

1KINGS 22: 1 They continued three years without war between Syria and Israel.

Jehoshaphat King of Judah, and Ahab King of Israel, unite against the Syrians, in order to recover Ramoth-gilead, 1Kgs 22:1-4. They inquire of false prophets, who promise them success. Micaiah, a true prophet, foretells the disasters of the war, 1Kgs 22:5-17. A lying spirit in the mouths of Ahab's prophets persuades Ahab to go up against Ramoth, 1Kgs 22:18-29. The confederate armies are routed, and the king of Israel slain, 1Kgs 22:30-36. Death and burial of Ahab, 1Kgs 22:37-40. Character of Jehoshaphat, 1Kgs 22:41-47. He makes a fleet in order to go to Ophir for gold, which is wrecked at Ezion-geber, 1Kgs 22:48. His death, 1Kgs 22:49. He is succeeded by his son Jehoram, 1Kgs 22:50. Ahaziah succeeds his father Ahab, and reigns wickedly, 1Kgs 22:51, 1Kgs 22:52.

Verse 1

Three years without war - That is, from the time that Ahab made the covenant with Ben-hadad, mentioned 1Kgs 20:34. And probably in that treaty it was stipulated that Ramoth-gilead should be restored to Israel; which not being done, Ahab formed a confederacy with Judah, and determined to take it by force.

1KINGS 22: 2 In the third year, Jehoshaphat the king of Judah came down to the king of Israel.

1KINGS 22: 3 The king of Israel said to his servants, "You know that Ramoth Gilead is ours, and we are still, and don't take it out of the hand of the king of Syria?"

1KINGS 22: 4 He said to Jehoshaphat, "Will you go with me to battle to Ramoth Gilead?"

Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, "I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses."

Verse 4

Wilt thou go with me - We find that there was a good understanding between Jehoshaphat and Ahab, which no doubt was the consequence of a matrimonial alliance between the son of the former, Jehoram, and the daughter of the latter, Athaliah; see 2Chr 18:1; 2Kgs 8:18. This coalition did not please God, and Jehoshaphat is severely reprov'd for it by Jehu the seer, 2Chr 19:1-3.

1KINGS 22: 5 Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, "Please inquire first for the LORD's word."

1KINGS 22: 6 Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said to them, "Shall I go against Ramoth Gilead to battle, or shall I forbear?"

They said, "Go up; for the Lord will deliver it into the hand of the king."

Verse 6

About four hundred men - These