.' ⁷When the king of Israel read the letter, he rent his clothes and said, 'Am I a god [*Or Am I God*] to kill and to make alive, that this fellow sends to me to cure a man of his disease? Surely you must see that he is picking a quarrel with me.' ⁸When Elisha, the man of God, heard how the king of Israel had rent his clothes, he sent to him saying, 'Why did you rend your clothes? Let the man come to me, and he will know that there is a prophet in Israel.' ⁹So Naaman came with his horses and chariots and stood at the entrance to Elisha's house. ¹⁰Elisha sent out a messenger to say to him, 'If you will go and wash seven times in the Jordan, your flesh will be restored and you will be clean.' ¹¹Naaman was furious and went away, saying, 'I thought he would at least have come out and stood, and invoked the LORD his God by name, waved his hand over the place and so rid me of the disease. ¹²Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Can I not wash in them and be clean?' So he turned and went off in a rage. ¹³But his servants came up to him and said, 'If the prophet had bidden you do something difficult, would you not do it? How much more then, if he tells you to wash and be clean?' ¹⁴So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored as a little child's, and he was clean.

¹⁵Then he and his retinue went back to the man of God and stood before him; and he said, 'Now I know that there is no god anywhere on earth except in Israel. Will you accept a token of gratitude from your servant?' ¹⁶As the LORD lives, whom I serve,' said the prophet, 'I will accept nothing.' He was pressed to accept, but he refused. ¹⁷'Then if you will not,' said Naaman, 'let me, sir, have two mules' load of earth. For I will no longer offer whole-offering or sacrifice to any god but the LORD. ¹⁸In this one matter only may the LORD pardon me: when my master goes to the temple of Rimmon to worship, leaning on my arm, and I worship in the temple of Rimmon when he worships there, for this let the LORD pardon me.' ¹⁹And Elisha bade him farewell.

Naaman had gone only a short distance on his way, ²⁰when Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said to himself, 'What? Has my master let this Aramaean, Naaman, go scot-free, and not accepted what he brought? As the LORD lives, I will run after him and get something from him.' ²¹So Gehazi hurried after Naaman. When Naaman saw him running after him, he jumped down from his chariot to meet him and said, 'Is anything wrong?' ²²'Nothing,' said Gehazi, 'but my master sent me to say that two young men of the company of prophets from the hill-country of Ephraim have just arrived. Could you provide them with a talent of silver and two changes of clothing?' ²³Naaman said, 'By all means; take two talents.' He pressed [*prob. rdg, Heb broke out*]

on] him to take them; so he tied up the two talents of silver in two bags, and the two changes of clothing, and gave them to his two servants, and they walked ahead carrying them. ²⁴When Gehazi came to the citadel [*Or hill*] he took them from the two servants, deposited them in the house and dismissed the men; and they departed. ²⁵When he went in and stood before his master, Elisha said, 'Where have you been, Gehazi?' 'Nowhere', said Gehazi. ²⁶But he said to him, 'Was I not with you in spirit when the man turned back from his chariot to meet you? Is it not true that you have the money? You may buy gardens with it [*gardens with it: prob. rdg, Heb garments*] [*Is it not ... with it: or Was it a time to get the money and to get garments?*], and olive-trees and vineyards, sheep and oxen, slaves and slave-girls; ²⁷but the disease of Naaman will fasten on you and on your descendants for ever.' Gehazi left his presence, his skin diseased, white as snow.

6¹A COMPANY OF PROPHETS said to Elisha, 'You can see that this place where our community is living, under you as its head, is too small for us. ²Let us go to the Jordan and each fetch a log, and make ourselves a place to live in.' The prophet agreed. ³Then one of them said, 'Please, sir, come with us.' 'I will', he said, ⁴and he went with them. When they reached the Jordan, they began cutting down trees; ⁵but it chanced that, as one man was felling a trunk, the head of his axe flew off into the water. 'Oh, master!' he exclaimed, 'it was a borrowed one.' ⁶'Where did it fall?' asked the man of God. When he was shown the place, he cut off a piece of wood and threw it in and made the iron float. ⁷Then he said, 'There you are, lift it out.' So he stretched out his hand and took it.

⁸Once, when the king of Aram was making war on Israel, he held a conference with his staff at which he said, 'I mean to attack in such and such a direction.' ⁹But the man of God warned the king of Israel: 'Take care to avoid this place, for the Aramaeans are going down that way.' ¹⁰So the king of Israel sent to the place about which the man of God had given him this warning; and the king took special precautions every time he found himself near that place. ¹¹The king of Aram was greatly perturbed at this and, summoning his staff, he said to them, 'Tell me, one of you, who has betrayed us to the king of Israel?' ¹²'None of us, my lord king,' said one of his staff; 'but Elisha, the prophet in Israel, tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedchamber.' ¹³'Go and find out where he is,' said the king, 'and I will send and seize him.' He was told that the prophet was at Dothan, ¹⁴and he sent a strong force there with horses and chariots. They came by night and surrounded the city.

¹⁵When the disciple of the man of God rose early in the morning and went out, he saw a force with horses and chariots surrounding the city. 'Oh, master,' he said, 'which way are we to turn?' ¹⁶He answered, 'Do not be afraid, for those who are on our side are more than those on theirs.' ¹⁷Then Elisha offered this prayer: 'O LORD, open his eyes and let him see.' And the LORD opened the young man's eyes, and he saw the hills covered with horses and chariots of fire all round Elisha. ¹⁸As they came down towards him, Elisha prayed to the LORD: 'Strike this host, I pray thee, with blindness'; and he struck them blind as Elisha had asked. ¹⁹Then Elisha said to them, 'You are on the wrong road; this is not the city. Follow me and I will lead you to the man you are looking for.' And he led them to Samaria. ²⁰As soon as they had entered Samaria, Elisha prayed, 'O LORD, open the eyes of these men and let them see again.' And he opened

their eyes and they saw that they were inside Samaria. ²¹When the king of Israel saw them, he said to Elisha, 'My father, am I to destroy them?' ²²No, you must not do that', he answered. 'You may destroy [*prob. rdg, Heb Would you destroy*] those whom you have taken prisoner with your own sword and bow, but as for these men, give them food and water, and let them eat and drink, and then go back to their master.' ²³So he prepared a great feast for them, and they ate and drank and then went back to their master. And Aramaean raids on Israel ceased.

²⁴But later, Ben-hadad king of Aram called up his entire army and marched to the siege of Samaria. ²⁵The city was near starvation, and they besieged it so closely that a donkey's head was sold for eighty shekels of silver, and a quarter of a kab of locust-beans for five shekels. ²⁶One day, as the king of Israel was walking along the city wall, a woman called to him, 'Help, my lord king!' ²⁷He said, 'If the LORD will not bring you help, where can I find any for you? From threshing-floor or from winepress? ²⁸What is your trouble?' She replied, 'This woman said to me, "Give up your child for us to eat today, and we will eat mine tomorrow." ²⁹So we cooked my son and ate him; but when I said to her the next day, "Now give up your child for us to eat", she had hidden him.' ³⁰When he heard the woman's story, the king rent his clothes. He was walking along the wall at the time, and when the people looked, they saw that he had sackcloth underneath, next to his skin. ³¹Then he said, 'The LORD do the same to me and more, if the head of Elisha son of Shaphat stays on his shoulders today.'

³²Elisha was sitting at home, the elders with him. The king had dispatched one of his retinue but, before the messenger arrived, Elisha said to the elders, 'See how this son of a murderer has sent to behead me! Take care, when the messenger comes, to shut the door and hold it fast against him. Can you not hear his master following on his heels?' ³³While he was still speaking, the king [*prob. rdg, Heb messenger*] arrived and said, 'Look at our plight! This is the LORD's doing. Why should I wait any longer for him to help us?' ⁷¹But Elisha answered, 'Hear this word of the LORD: By this time tomorrow a shekel will buy a measure of flour or two measures of barley in the gateway of Samaria.' ²Then the lieutenant on whose arm the king leaned said to the man of God, 'Even if the LORD were to open windows in the sky, such a thing could not happen!' He answered, 'You will see it with your own eyes, but none of it will you eat.'

³At the city gate were four lepers [*Or men suffering from skin-disease*]. They said to one another, 'Why should we stay here and wait for death? ⁴If we say we will go into the city, there is famine there, and we shall die; if we say we will stay here, we shall die just the same. Well then, let us go to the camp of the Aramaeans and give ourselves up: if they spare us, we shall live; if they put us to death, we can but die.' ⁵And so in the twilight they set out for the Aramaean camp; but when they reached the outskirts, they found no one there; ⁶for the Lord had caused the Aramaean army to hear a sound like that of chariots and horses and of a great host, so that the word went round: 'The king of Israel has hired the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Egypt to attack us.' ⁷They had fled at once in the twilight, abandoning their tents, their horses and asses, and leaving the camp as it stood, while they fled for their lives. ⁸When the four men came to the outskirts of the camp, they went into a tent and ate and drank and looted silver and gold and clothing, and made off and hid them. Then they came back, went

into another tent and rifled it, and made off and hid the loot. ⁹Then they said to one another, 'What we are doing is not right. This is a day of good news and we are keeping it to ourselves. If we wait till morning, we shall be held to blame. We must go now and give the news to the king's household.' ¹⁰So they came and called to the watch at the city gate and described how they had gone to the Aramaean camp and found not a single man in it and had heard no sound: nothing but horses and asses tethered, and the tents left as they were. ¹¹Then the watch called out and gave the news to the king's household in the palace. ¹²The king rose in the night and said to his staff, 'I will tell you what the Aramaeans have done. They know that we are starving, and they have left their camp to go and hide in the open country, expecting us to come out, and then they can take us alive and enter the city.' ¹³One of his staff said, 'Send out a party of men with some of the horses that are left; if they live, they will be as well off as all the other Israelites who are still left; if they die [if they live ... if they die: *prob. rdg, Heb obscure*], they will be no worse off than all those who have already perished. Let them go and see what has happened.' ¹⁴So they picked two mounted men, and the king dispatched them in the track of the Aramaean army with the order to go and find out what had happened. ¹⁵They followed as far as the Jordan and found the whole road littered with clothing and equipment which the Aramaeans had flung aside in their haste. The messengers returned and reported this to the king. ¹⁶Then the people went out and plundered the Aramaean camp, and a measure of flour was sold for a shekel and two measures of barley for a shekel, so that the word of the LORD came true. ¹⁷Now the king had appointed the lieutenant on whose arm he leaned to take charge of the gate, and the people trampled him to death there, just as the man of God had foretold when the king visited him. ¹⁸For when the man of God said to the king, 'By this time tomorrow a shekel will buy two measures of barley or one measure of flour in the gateway of Samaria', ¹⁹the lieutenant had answered, 'Even if the LORD were to open windows in the sky, such a thing could not happen!' And the man of God had said, 'You will see it with your own eyes, but none of it will you eat.' ²⁰And this is just what happened to him: the people trampled him to death at the gate.

8¹Elisha said to the woman whose son he had restored to life, 'Go away at once with your household and find lodging where you can, for the LORD has decreed a seven years' famine and it has already come upon the land.' ²The woman acted at once on the word of the man of God and went away with her household; and she stayed in the Philistine country for seven years. ³When she came back at the end of the seven years, she sought an audience of the king to appeal for the return of her house and land. ⁴Now the king was questioning Gehazi, the servant of the man of God, about all the great things Elisha had done; ⁵and, as he was describing to the king how he had brought the dead to life, the selfsame woman began appealing to the king for her house and her land. 'My lord king,' said Gehazi, 'this is the very woman, and this is her son whom Elisha brought to life.' ⁶The king asked the woman about it, and she told him. Then he entrusted the case to a eunuch and ordered him to restore all her property to her, with all the revenues from her land from the time she left the country till that day.

⁷Elisha came to Damascus, at a time when Ben-hadad king of Aram was ill; and when he was told that the man of God had arrived, ⁸he bade Hazael take a gift with him and go to the man of God and inquire of the LORD through him whether he would recover

from his illness. ⁹Hazael went, taking with him as a gift all kinds of wares of Damascus, forty camel-loads. When he came into the prophet's presence, he said, 'Your son Benhadad king of Aram has sent me to you to ask whether he will recover from his illness.' ¹⁰'Go and tell him that he will recover,' he answered; 'but the LORD has revealed to me that in fact he will die.' ¹¹The man of God stood there with set face like a man stunned, until he could bear it no longer; then he wept. ¹²'Why do you weep, my lord?' said Hazael. He answered, 'Because I know the harm you will do to the Israelites: you will set their fortresses on fire and put their young men to the sword; you will dash their children to the ground and you will rip open their pregnant women.' ¹³But Hazael said, 'But I am a dog, a mere nobody; how can I do this great thing?' Elisha answered, 'The LORD has revealed to me that you will be king of Aram.' ¹⁴Hazael left Elisha and returned to his master, who asked him what Elisha had said. 'He told me that you would recover', he replied. ¹⁵But the next day he took a blanket and, after dipping it in water, laid it over the king's face, and he died; and Hazael succeeded him.

¹⁶In the fifth year of Jehoram son of Ahab king of Israel, Joram son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah became king. ¹⁷ [vv17-22: cp 2Chr. 21.5-10] He was thirty-two years old when he came to the throne, and he reigned in Jerusalem for eight years. ¹⁸He followed the practices of the kings of Israel as the house of Ahab had done, for he had married Ahab's daughter; and he did what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD. ¹⁹But for his servant David's sake the LORD was unwilling to destroy Judah, since he had promised to give him and his sons a flame, to burn for all time.

²⁰During his reign Edom revolted against Judah and set up its own king. ²¹Joram crossed over to Zair with all his chariots. He and his chariot-commanders set out by night, but they were surrounded by the Edomites and defeated [and defeated: *prob. rdg, Heb* and he defeated Edom] whereupon the people fled to their tents. ²²So Edom has remained independent of Judah to this day; Libnah also revolted at the same time. ²³The other acts and events of Joram's reign are recorded in the annals of the kings of Judah. ²⁴So Joram rested with his forefathers and was buried with them in the city of David, and his son Ahaziah succeeded him.

²⁵ [vv25-29: cp 2Chr. 22.1-6] In the twelfth year of Jehoram son of Ahab king of Israel, Ahaziah son of Joram king of Judah became king. ²⁶Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he came to the throne, and he reigned in Jerusalem for one year; his mother was Athaliah granddaughter of Omri king of Israel. ²⁷He followed the practices of the house of Ahab and did what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD like the house of Ahab, for he was connected with that house by marriage. ²⁸He allied himself with Jehoram son of Ahab to fight against Hazael king of Aram at Ramoth-gilead; but King Jehoram was wounded by the Aramaeans, ²⁹and returned to Jezreel to recover from the wounds which were inflicted on him at Ramoth in battle with Hazael king of Aram; and because of his illness Ahaziah son of Joram king of Judah went down to Jezreel to visit him.

9¹ELISHA THE PROPHET SUMMONED one of the company of prophets and said to him, 'Hitch up your cloak, take this flask of oil with you and go to Ramoth-gilead. ²When you arrive, you will find Jehu son of Jehoshaphat, son of Nimshi; go in and call him aside from his fellow-officers, and lead him through to an inner room. ³Then take the flask

and pour the oil on his head and say, "This is the word of the LORD: I anoint you king over Israel"; then open the door and flee for your life.' ⁴So the young prophet went to Ramoth-gilead. ⁵When he arrived, he found the officers sitting together and said, 'Sir, I have a word for you.' 'For which of us?' asked Jehu. 'For you, sir', he said. ⁶He rose and went into the house, and the prophet poured the oil on his head, saying, 'This is the word of the LORD the God of Israel: "I anoint you king over Israel, the people of the LORD. ⁷You shall strike down the house of Ahab your master, and I will take vengeance on Jezebel for the blood of my servants the prophets and for the blood of all the LORD's servants. ⁸All the house of Ahab shall perish and I will destroy every mother's son of his house in Israel, whether under the protection of the family or not. ⁹And I will make the house of Ahab like the house of Jeroboam son of Nebat and the house of Baasha son of Ahijah. ¹⁰Jezebel shall be devoured by dogs in the plot of ground at Jezreel and no one will bury her." ' Then he opened the door and fled. ¹¹When Jehu rejoined the king's officers, they said to him, 'Is all well? What did this crazy fellow want with you?' 'You know him and the way his thoughts run', he said. ¹²'Nonsense!' they replied; 'tell us what happened.' 'I will tell you exactly what he said: "This is the word of the LORD: I anoint you king over Israel." ' ¹³They snatched up their cloaks and spread them under him on the stones [*prob. rdg, Heb obscure*] of the steps, and sounded the trumpet and shouted, 'Jehu is king.'

¹⁴Then Jehu son of Jehoshaphat, son of Nimshi, laid his plans against Jehoram, while Jehoram and the Israelites were defending Ramoth-gilead against Hazael king of Aram. ¹⁵King Jehoram had returned to Jezreel to recover from the wounds inflicted on him by the Aramaeans when he fought against Hazael king of Aram. Jehu said to them, 'If you are on my side, see that no one escapes from the city to tell the news in Jezreel.' ¹⁶He mounted his chariot and drove to Jezreel, for Jehoram was laid up there, and Ahaziah king of Judah had gone down to visit him.

¹⁷The watchman standing on the watch-tower in Jezreel saw Jehu and his troop approaching and called out, 'I see a troop of men.' Then Jehoram said, 'Fetch a horseman and send to find out if they come peaceably.' ¹⁸The horseman went to meet him and said, 'The king asks, "Is it peace?" ' Jehu said, 'Peace? What is peace to you? Fall in behind me.' Thereupon the watchman reported, 'The messenger has met them but he is not coming back.' ¹⁹A second horseman was sent; when he met them, he also said, 'The king asks, "Is it peace?" ' 'Peace?' said Jehu. 'What is peace to you? Fall in behind me.' ²⁰Then the watchman reported, 'He has met them but he is not coming back. The driving is like the driving of Jehu son [*Or grandson (cp v2)*] of Nimshi, for he drives furiously.' ²¹'Harness my chariot', said Jehoram. They harnessed it, and Jehoram king of Israel and Ahaziah king of Judah went out each in his own chariot to meet Jehu, and met him by the plot of Naboth of Jezreel. ²²When Jehoram saw Jehu, he said, 'Is it peace, Jehu?' But he replied, 'Do you call it peace while your mother Jezebel keeps up her obscene idol-worship and monstrous sorceries?' ²³Jehoram wheeled about and fled, crying out to Ahaziah, 'Treachery, Ahaziah!' ²⁴Jehu seized his bow and shot Jehoram between the shoulders; the arrow pierced his heart and he sank down in his chariot. ²⁵Then Jehu said to Bidkar, his lieutenant, 'Pick him up and throw him into the plot of land belonging to Naboth of Jezreel; remember how, when you and I were riding side by side behind Ahab his father, the LORD pronounced this sentence against him: ²⁶"It is

the very word of the LORD: as surely as I saw yesterday the blood of Naboth and the blood of his sons, I will requite you in this plot." So pick him up and throw him into it and thus fulfil the word of the LORD.' ²⁷When Ahaziah king of Judah saw this, he fled by the road to Beth-haggan. Jehu went after him and said, 'Make sure of him too.' They shot him down in his chariot on the road up the valley [the valley: *prob. rdg, Heb to Gur*] near Ibleam, but he escaped to Megiddo and died there. ²⁸His servants conveyed his body to Jerusalem and buried him in his tomb with his forefathers in the city of David.

²⁹In the eleventh year of Jehoram son of Ahab, Ahaziah became king over Judah.

³⁰Jehu came to Jezreel. Now Jezebel had heard what had happened; she had painted her eyes and dressed her hair, and she stood looking down from a window. ³¹As Jehu entered the gate, she said, 'Is it peace, you Zimri, you murderer of your master?' ³²He looked up at the window and said, 'Who is on my side, who?' Two or three eunuchs looked out, ³³and he said, 'Throw her down.' They threw her down, and some of her blood splashed on to the wall and the horses, which trampled her underfoot. ³⁴Then he went in and ate and drank. 'See to this accursed woman', he said, 'and bury her; for she is a king's daughter.' ³⁵But when they went to bury her they found nothing of her but the skull, the feet, and the palms of the hands; ³⁶and they went back and told him. Jehu said, 'It is the word of the LORD which his servant Elijah the Tishbite spoke, when he said, "In the plot of ground at Jezreel the dogs shall devour the flesh of Jezebel, ³⁷and Jezebel's corpse shall lie like dung upon the ground in the plot at Jezreel so that no one will be able to say: This is Jezebel."'

10¹Now seventy sons of Ahab were left in Samaria. Jehu therefore sent a letter to Samaria, to the elders, the rulers of the city, and to the tutors of Ahab's children, ²in which he wrote: 'Now, when this letter reaches you, since you have in your care your master's family as well as his chariots and horses, fortified cities and weapons, ³choose the best and the most suitable of your master's family, set him on his father's throne, and fight for your master's house.' ⁴They were panic-stricken and said, 'The two kings could not stand against him; what hope is there that we can?' ⁵Therefore the comptroller of the household and the governor of the city, with the elders and the tutors, sent this message to Jehu: 'We are your servants. Whatever you tell us we will do; but we will not make anyone king. Do as you think fit.' ⁶Then he wrote them a second letter: 'If you are on my side and will obey my orders, then bring the heads of your master's sons to me at Jezreel by this time tomorrow.' Now the royal princes, seventy in all, were with the nobles of the city who were bringing them up. ⁷When the letter reached them, they took the royal princes and killed all seventy; they put their heads in baskets and sent them to Jehu in Jezreel. ⁸When the messenger came to him and reported that they had brought the heads of the royal princes, he ordered them to be put in two heaps and left at the entrance of the city gate till morning. ⁹In the morning he went out, stood there and said to all the people, 'You are fair judges. If I conspired against my master and killed him, who put all these to death? ¹⁰Be sure then that every word which the LORD has spoken against the house of Ahab shall be fulfilled, and that the LORD has now done what he spoke through his servant Elijah.' ¹¹So Jehu put to death all who were left of the house of Ahab in Jezreel, as well as all his nobles,

his close friends, and his priests, until he had left not one survivor.

¹²Then he set out for Samaria, and on the way there, when he had reached a shepherds' shelter [a shepherds' shelter: *or* Beth-eker of the Shepherds], ¹³he came upon the kinsmen of Ahaziah king of Judah and said, 'Who are you?' 'We are kinsmen of Ahaziah,' they replied; 'and we have come down to greet the families of the king and of the queen mother.' ¹⁴'Take them alive', he said. So they took them alive; then they slew them and flung them into the pit that was there, forty-two of them; they did not leave a single survivor.

¹⁵When he had left that place, he found Jehonadab son of Rechab coming to meet him. He greeted him and said, 'Are you with me heart and soul, as I am with you?' 'I am', said Jehonadab. 'Then if you are,' said Jehu, 'give me your hand.' He gave him his hand and Jehu helped him up into his chariot. ¹⁶'Come with me,' he said, 'and you will see my zeal for the LORD.' So he took him with him in his chariot. ¹⁷When he came to Samaria, he put to death all of Ahab's house who were left there and so blotted it out, in fulfilment of the word which the LORD had spoken to Elijah. ¹⁸Then Jehu called all the people together and said to them, 'Ahab served the Baal a little; Jehu will serve him much. ¹⁹Now, summon all the prophets of Baal, all his ministers and priests; not one must be missing. For I am holding a great sacrifice to Baal, and no one who is missing from it shall live.' In this way Jehu outwitted the ministers of Baal in order to destroy them. ²⁰So Jehu said, 'Let a sacred ceremony for Baal be held.' They did so, ²¹and Jehu himself sent word throughout Israel, and all the ministers of Baal came; there was not a man left who did not come. They went into the temple of Baal and it was filled from end to end. ²²Then he said to the person who had charge of the wardrobe, 'Bring out robes for all the ministers of Baal'; and he brought them out. ²³Then Jehu and Jehonadab son of Rechab went into the temple of Baal and said to the ministers of Baal, 'Look carefully and make sure that there are no servants of the LORD here with you, but only the ministers of Baal.' ²⁴Then they went in to offer sacrifices and whole-offerings. Now Jehu had stationed eighty men outside and said to them. 'I am putting these men in your charge, and any man who lets one escape shall answer for it with his life.' ²⁵When he had finished offering the whole-offering, Jehu ordered the guards and the lieutenants to go and cut them all down, and let not one of them escape; so they slew them without quarter. The escort and the lieutenants then rushed into the keep of the temple of Baal ²⁶and brought out the sacred pole [*prob. rdg, Heb sacred pillars*] from the temple of Baal and burnt it; ²⁷and they pulled down the sacred pillar of the Baal and the temple itself and made a privy of it – as it is today. ²⁸Thus Jehu stamped out the worship of Baal in Israel. ²⁹He did not however abandon the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat who led Israel into sin, but he maintained the worship of the golden calves of Bethel and Dan.

³⁰Then the LORD said to Jehu, 'You have done well what is right in my eyes and have done to the house of Ahab all that it was in my mind to do. Therefore your sons to the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel.' ³¹But Jehu was not careful to follow the law of the LORD the God of Israel with all his heart; he did not abandon the sins of Jeroboam who led Israel into sin.

³²In those days the LORD began to work havoc on Israel, and Hazael struck at them in

every corner of their territory ³³eastwards from the Jordan: all the land of Gilead, Gad, Reuben, and Manasseh, from Aroer which is by the gorge of the Arnon, including Gilead and Bashan.

³⁴The other events of Jehu's reign, his achievements and his exploits, are recorded in the annals of the kings of Israel. ³⁵So Jehu rested with his forefathers and was buried in Samaria; and he was succeeded by his son Jehoahaz. ³⁶Jehu reigned over Israel in Samaria for twenty-eight years.

Kings of Israel and Judah

11¹ [*vv1-20: cp 2Chr. 22.10-23. 21*] AS SOON AS ATHALIAH mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she set out to destroy all the royal line. ²But Jehosheba daughter of King Joram, sister of Ahaziah, took Ahaziah's son Joash and stole him away from among the princes who were being murdered; she put [*she put: prob. rdg, cp 2Chr. 22.11; Heb omitted*] him and his nurse in a bedchamber where he was hidden from Athaliah and was not put to death. ³He remained concealed with her in the house of the LORD for six years, while Athaliah ruled the country. ⁴In the seventh year Jehoiada sent for the captains of units of a hundred, both of the Carites and of the guards, and he brought them into the house of the LORD; he made an agreement with them and put them on their oath in the house of the LORD, and showed them the king's son, ⁵and gave them the following orders: 'One third of you who are on duty on the sabbath are to be on guard in the palace; ⁶the rest of you are to be on special duty in the house of the LORD, one third at the Sur Gate and the other third at the gate with [*Or behind*] the outrunners. ⁷Your two companies who are off duty on the sabbath shall be on duty for the king in the house of the LORD. ⁸So you shall be on guard round the king, each man with his arms at the ready, and anyone who comes near the ranks is to be put to death; you must be with the king wherever he goes.'

⁹The captains carried out the orders of Jehoiada the priest to the letter. Each took his men, both those who came on duty on the sabbath and those who came off, and came to Jehoiada. ¹⁰The priest handed out to the captains King David's spears and shields, which were in the house of the LORD. ¹¹Then the guards took up their stations, each man carrying his arms at the ready, from corner to corner of the house to north and south [*prob. rdg, Heb adds of the altar and the house*], surrounding the king. ¹²Then he brought out the king's son, put the crown on his head, handed him the warrant and anointed him king. The people clapped their hands and shouted, 'Long live the king.'
¹³When Athaliah heard the noise made by the guards and the people, she came into the house of the LORD where the people were ¹⁴and found the king standing, as was the custom, on the dais [*Or by the pillar*], amidst outbursts of song and fanfares of trumpets in his honour, and all the populace rejoicing and blowing trumpets. Then Athaliah rent her clothes and cried, 'Treason! Treason!' ¹⁵Jehoiada the priest gave orders to the captains in command of the troops: 'Bring her outside the precincts and put to the sword anyone in attendance on her'; for the priest said, 'She shall not be put to death in the house of the LORD.'
¹⁶So they laid hands on her and took her out by the entry for horses to the royal palace, and there she was put to death.

¹⁷Then Jehoiada made a covenant between the LORD and the king and people that they should be the LORD's people, and also between the king and the people. ¹⁸And all the people went into the temple of Baal and pulled it down; they smashed to pieces its altars and images, and they slew Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars. Then Jehoiada set a watch over the house of the LORD; ¹⁹he took the captains of units of a hundred, the Carites and the guards and all the people, and they escorted the king from the house of the LORD through the Gate of the Guards to the royal palace, and seated him on the royal throne. ²⁰The whole people rejoiced and the city was tranquil. That is how Athaliah was put to the sword in the royal palace.

21 [vv11.21-12.15: cp 2Chr. 24.1-14] Joash was seven years old when he became king. **12**¹In the seventh year of Jehu, Joash became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem for forty years; his mother was Zibiah of Beersheba. ²He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD all his days, as Jehoiada the priest had taught him. ³The hill-shrines, however, were allowed to remain; the people still continued to sacrifice and make smoke-offerings there.

⁴Then Joash ordered the priests to take all the silver brought as holy-gifts into the house of the LORD, the silver for which each man was assessed [the silver ... assessed: *prob. rdg, Heb obscure*], the silver for the persons assessed under his name, and any silver which any man brought voluntarily to the house of the LORD. ⁵He ordered the priests, also, each to make a contribution from his own funds, and to repair the house wherever it was found necessary. ⁶But in the twenty-third year of the reign of Joash the priests had still not carried out the repairs to the house. ⁷King Joash summoned Jehoiada the priest and the other priests and said to them, 'Why are you not repairing the house? Henceforth you need not contribute from your own funds for the repair of the house.' ⁸So the priests agreed neither to receive money from the people nor to undertake the repairs of the house. ⁹Then Jehoiada the priest took a chest and bored a hole in the lid and put it beside the altar on the right side going into the house of the LORD, and the priests on duty at the entrance put in it all the money brought into the house of the LORD. ¹⁰And whenever they saw that the chest was well filled, the king's secretary and the high priest came and melted down the silver found in the house of the LORD and weighed it. ¹¹When it had been checked, they gave the silver to the foremen over the work in the house of the LORD and they paid the carpenters and the builders working on the temple ¹²and the masons and the stone-cutters; they used it also to buy timber and hewn stone for the repairs and for all other expenses connected with them. ¹³They did not use the silver brought into the house of the LORD to make silver cups, snuffers, tossing-bowls, trumpets, or any gold or silver vessels; ¹⁴but they paid it to the workmen and used it for the repairs. ¹⁵No account was demanded from the foremen to whom the money was given for the payment of the workmen, for they were acting on trust. ¹⁶Money from guilt-offerings and sin-offerings was not brought into the house of the LORD: it belonged to the priests.

¹⁷Then Hazael king of Aram came up and attacked Gath and took it; and he moved on against Jerusalem. ¹⁸But Joash king of Judah took all the holy-gifts that Jehoshaphat, Joram, and Ahaziah his forefathers, kings of Judah, had dedicated, and his own holy-gifts, and all the gold that was found in the treasuries of the house of the LORD and in

the royal palace, and sent them to Hazael king of Aram; and he withdrew from Jerusalem.

¹⁹The other acts and events of the reign of Joash are recorded in the annals of the kings of Judah. ²⁰ [vv20, 21: cp 2Chr. 24.25-27] His servants revolted against him and struck him down in the house of Millo on the descent to Silla. ²¹It was his servants Jozachar son of Shimeath and Jehozabad son of Shomer who struck the fatal blow; and he was buried with his forefathers in the city of David. He was succeeded by his son Amaziah.

13¹In the twenty-third year of Joash son of Ahaziah king of Judah, Jehoahaz son of Jehu became king over Israel in Samaria and he reigned seventeen years. ²He did what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD and continued the sinful practices of Jeroboam son of Nebat who led Israel into sin, and did not give them up. ³So the LORD was roused to anger against Israel and he made them subject for some years to Hazael king of Aram and Ben-hadad son of Hazael. ⁴Then Jehoahaz sought to placate the LORD, and the LORD heard his prayer, for he saw how the king of Aram oppressed Israel. ⁵The LORD appointed a deliverer for Israel, who rescued them from the power of Aram, and the Israelites settled down again in their own homes. ⁶But they did not give up the sinful practices of the house of Jeroboam who led Israel into sin, but continued in them; the goddess Asherah [the goddess Asherah: or the sacred pole] remained in Samaria. ⁷Hazael had left Jehoahaz no armed force except fifty horsemen, ten chariots, and ten thousand infantry; all the rest the king of Aram had destroyed and made like dust under foot.

⁸The other events of the reign of Jehoahaz, and all his achievements and his exploits, are recorded in the annals of the kings of Israel. ⁹So Jehoahaz rested with his forefathers and was buried in Samaria; and he was succeeded by his son Jehoash.

¹⁰In the thirty-ninth year of Joash king of Judah, Jehoash son of Jehoahaz became king over Israel in Samaria and reigned sixteen years. ¹¹He did what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD; he did not give up any of the sinful practices of Jeroboam son of Nebat who led Israel into sin, but continued in them. ¹²The other events of the reign of Jehoash, all his achievements, his exploits and his war with Amaziah king of Judah, are recorded in the annals of the kings of Israel. ¹³So Jehoash rested with his forefathers and was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel, and Jeroboam sat upon his throne.

¹⁴Elisha fell ill and lay on his deathbed, and Jehoash king of Israel went down to him and wept over him and said, 'My father! My father, the chariots and the horsemen of Israel!' ¹⁵'Take bow and arrows', said Elisha, and he took bow and arrows. ¹⁶'Put your hand to the bow', said the prophet. He did so, and Elisha laid his hands on those of the king. ¹⁷Then he said, 'Open the window toward the east'; he opened it and Elisha told him to shoot, and he shot. Then the prophet said, 'An arrow for the LORD's victory, an arrow for victory over Aram! You will defeat Aram utterly at Aphek'; ¹⁸and he added, 'Now take up your arrows.' When the king had taken them, Elisha said, 'Strike the ground with them.' He struck three times and stopped. ¹⁹The man of God was furious with him and said, 'You should have struck five or six times; then you would have defeated Aram utterly; as it is, you will strike Aram three times and no more.'

²⁰Then Elisha died and was buried.

Year by year Moabite raiders used to invade the land. ²¹Once some men were burying a dead man when they caught sight of the raiders. They threw the body into the grave of Elisha and made off; when the body touched the prophet's bones, the man came to life and rose to his feet.

²²All through the reign of Jehoahaz, Hazael king of Aram oppressed Israel. ²³But the LORD was gracious and took pity on them; because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, he looked on them with favour and was unwilling to destroy them; nor has he even yet banished them from his sight. ²⁴When Hazael king of Aram died and was succeeded by his son Ben-hadad, ²⁵Jehoash son of Jehoahaz recaptured the cities which Ben-hadad had taken in war from Jehoahaz his father; three times Jehoash defeated him and recovered the cities of Israel.

14¹ [*vv1-6: cp 2Chr. 25.1-4*] In the second year of Jehoash son of Jehoahaz king of Israel, Amaziah son of Joash king of Judah succeeded his father. ²He was twenty-five years old when he came to the throne, and he reigned in Jerusalem for twenty-nine years; his mother was Jehoaddin of Jerusalem. ³He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, yet not as his forefather David had done; he followed his father Joash in everything. ⁴The hill-shrines were allowed to remain; the people continued to slaughter and burn sacrifices there. ⁵When the royal power was firmly in his grasp, he put to death those of his servants who had murdered the king his father; ⁶but he spared the murderers' children in obedience to the LORD's command written in the law of Moses: 'Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor children for their fathers; a man shall be put to death only for his own sin.' ⁷He defeated ten thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt and captured Sela; he gave it the name Joktheel, which it still bears.

⁸ [*vv8-14: cp 2Chr. 25.17-24*] Then Amaziah sent messengers to Jehoash son of Jehoahaz, son of Jehu, king of Israel, to propose a meeting. ⁹But Jehoash king of Israel sent this answer to Amaziah king of Judah: 'A thistle in Lebanon sent to a cedar in Lebanon to say, "Give your daughter in marriage to my son." But a wild beast in Lebanon, passing by, trampled on the thistle. ¹⁰You have defeated Edom, it is true; and it has gone to your head. Stay at home and enjoy your triumph. Why should you involve yourself in disaster and bring yourself to the ground, and Judah with you?'

¹¹But Amaziah would not listen; so Jehoash king of Israel marched out, and he and Amaziah king of Judah met one another at Beth-shemesh in Judah. ¹²The men of Judah were routed by Israel and fled to their homes. ¹³But Jehoash king of Israel captured Amaziah king of Judah, son of Joash, son of Ahaziah, at Beth-shemesh. He went to Jerusalem and broke down the city wall from the Gate of Ephraim to the Corner Gate, a distance of four hundred cubits. ¹⁴He also took all the gold and silver and all the vessels found in the house of the LORD and in the treasuries of the royal palace, as well as hostages, and returned to Samaria.

¹⁵The other events of the reign of Jehoash, and all his achievements, his exploits and his wars with Amaziah king of Judah, are recorded in the annals of the kings of Israel.

¹⁶So Jehoash rested with his forefathers and was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel; and he was succeeded by his son Jeroboam.

¹⁷ [*vv17-22: cp 2Chr 25.25-26.2*] Amariah son of Joash, king of Judah, outlived Jehoash son of Jehoahaz, king of Israel, by fifteen years. ¹⁸The other events of Amariah's reign are recorded in the annals of the kings of Judah. ¹⁹A conspiracy was formed against him in Jerusalem and he fled to Lachish; but they sent after him to Lachish and put him to death there. ²⁰Then his body was conveyed on horseback to Jerusalem, and there he was buried with his forefathers in the city of David. ²¹The people of Judah took Azariah, now sixteen years old, and made him king in succession to his father Amariah. ²²It was he who built Elath and restored it to Judah after the king rested with his forefathers.

²³In the fifteenth year of Amariah son of Joash king of Judah, Jeroboam son of Jehoash king of Israel became king in Samaria and reigned for forty-one years. ²⁴He did what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD; he did not give up the sinful practices of Jeroboam son of Nebat who led Israel into sin. ²⁵He re-established the frontiers of Israel from Lebo-hamath to the Sea of the Arabah, in fulfilment of the word of the LORD the God of Israel spoken by his servant the prophet Jonah son of Amittai, of Gath-hepher. ²⁶For the LORD had seen how bitterly Israel had suffered; no one was safe, whether under the protection of his family or not, and Israel was left defenceless. ²⁷But the LORD had made no threat to blot out the name of Israel under heaven, and he saved them through Jeroboam son of Jehoash. ²⁸The other events of Jeroboam's reign, and all his achievements, his exploits, the wars he fought and how he recovered Damascus and Hamath in Jaudi for [*in Jaudi for: prob. rdg, Heb to Judah in*] Israel, are recorded in the annals of the kings of Israel. ²⁹So Jeroboam rested with his forefathers the kings of Israel; and he was succeeded by his son Zechariah.

15¹In the twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam king of Israel, Azariah [*Uzziah in vv13, 30, 32, 34*] son of Amariah king of Judah became king. ² [*vv2, 3: cp 2Chr. 26.3, 4*] He was sixteen years old when he came to the throne, and he reigned in Jerusalem for fifty-two years; his mother was Jecoliah of Jerusalem. ³He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, as Amariah his father had done. ⁴But the hill-shrines were allowed to remain; the people still continued to slaughter and burn sacrifices there. ⁵ [*vv5-7: cp 2 Chr. 26.21-23*] The LORD struck the king with leprosy [*Or a skin-disease*], which he had till the day of his death; he was relieved of all duties and lived in his own house, while his son Jotham was comptroller of the household and regent. ⁶The other acts and events of Azariah's reign are recorded in the annals of the kings of Judah. ⁷So he rested with his forefathers and was buried with them in the city of David; and he was succeeded by his son Jotham.

⁸In the thirty-eighth year of Azariah king of Judah, Zechariah son of Jeroboam became king over Israel in Samaria and reigned six months. ⁹He did what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD, as his forefathers had done; he did not give up the sinful practices of Jeroboam son of Nebat who led Israel into sin. ¹⁰Shallum son of Jabesh formed a conspiracy against him, attacked him in Ibleam, killed him and usurped the throne. ¹¹The other events of Zechariah's reign are recorded in the annals of the kings of Israel. ¹²Thus the word of the LORD spoken to Jehu was fulfilled: 'Your sons to the fourth

generation shall sit on the throne of Israel.'

¹³Shallum son of Jabesh became king in the thirty-ninth year of Uzziah king of Judah, and he reigned one full month in Samaria. ¹⁴Then Menahem son of Gadi came up from Tirzah to Samaria, attacked Shallum son of Jabesh there, killed him and usurped the throne. ¹⁵The other events of Shallum's reign and the conspiracy that he formed are recorded in the annals of the kings of Israel.

¹⁶Then Menahem, starting out from Tirzah, destroyed Tappuah and everything in it and ravaged its territory; he ravaged it because it had not opened its gates to him, and he ripped open all the pregnant women.

¹⁷In the thirty-ninth year of Azariah king of Judah, Menahem son of Gadi became king over Israel and he reigned in Samaria for ten years. ¹⁸He did what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD; he did not give up the sinful practices of Jeroboam son of Nebat who led Israel into sin. ¹⁹In his days Pul king of Assyria invaded the country, and Menahem gave him a thousand talents of silver to obtain his help in strengthening his hold on the kingdom. ²⁰Menahem laid a levy on all the men of wealth in Israel, and each had to give the king of Assyria fifty silver shekels. Then the king of Assyria withdrew without occupying the country. ²¹The other acts and events of Menahem's reign are recorded in the annals of the kings of Israel. ²²So Menahem rested with his forefathers; and he was succeeded by his son Pekahiah.

²³In the fiftieth year of Azariah king of Judah, Pekahiah son of Menahem became king over Israel in Samaria and reigned for two years. ²⁴He did what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD; he did not give up the sinful practices of Jeroboam son of Nebat who led Israel into sin. ²⁵Pekah son of Remaliah, his lieutenant, formed a conspiracy against him and, with the help of fifty Gileadites, attacked him in Samaria in the citadel of the royal palace [*prob. rdg, Heb adds Argob and Arie*h], killed him and usurped the throne. ²⁶The other acts and events of Pekahiah's reign are recorded in the annals of the kings of Israel.

²⁷In the fifty-second year of Azariah king of Judah, Pekah son of Remaliah became king over Israel in Samaria and reigned for twenty years. ²⁸He did what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD; he did not give up the sinful practices of Jeroboam son of Nebat who led Israel into sin. ²⁹In the days of Pekah king of Israel, Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria came and seized Iyyon, Abel-beth-maacah, Janoah, Kedesh, Hazor, Gilead, and Galilee, with all the land of Naphtali, and deported the people to Assyria. ³⁰Then Hoshea son of Elah formed a conspiracy against Pekah son of Remaliah, attacked him, killed him and usurped the throne in the twentieth year of Jotham son of Uzziah. ³¹The other acts and events of Pekah's reign are recorded in the annals of the kings of Israel.

³²In the second year of Pekah son of Remaliah king of Israel, Jotham son of Uzziah king of Judah became king. ³³ [*vv33-35: cp 2Chr. 27.1-3*] He was twenty-five years old when he came to the throne, and he reigned in Jerusalem for sixteen years; his mother was Jerusha daughter of Zadok. ³⁴He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, as his father Uzziah had done; ³⁵but the hill-shrines were allowed to remain and the people

continued to slaughter and burn sacrifices there. It was he who constructed the upper gate of the house of the LORD. ³⁶The other acts and events of Jotham's reign are recorded in the annals of the kings of Judah. ³⁷In those days the LORD began to make Rezin king of Aram and Pekah son of Remaliah attack Judah. ³⁸And Jotham rested with his forefathers and was buried with them in the city of David his forefather; and he was succeeded by his son Ahaz.

Downfall of the northern kingdom

16¹IN THE SEVENTEENTH YEAR OF PEKAH son of Remaliah, Ahaz son of Jotham king of Judah became king. ² [vv2-4: cp 2Chr. 28.1-4] Ahaz was twenty years old when he came to the throne, and he reigned in Jerusalem for sixteen years. He did not do what was right in the eyes of the LORD his God like his forefather David, ³but followed in the footsteps of the kings of Israel; he even passed his son through the fire, adopting the abominable practice of the nations whom the LORD had dispossessed in favour of the Israelites. ⁴He slaughtered and burnt sacrifices at the hill-shrines and on the hill-tops and under every spreading tree.

⁵Then Rezin king of Aram and Pekah son of Remaliah king of Israel attacked Jerusalem and besieged Ahaz but could not bring him to battle. ⁶At that time the king of Edom [the king of Edom: *prob. rdg, Heb Rezin king of Aram*] recovered Elath and drove the Judaeans out of it; so the Edomites entered the city and have occupied it to this day. ⁷Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria to say, 'I am your servant and your son. Come and save me from the king of Aram and from the king of Israel who are attacking me.' ⁸Ahaz took the silver and gold found in the house of the LORD and in the treasuries of the royal palace and sent them to the king of Assyria as a bribe. ⁹The king of Assyria listened to him; he advanced on Damascus, captured it, deported its inhabitants to Kir and put Rezin to death.

¹⁰When King Ahaz went to meet Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria at Damascus, he saw there an altar of which he sent a sketch and a detailed plan to Uriah the priest. ¹¹Accordingly, Uriah built an altar, following all the instructions that the king had sent him from Damascus, and had it ready against the king's return. ¹²When the king returned from Damascus, he saw the altar, approached it and mounted the steps; ¹³there he burnt his whole-offering and his grain-offering and poured out his drink-offering, and he flung the blood of his shared-offerings against it. ¹⁴The bronze altar that was before the LORD he removed from the front of the house, from between this altar and the house of the LORD, and put it on the north side of this altar. ¹⁵Then King Ahaz gave these instructions to Uriah the priest: 'Burn on the great altar the morning whole-offering and the evening grain-offering, and the king's whole-offering and his grain-offering, and the whole-offering of all the people of the land, their grain-offering and their drink-offerings, and fling against it all the blood of the sacrifices. But the bronze altar shall be mine, to offer morning sacrifice.' ¹⁶Uriah the priest did all that the king told him. ¹⁷Then King Ahaz broke up the trolleys and removed the panels, and he took down the basin and the Sea of bronze from the oxen which supported it and put it on a stone base. ¹⁸In the house of the LORD he turned round the structure they had

erected for use on the sabbath, and the outer gate for the king, to satisfy the king of Assyria. ¹⁹ [vv19, 20: cp 2Chr. 28.26, 27] The other acts and events of the reign of Ahaz are recorded in the annals of the kings of Judah. ²⁰ So Ahaz rested with his forefathers and was buried with them in the city of David; and he was succeeded by his son Hezekiah.

17¹In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah, Hoshea son of Elah became king over Israel in Samaria and reigned nine years. ²He did what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD, but not as the previous kings of Israel had done. ³Shalmaneser king of Assyria made war upon him and Hoshea became tributary to him. ⁴But when the king of Assyria discovered that Hoshea was being disloyal to him, sending messengers to the king of Egypt at So [to the king of Egypt at So: *prob. rdg, Heb to So king of Egypt*], and withholding the tribute which he had been paying year by year, the king of Assyria arrested him and put him in prison. ⁵Then he invaded the whole country and, reaching Samaria, besieged it for three years. ⁶In the ninth year of Hoshea he captured Samaria and deported its people to Assyria and settled them in Halah and on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of Media.

⁷All this happened to the Israelites because they had sinned against the LORD their God who brought them up from Egypt, from the rule of Pharaoh king of Egypt; they paid homage to other gods ⁸and observed the laws and customs of the nations whom the LORD had dispossessed before them ⁹and uttered blasphemies against the LORD their God; they built hill-shrines for themselves in all their settlements, from watch-tower to fortified city, ¹⁰and set up sacred pillars and sacred poles on every high hill and under every spreading tree, ¹¹and burnt sacrifices at all the hill-shrines there, as the nations did whom the LORD had displaced before them. By this wickedness of theirs they provoked the LORD's anger. ¹²They worshipped idols, a thing which the LORD had forbidden them to do. ¹³Still the LORD solemnly charged Israel and Judah by every prophet and seer, saying, 'Give up your evil ways; keep my commandments and statutes given in the law which I enjoined on your forefathers and delivered to you through my servants the prophets.' ¹⁴They would not listen, however, but were as stubborn and rebellious as their forefathers had been, who refused to put their trust in the LORD their God; ¹⁵they rejected his statutes and the covenant which he had made with their forefathers and the solemn warnings which he had given to them; they followed worthless idols and became worthless themselves; they imitated the nations round about them, a thing which the LORD had forbidden them to do. ¹⁶Forsaking every commandment of the LORD their God, they made themselves images of cast metal, two calves, and also a sacred pole; they prostrated themselves to all the host of heaven and worshipped the Baal, ¹⁷and they made their sons and daughters pass through the fire. They practised augury and divination; they sold themselves to do what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD and so provoked his anger.

¹⁸Thus it was that the LORD was incensed against Israel and banished them from his presence; only the tribe of Judah was left. ¹⁹Even Judah did not keep the commandments of the LORD their God but followed the practices adopted by Israel; ²⁰so the LORD rejected the whole race of Israel and punished them and gave them over to plunderers and finally flung them out of his sight. ²¹When he tore Israel from the house of David, they made Jeroboam son of Nebat king, who seduced Israel from their

allegiance to the LORD and led them into grave sin. ²²The Israelites persisted in all the sins that Jeroboam had committed and did not give them up, ²³until finally the LORD banished the Israelites from his presence, as he had threatened through his servants the prophets, and they were carried into exile from their own land to Assyria; and there they are to this day.

²⁴Then the king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim, and settled them in the cities of Samaria in place of the Israelites; so they occupied Samaria and lived in its cities. ²⁵In the early years of their settlement they did not pay homage to the LORD; and the LORD sent lions among them, and the lions preyed upon them. ²⁶The king was told that the deported peoples whom he had settled in the cities of Samaria did not know the established usage of the god of the country, and that he had sent lions among them which were preying upon them because they did not know this. ²⁷The king of Assyria, therefore, gave orders that one of the priests deported from Samaria should be sent back to live there and teach the people the usage of the god of the country. ²⁸So one of the deported priests came and lived at Bethel, and taught them how they should pay their homage to the LORD. ²⁹But each of the nations made its own god, and they set them up within [*Or in niches at*] the hill-shrines which the Samaritans had made, each nation in its own settlements. ³⁰Succoth-benoth was worshipped by the men of Babylon, Nergal by the men of Cuth, Ashima by the men of Hamath, ³¹Nibhaz and Tartak by the Avvites; and the Sepharvites burnt their children as offerings to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim. ³²While still paying homage to the LORD, they appointed people from every class to act as priests of the hill-shrines and they resorted to them there. ³³They paid homage to the LORD while at the same time they served their own gods, according to the custom of the nations from which they had been carried into exile.

³⁴They keep up these old practices to this day; they do not pay homage to the LORD, for they do not keep his [*prob. rdg, Heb their*] statutes and his [*prob. rdg, Heb their*] judgements, the law and commandment, which he enjoined upon the descendants of Jacob whom he named Israel. ³⁵When the LORD made a covenant with them, he gave them this commandment: 'You shall not pay homage to other gods or bow down to them or serve them or sacrifice to them, ³⁶but you shall pay homage to the LORD who brought you up from Egypt with great power and with outstretched arm; to him you shall bow down, to him you shall offer sacrifice. ³⁷You shall faithfully keep the statutes, the judgements, the law, and the commandments which he wrote for you, and you shall not pay homage to other gods. ³⁸You shall not forget the covenant which I made with you; you shall not pay homage to other gods. ³⁹But to the LORD your God you shall pay homage, and he will preserve you from all your enemies.' ⁴⁰However, they would not listen but continued their former practices. ⁴¹While these nations paid homage to the LORD they continued to serve their images, and their children and their children's children have maintained the practice of their forefathers to this day.

18¹ [*vv1-3: cp 2Chr. 29.I, 2*] IN THE THIRD YEAR OF HOSHEA son of Elah king of Israel, Hezekiah son of Ahaz king of Judah became king. ²He was twenty-five years old when he came to the throne, and he reigned in Jerusalem for twenty-nine years; his mother was Abi daughter of Zechariah. ³He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, as

David his forefather had done. ⁴It was he who suppressed the hill-shrines, smashed the sacred pillars, cut down every sacred pole and broke up the bronze serpent that Moses had made; for up to that time the Israelites had been burning sacrifices to it; they called it Nehushtan. ⁵He put his trust in the LORD the God of Israel; there was nobody like him among all the kings of Judah who succeeded him or among those who had gone before him. ⁶He remained loyal to the LORD and did not fail in his allegiance to him, and he kept the commandments which the LORD had given to Moses. ⁷So the LORD was with him and he prospered in all that he undertook; he rebelled against the king of Assyria and was no longer subject to him. ⁸He conquered the Philistine country as far as Gaza and its boundaries, alike the watch-tower and the fortified city.

⁹In the fourth year of Hezekiah's reign (that was the seventh year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel) Shalmaneser king of Assyria made an attack on Samaria, invested it ¹⁰and captured it after a siege of three years; it was in the sixth year of Hezekiah (the ninth year of Hoshea king of Israel) that Samaria was captured. ¹¹The king of Assyria deported the Israelites to Assyria and settled them in Halah and on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of Media, ¹²because they did not obey the LORD their God but violated his covenant and every commandment that Moses the servant of the LORD had given them; they would not listen and they would not obey.

¹³ [*vv13-37: cp Isa. 36.1-22; 2Chr. 32.1-19*] In the fourteenth year of the reign of Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria attacked and took all the fortified cities of Judah. ¹⁴Hezekiah king of Judah sent a message to the king of Assyria at Lachish: 'I have done wrong; withdraw from my land, and I will pay any penalty you impose upon me.' So the king of Assyria laid on Hezekiah king of Judah a penalty of three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold; ¹⁵and Hezekiah gave him all the silver found in the house of the LORD and in the treasuries of the royal palace. ¹⁶At that time Hezekiah broke up the doors of the temple of the LORD and the door-frames which he himself had plated, and gave them to the king of Assyria.

¹⁷From Lachish the king of Assyria sent the commander-in-chief, the chief eunuch, and the chief officer [the commander-in-chief, the chief eunuch, and the chief officer: **or** Tartan, Rab-saris, and Rab-shakeh] with a strong force to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem, and they went up and came to Jerusalem and halted by the conduit of the Upper Pool on the causeway which leads to the Fuller's Field. ¹⁸When they called for the king, Eliakim son of Hilkiah, the comptroller of the household, came out to them, with Shebna the adjutant-general and Joah son of Asaph, the secretary of state. ¹⁹The chief officer said to them, 'Tell Hezekiah that this is the message of the Great King, the king of Assyria: "What ground have you for this confidence of yours? ²⁰Do you think fine words can take the place of skill and numbers? On whom then do you rely for support in your rebellion against me? ²¹On Egypt? Egypt is a splintered cane that will run into a man's hand and pierce it if he leans on it. That is what Pharaoh king of Egypt proves to all who rely on him. ²²And if you tell me that you are relying on the LORD your God, is he not the god whose hill-shrines and altars Hezekiah has suppressed, telling Judah and Jerusalem that they must prostrate themselves before this altar in Jerusalem?"

²³Now, make a bargain with my master the king of Assyria: I will give you two

thousand horses if you can find riders for them. ²⁴Will you reject the authority of even the least of my master's servants and rely on Egypt for chariots and horsemen? ²⁵Do you think that I have come to attack this place and destroy it without the consent of the LORD? No; the LORD himself said to me, "Attack this land and destroy it." '

²⁶Eliakim son of Hilkiah, Shebna, and Joah said to the chief officer, 'Please speak to us in Aramaic, for we understand it; do not speak Hebrew to us within earshot of the people on the city wall.' ²⁷The chief officer answered, 'Is it to your master and to you that my master has sent me to say this? Is it not to the people sitting on the wall who, like you, will have to eat their own dung and drink their own urine?' ²⁸Then he stood and shouted in Hebrew, 'Hear the message of the Great King, the king of Assyria. ²⁹These are the king's words: "Do not be taken in by Hezekiah. He cannot save you from me. ³⁰Do not let him persuade you to rely on the LORD, and tell you that the LORD will save you and that this city will never be surrendered to the king of Assyria." ³¹Do not listen to Hezekiah; these are the words of the king of Assyria: "Make peace with me. Come out to me, and then you shall each eat the fruit of his own vine and his own fig-tree, and drink the water of his own cistern, ³²until I come and take you to a land like your own, a land of grain and new wine, of corn and vineyards, of olives, fine oil, and honey – life for you all, instead of death. Do not listen to Hezekiah; he will only mislead you by telling you that the LORD will save you. ³³Did the god of any of these nations save his land from the king of Assyria? ³⁴Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah? Where are the gods of Samaria? Did they save Samaria from me? ³⁵Among all the gods of the nations is there one who saved his land from me? And how is the LORD to save Jerusalem?" '

³⁶The people were silent and answered not a word, for the king had given orders that no one was to answer him. ³⁷Eliakim son of Hilkiah, comptroller of the household, Shebna the adjutant-general, and Joah son of Asaph, secretary of state, came to Hezekiah with their clothes rent and reported what the chief officer had said.

19¹ [*vv1-37: cp Isa. 37.1-38; 2Chr. 32.20-22*] When King Hezekiah heard their report, he rent his clothes and wrapped himself in sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD. ²He sent Eliakim comptroller of the household, Shebna the adjutant-general, and the senior priests, all covered in sackcloth, to the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz, ³to give him this message from the king: 'This day is a day of trouble for us, a day of reproof and contempt. We are like a woman who has no strength to bear the child that is coming to the birth. ⁴It may be that the LORD your God heard all the words of the chief officer whom his master the king of Assyria sent to taunt the living God, and will confute what he, the LORD your God, heard. Offer a prayer for those who still survive.' ⁵King Hezekiah's servants came to Isaiah, ⁶and he told them to say this to their master: 'This is the word of the LORD: "Do not be alarmed at what you heard when the lackeys of the king of Assyria blasphemed me. ⁷I will put a spirit in him and he shall hear a rumour and withdraw to his own country; and there I will make him fall by the sword." '

⁸So the chief officer withdrew. He heard that the king of Assyria had left Lachish, and he found him attacking Libnah. ⁹But when the king learnt that Tirhakah king of Cush was on the way to make war on him, he sent messengers again to Hezekiah king of Judah,

¹⁰to say to him, 'How can you be deluded by your god on whom you rely when he promises that Jerusalem shall not fall into the hands of the king of Assyria? ¹¹Surely you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all countries, exterminating their people; can you then hope to escape? ¹²Did their gods save the nations which my forefathers destroyed, Gozan, Harran, Rezep, and the people of Beth-eden living in Telassar? ¹³Where are the kings of Hamath, of Arpad, and of Lahir, Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah?'

¹⁴Hezekiah took the letter from the messengers and read it; then he went up into the house of the LORD, spread it out before the LORD ¹⁵and offered this prayer: 'O LORD God of Israel, enthroned on the cherubim, thou alone art God of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth. ¹⁶Turn thy ear to me, O LORD, and listen; open thine eyes, O LORD, and see; hear the message that Sennacherib has sent to taunt the living God. ¹⁷It is true, O LORD, that the kings of Assyria have ravaged the nations and their lands, ¹⁸that they have consigned their gods to the fire and destroyed them; for they were no gods but the work of men's hands, mere wood and stone. ¹⁹But now, O LORD our God, save us from his power, so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou, O LORD, alone art God.'

²⁰Isaiah son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah and said, 'This is the word of the LORD the God of Israel: I have heard your prayer to me concerning Sennacherib king of Assyria. ²¹This is the word which the LORD has spoken concerning him:

The virgin daughter of Zion disdains you,
she laughs you to scorn;
the daughter of Jerusalem tosses her head
as you retreat.

²²Whom have you taunted and blasphemed?
Against whom have you clamoured,
casting haughty glances at the Holy One of Israel?

²³You have sent your messengers to taunt the Lord,
and said:

I have mounted my chariot and done mighty deeds:
I have gone high up in the mountains,
into the recesses of Lebanon.
I have cut down its tallest cedars,
the best of its pines,
I have reached its farthest corners,
forest and meadow.

²⁴I have dug wells
and drunk the waters of a foreign land,
and with the soles of my feet I have dried up
all the streams of Egypt.

²⁵Have you not heard long ago?
I did it all.
In days gone by I planned it
and now I have brought it about,
making fortified cities tumble down

into heaps of rubble [heaps of rubble: *prob. rdg, cp Isa. 37.26; Heb obscure*].

²⁶Their citizens, shorn of strength,
disheartened and ashamed,
were but as plants in the field, as green herbs,
as grass on the roof-tops blasted before the east wind [the east wind: *prob. rdg, cp Isa. 37.27; Heb it is mature*].

²⁷I know your rising up [your rising up: *prob. rdg, cp Isa. 37. 28; Heb omitted*] and your sitting down,
your going out and your coming in.

²⁸The frenzy of your rage against me [*prob. rdg, cp Isa. 37.29; Heb repeats the frenzy of your rage against me*] and your arrogance
have come to my ears.

I will put a ring in your nose
and a hook in your lips,
and I will take you back by the road
on which you have come.

²⁹This shall be the sign for you: this year you shall eat shed grain and in the second year what is self-sown; but in the third year sow and reap, plant vineyards and eat their fruit. ³⁰The survivors left in Judah shall strike fresh root under ground and yield fruit above ground, ³¹for a remnant shall come out of Jerusalem and survivors from Mount Zion. The zeal of the LORD will perform this.

³²Therefore, this is the word of the LORD concerning the king of Assyria:

He shall not enter this city
nor shoot an arrow there,
he shall not advance against it with shield
nor cast up a siege-ramp against it.

³³By the way on which he came he shall go back;
this city he shall not enter.

This is the very word of the LORD.

³⁴I will shield this city to deliver it,
for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David.'

³⁵That night the angel of the LORD went out and struck down a hundred and eighty-five thousand men in the Assyrian camp; when morning dawned, they all lay dead. ³⁶So Sennacherib king of Assyria broke camp, went back to Nineveh and stayed there. ³⁷One day, while he was worshipping in the temple of his god Nisroch, Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons murdered him and escaped to the land of Ararat. He was succeeded by his son Esarhaddon.

20¹ [*vv1-11: cp Isa. 38.1-8, 21, 22*] At this time Hezekiah fell dangerously ill and the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz came to him and said, 'This is the word of the LORD: Give your last instructions to your household, for you are a dying man and will not recover.' ²Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and offered this prayer to the LORD: ³'O LORD, remember how I have lived before thee, faithful and loyal in thy service, always doing what was good in thine eyes.' And he wept bitterly. ⁴But before Isaiah had left the citadel, the

word of the LORD came to him: ⁵Go back and say to Hezekiah, the prince of my people: "This is the word of the LORD the God of your father David: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will heal you and on the third day you shall go up to the house of the LORD. ⁶I will add fifteen years to your life and deliver you and this city from the king of Assyria, and I will protect this city for my own sake and for my servant David's sake." ⁷Then Isaiah told them to apply a fig-plaster; so they made one and applied it to the boil, and he recovered. ⁸Then Hezekiah asked Isaiah what sign the LORD would give him that he would be cured and would go up into the house of the LORD on the third day. ⁹And Isaiah said, 'This shall be your sign from the LORD that he will do what he has promised; shall the shadow go forward ten steps or back ten steps?' ¹⁰Hezekiah answered, 'It is an easy thing for the shadow to move forward ten steps; rather let it go back ten steps.' ¹¹Isaiah the prophet called to the LORD, and he made the shadow go back ten steps where it had advanced down the stairway of Ahaz.

¹² [*vv12-19: cp Isa. 39.1-8*] At this time Merodach-baladan son of Baladan king of Babylon sent envoys with a gift to Hezekiah; for he had heard that he had been ill. ¹³Hezekiah welcomed them and showed them all his treasury, silver and gold, spices and fragrant oil, his armoury and everything to be found among his treasures; there was nothing in his house and in all his realm that Hezekiah did not show them. ¹⁴Then the prophet Isaiah came to King Hezekiah and asked him, 'What did these men say and where have they come from?' 'They have come from a far-off country,' Hezekiah answered, 'from Babylon.' ¹⁵Then Isaiah asked, 'What did they see in your house?' 'They saw everything,' Hezekiah replied; 'there was nothing among my treasures that I did not show them.' ¹⁶Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, 'Hear the word of the LORD: ¹⁷The time is coming, says the LORD, when everything in your house, and all that your forefathers have amassed till the present day, will be carried away to Babylon; not a thing shall be left. ¹⁸And some of the sons who will be born to you, sons of your own begetting, shall be taken and shall be made eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.' ¹⁹Hezekiah answered, 'The word of the LORD which you have spoken is good'; thinking to himself that peace and security would last out his lifetime.

²⁰The other events of Hezekiah's reign, his exploits, and how he made the pool and the conduit and brought water into the city, are recorded in the annals of the kings of Judah. ²¹So Hezekiah rested with his forefathers and was succeeded by his son Manasseh.

The last kings of Judah

21¹ [*vv1-9: cp 2Chr. 33.1-9*] **MANASSEH WAS TWELVE YEARS OLD** when he came to the throne, and he reigned in Jerusalem for fifty-five years; his mother was Hephzi-bah. ²He did what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD, in following the abominable practices of the nations which the LORD had dispossessed in favour of the Israelites. ³He rebuilt the hill-shrines which his father Hezekiah had destroyed, he erected altars to the Baal and made a sacred pole as Ahab king of Israel had done, and prostrated himself before all the host of heaven and worshipped them. ⁴He built altars in the house of the LORD, that house of which the LORD had said, 'Jerusalem shall receive my Name.' ⁵He built altars

for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD; ⁶he made his son pass through the fire, he practised soothsaying and divination, and dealt with ghosts and spirits. He did much wrong in the eyes of the LORD and provoked his anger; ⁷and the image that he had made of the goddess Asherah he put in the house, the place of which the LORD had said to David and Solomon his son, 'This house and Jerusalem, which I chose out of all the tribes of Israel, shall receive my Name for all time. ⁸I will not again make Israel outcasts from the land which I gave to their forefathers, if only they will be careful to observe all my commands and all the law that my servant Moses gave them.' ⁹But they did not obey, and Manasseh misled them into wickedness far worse than that of the nations which the LORD had exterminated in favour of the Israelites.

¹⁰Then the LORD spoke through his servants the prophets: ¹¹'Because Manasseh king of Judah has done these abominable things, outdoing the Amorites before him in wickedness, and because he has led Judah into sin with his idols, ¹²this is the word of the LORD the God of Israel: I will bring disaster on Jerusalem and Judah, disaster which will ring in the ears of all who hear of it. ¹³I will mark down every stone of Jerusalem with the plumb-line of Samaria and the plummet of the house of Ahab; I will wipe away Jerusalem as when a man wipes his plate and turns it upside down, ¹⁴and I will cast off what is left of my people, my own possession, and hand them over to their enemies. They shall be plundered and fall a prey to all their enemies; ¹⁵for they have done what is wrong in my eyes and have provoked my anger from the day their forefathers left Egypt up to the present day. ¹⁶And this Manasseh shed so much innocent blood that he filled Jerusalem full to the brim, not to mention the sin into which he led Judah by doing what is wrong in my eyes.' ¹⁷The other events and acts of Manasseh's reign, and the sin that he committed, are recorded in the annals of the kings of Judah. ¹⁸So Manasseh rested with his forefathers and was buried in the garden-tomb of his family, in the garden of Uzza; he was succeeded by his son Amon.

¹⁹ [*vv19-24: cp 2Chr. 33.21-25*] Amon was twenty-two years old when he came to the throne, and he reigned in Jerusalem for two years; his mother was Meshullemeth daughter of Haruz of Jotbah. ²⁰He did what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD as his father Manasseh had done. ²¹He followed in his father's footsteps and served the idols that his father had served and prostrated himself before them. ²²He forsook the LORD the God of his fathers and did not conform to his ways. ²³King Amon's courtiers conspired against him and murdered him in his house; ²⁴but the people of the land killed all the conspirators and made his son Josiah king in his place. ²⁵The other events of Amon's reign are recorded in the annals of the kings of Judah. ²⁶He was buried in his grave in the garden of Uzza; he was succeeded by his son Josiah.

22¹ [*vv1, 2: cp 2Chr. 34.1, 2*] Josiah was eight years old when he came to the throne, and he reigned in Jerusalem for thirty-one years; his mother was Jedidah daughter of Adaiah of Bozkath. ²He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD; he followed closely in the footsteps of his forefather David, swerving neither right nor left.

³ [*vv3-20: cp 2Chr. 34.8-28*] In the eighteenth year of his reign Josiah sent Shaphan son of Azaliah, son of Meshullam, the adjutant-general, to the house of the LORD. ⁴Go to the

high priest Hilkiah,' he said, 'and tell him to melt down the silver that has been brought into the house of the LORD, which those on duty at the entrance have received from the people, ⁵and to hand it over to the foremen in the house of the LORD, to pay the workmen who are carrying out repairs in it, ⁶the carpenters, builders, and masons, and to purchase timber and hewn stones for its repair. ⁷They are not to be asked to account for the money that has been given them; they are acting on trust.' ⁸The high priest Hilkiah told Shaphan the adjutant-general that he had discovered the book of the law in the house of the LORD, and he gave it to him, and Shaphan read it. ⁹Then Shaphan came to report to the king and told him that his servants had melted down the silver in the house of the LORD and handed it over to the foremen there. ¹⁰Then Shaphan the adjutant-general told the king that the high priest Hilkiah had given him a book, and he read it out in the king's presence. ¹¹When the king heard what was in the book of the law, he rent his clothes, ¹²and ordered the priest Hilkiah, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Akbor son of Micaiah, Shaphan the adjutant-general, and Asaiah the king's attendant, ¹³to go and seek guidance of the LORD for himself, for the people, and for all Judah, about what was written in this book that had been discovered. 'Great is the wrath of the LORD', he said, 'that has been kindled against us, because our forefathers did not obey the commands in this book and do all that is laid upon us.'

¹⁴So Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Akbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to Huldah the prophetess, wife of Shallum son of Tikvah, son of Harhas, the keeper of the wardrobe, and consulted her at her home in the second quarter of Jerusalem. ¹⁵'This is the word of the LORD the God of Israel,' she answered: 'Say to the man who sent you to me, ¹⁶"This is the word of the LORD: I am bringing disaster on this place and its inhabitants as foretold in the book which the king of Judah has read, ¹⁷because they have forsaken me and burnt sacrifices to other gods, provoking my anger with all the idols they have made with their own hands; therefore, my wrath is kindled against this place and will not be quenched." ¹⁸This is what you shall say to the king of Judah who sent you to seek guidance of the LORD: "This is the word of the LORD the God of Israel: ¹⁹You have listened to my words and shown a willing heart, you humbled yourself before the LORD when you heard me say that this place and its inhabitants would become objects of loathing and scorn, you rent your clothes and wept before me. Because of all this, I for my part have heard you. This is the very word of the LORD. ²⁰Therefore, I will gather you to your forefathers, and you will be gathered to your grave in peace; you will not live to see all the disaster which I am bringing upon this place." ' So they brought back word to the king.

23¹ [*vv1-3: cp 2Chr. 34.29-32*] Then the king sent and called all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem together, ²and went up to the house of the LORD; he took with him the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the priests and the prophets, the whole population, high and low. There he read out to them all the book of the covenant discovered in the house of the LORD; ³and then, standing on the dais [*Or by the pillar*], the king made a covenant before the LORD to obey him and keep his commandments, his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart and soul, and so fulfil the terms of the covenant written in this book. And all the people pledged themselves to the covenant.

⁴Next, the king ordered the high priest Hilkiah, the deputy high priest [*prob. rdg, Heb*

priests], and those on duty at the entrance, to remove from the house of the LORD all the objects made for Baal and Asherah and all the host of heaven; he burnt these outside Jerusalem, in the open country by the Kidron, and carried the ashes to Bethel. ⁵He suppressed the heathen priests whom the kings of Judah had appointed to burn sacrifices at the hill-shrines in the cities of Judah and in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, as well as those who burnt sacrifices to Baal, to the sun and moon and planets and all the host of heaven. ⁶He took the symbol of Asherah [*symbol of Asherah: or sacred pole*] from the house of the LORD to the gorge of the Kidron outside Jerusalem, burnt it there and pounded it to dust, which was then scattered over the common burial-ground. ⁷He also pulled down the houses of the male prostitutes attached to the house of the LORD, where the women wove vestments in honour of Asherah.

⁸He brought in all the priests from the cities of Judah and desecrated the hill-shrines where they had burnt sacrifices, from Geba to Beersheba, and dismantled the hill-shrines of the demons [*Or satyrs*] in front of the gate of Joshua, the governor of the city, to the left of the city gate. ⁹These priests, however, never came up to the altar of the LORD in Jerusalem but used to eat unleavened bread with the priests of their clan. ¹⁰He desecrated Topheth in the Valley of Ben-hinnom, so that no one might make his son or daughter pass through the fire in honour of Molech [*in honour of Molech: or for an offering*] ¹¹He destroyed the horses that the kings of Judah had set up in honour of the sun at the entrance to the house of the LORD, beside the room of Nathan-melek the eunuch in the colonnade, and he burnt the chariots of the sun. ¹²He pulled down the altars made by the kings of Judah on the roof by the upper chamber of Ahaz and the altars made by Manasseh in the two courts of the house of the LORD; he pounded them to dust and threw it into the gorge of the Kidron. ¹³Also, on the east of Jerusalem, to the south of the Mount of Olives, the king desecrated the hill-shrines which Solomon the king of Israel had built for Ashtoreth the loathsome goddess of the Sidonians, and for Kemosh the loathsome god of Moab, and for Milcom the abominable god of the Ammonites; ¹⁴he broke down the sacred pillars and cut down the sacred poles and filled the places where they had stood with human bones.

¹⁵At Bethel he dismantled the altar by [*prob. rdg, Heb omitted*] the hill-shrine made by Jeroboam son of Nebat who led Israel into sin, together with the hill-shrine itself; he broke its stones in pieces, crushed them to dust and burnt the sacred pole. ¹⁶When Josiah set eyes on the graves which were there on the hill, he sent and took the bones from them and burnt them on the altar to desecrate it, thus fulfilling the word of the LORD announced by the man of God when Jeroboam stood by the altar at the feast. But when he caught sight of the grave of the man of God who had foretold these things, ¹⁷he asked, 'What is that monument I see there?' The people of the city answered, 'The grave of the man of God who came from Judah and foretold all that you have done to the altar at Bethel.' ¹⁸'Leave it alone,' he said; 'let no one disturb his bones.' So they spared his bones and also those of the prophet who came from Samaria. ¹⁹Further, Josiah suppressed all the hill-shrines in the cities of Samaria, which the kings of Israel had set up and thereby provoked the LORD's anger, and he did to them what he had done at Bethel. ²⁰He slaughtered on the altars all the priests of the hill-shrines who were there, and he burnt human bones upon them. Then he went back to Jerusalem.

²¹The king ordered all the people to keep the Passover to the LORD their God, as this book of the covenant prescribed; ²²no such Passover had been kept either when the judges were ruling Israel or during the times of the kings of Israel and Judah. ²³But in the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign this Passover was kept to the LORD in Jerusalem. ²⁴Further, Josiah got rid of all who called up ghosts and spirits, of all household gods and idols and all the loathsome objects seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, so that he might fulfil the requirements of the law written in the book which the priest Hilkiah had discovered in the house of the LORD. ²⁵No king before him had turned to the LORD as he did, with all his heart and soul and strength, following the whole law of Moses; nor did any king like him appear again.

²⁶Yet the LORD did not abate his fierce anger; it still burned against Judah because of all the provocation which Manasseh had given him. ²⁷'Judah also I will banish from my presence', he declared, 'as I banished Israel; and I will cast off this city of Jerusalem which once I chose, and the house where I promised that my Name should be.'

²⁸The other events and acts of Josiah's reign are recorded in the annals of the kings of Judah. ²⁹It was in his reign that Pharaoh Necho king of Egypt set out for the river Euphrates to help the king of Assyria. King Josiah went to meet him; and when they met at Megiddo, Pharaoh Necho slew him. ³⁰ [vv30-34: cp 2Chr. 36.1-4] His attendants conveyed his body in a chariot from Megiddo to Jerusalem and buried him in his own burial place. Then the people of the land took Josiah's son Jehoahaz and anointed him king in place of his father.

³¹Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he came to the throne, and he reigned in Jerusalem for three months; his mother was Hamutal daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. ³²He did what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD, as his forefathers had done. ³³Pharaoh Necho removed him from the throne [removed ... throne: *prob. rdg, cp 2Chr. 36.3; Heb* bound him at Riblah in the land of Hamath when he was king] in Jerusalem, and imposed on the land a fine of a hundred talents of silver and one talent of gold. ³⁴Pharaoh Necho made Josiah's son Eliakim king in place of his father and changed his name to Jehoiakim. He took Jehoahaz and brought him to Egypt, where he died. ³⁵Jehoiakim paid the silver and gold to Pharaoh, taxing the country to meet Pharaoh's demands; he exacted it from the people, from every man according to his assessment, so that he could pay Pharaoh Necho.

³⁶Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he came to the throne, and he reigned in Jerusalem for eleven years; his mother was Zebidah daughter of Pedaiiah of Rumah. ³⁷He did what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD, as his forefathers had done. **24**¹During his reign Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took the field, and Jehoiakim became his vassal; but three years later he broke with him and revolted. ²The LORD launched against him raiding-parties of Chaldaeans, Aramaeans, Moabites, and Ammonites, letting them range through Judah and ravage it, as the LORD had foretold through his servants the prophets. ³All this happened to Judah in fulfilment of the LORD's purpose to banish them from his presence, because of all the sin that Manasseh had committed ⁴and because of the innocent blood that he had shed; he had drenched Jerusalem with innocent blood, and the LORD would not forgive him. ⁵The other events

and acts of Jehoiakim's reign are recorded in the annals of the kings of Judah. ⁶He rested with his forefathers, and was succeeded by his son Jehoiachin. ⁷The king of Egypt did not leave his own land again, because the king of Babylon had stripped him of all his possessions, from the Torrent of Egypt to the river Euphrates.

Downfall of the southern kingdom

⁸ [vv8-17: cp 2Chr. 36.9, 10] JEHOIACHIN WAS EIGHTEEN YEARS OLD when he came to the throne, and he reigned in Jerusalem for three months; his mother was Nehushta daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem. ⁹He did what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD, as his father had done. ¹⁰At that time the troops of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon advanced on Jerusalem and besieged the city. ¹¹Nebuchadnezzar arrived while his troops were besieging it, ¹²and Jehoiachin king of Judah, his mother, his courtiers, his officers, and his eunuchs, all surrendered to the king of Babylon. The king of Babylon, now in the eighth year of his reign, took him prisoner; ¹³and, as the LORD had foretold, he carried off all the treasures of the house of the LORD and of the royal palace and broke up all the vessels of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made for the temple of the LORD. ¹⁴He carried the people of Jerusalem into exile, the officers and the fighting men, ten thousand in number, together with all the craftsmen and smiths; only the weakest class of people were left. ¹⁵He deported Jehoiachin to Babylon; he also took into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon the king's mother and his wives, his eunuchs and the foremost men of the land. ¹⁶He also deported to Babylon all the men of substance, seven thousand in number, and a thousand craftsmen and smiths, all of them able-bodied men and skilled armourers. ¹⁷He made Mattaniah, uncle of Jehoiachin, king in his place and changed his name to Zedekiah.

¹⁸ [vv24.18-25.21: cp Jer. 52.1-27] Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he came to the throne, and he reigned in Jerusalem for eleven years; his mother was Hamutal daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. ¹⁹He did what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD, as Jehoiakim had done. ²⁰Jerusalem and Judah so angered the LORD that in the end he banished them from his sight; and Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

25¹ [vv1-12: cp Jer. 39.1-10; vv1-17: cp 2Chr. 36.17-20] In the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon advanced with all his army against Jerusalem, invested it and erected watch-towers against it on every side; ²the siege lasted till the eleventh year of King Zedekiah. ³In the fourth month of that year [In ... year: prob. rdg, cp Jer. 52.6; Heb omitted], on the ninth day of the month, when famine was severe in the city and there was no food for the common people, ⁴the city was thrown open. When Zedekiah king of Judah saw this [When ... this: prob. rdg, cp Jer. 39.4; Heb omitted], he and all his armed escort left the city and fled by night through the gate called Between the Two Walls, near the king's garden. They escaped towards the Arabah, although the Chaldeans were surrounding the city. ⁵But the Chaldaean army pursued the king and overtook him in the lowlands of Jericho; and all his company was dispersed. ⁶The king was seized and brought before the king of Babylon at Riblah, where he pleaded his case before him. ⁷Zedekiah's sons were slain before his eyes; then his eyes were put out, and he was

brought to Babylon in fetters of bronze.

⁸In the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month, in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, Nebuzaradan, captain of the king's bodyguard, came to Jerusalem ⁹and set fire to the house of the LORD and the royal palace; all the houses in the city, including the mansion of Gedaliah [*Gedaliah: prob. rdg, Heb a great man*] were burnt down. ¹⁰The Chaldaean forces with the captain of the guard pulled down the walls all round Jerusalem. ¹¹Nebuzaradan captain of the guard deported the rest of the people left in the city, those who had deserted to the king of Babylon and any remaining artisans [*any remaining artisans: prob. rdg, cp Jer. 52.15; Heb the remaining crowd*]

¹²He left only the weakest class of people to be vine-dressers and labourers.

¹³The Chaldeans broke up the pillars of bronze in the house of the LORD, the trolleys, and the Sea of bronze, and took the metal to Babylon. ¹⁴They took also the pots, shovels, snuffers, saucers, and all the vessels of bronze used in the service of the temple. ¹⁵The captain of the guard took away the precious metal, whether gold or silver, of which the firepans and the tossing-bowls were made. ¹⁶The bronze of the two pillars, the one Sea, and the trolleys, which Solomon had made for the house of the LORD, was beyond weighing. ¹⁷The one pillar was eighteen cubits high and its capital was bronze; the capital was three cubits high, and a decoration of network and pomegranates ran all round it, wholly of bronze. The other pillar, with its network, was exactly like it.

¹⁸The captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest and Zephaniah the deputy chief priest and the three on duty at the entrance; ¹⁹he took also from the city a eunuch who was in charge of the fighting men, five of those with right of access to the king who were still in the city, the adjutant-general [*prob. rdg, Heb adds commander-in-chief*] whose duty was to muster the people for war, and sixty men of the people who were still there. ²⁰These Nebuzaradan captain of the guard brought to the king of Babylon at Riblah. ²¹There, in the land of Hamath, the king of Babylon had them flogged and put to death. So Judah went into exile from their own land.

²²Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon appointed Gedaliah son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan, governor over the few people whom he had left in Judah. ²³When the captains of the armed bands and their men heard that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah governor, they all came to him at Mizpah: Ishmael son of Nethaniah, Johanan son of Kareah, Seraiah son of Tanhumeth of Netophah, and Jaazaniah of Beth-maacah. ²⁴Then Gedaliah gave them and their men this assurance: 'Have no fear of the Chaldaean officers. Settle down in the land and serve the king of Babylon; and then all will be well with you.' ²⁵But in the seventh month Ishmael son of Nethaniah, son of Elishama, who was a member of the royal house, came with ten men and murdered Gedaliah and the Jews and Chaldeans who were with him at Mizpah. ²⁶Thereupon all the people, high and low, and the captains of the armed bands, fled to Egypt for fear of the Chaldeans.

²⁷ [*vv27-30: cp Jer. 52.31- 34*] In the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin king of Judah, on the twenty-seventh day of the twelfth month, Evil-merodach [*Or Ewil-marduk*] king of Babylon in the year of his accession showed favour to Jehoiachin king of Judah. He brought him out of prison, ²⁸treated him kindly and gave him a seat at

table above the kings with him in Babylon. ²⁹So Jehoiachin discarded his prison clothes and lived as a pensioner of the king for the rest of his life. ³⁰For his maintenance, a regular daily allowance was given him by the king as long as he lived.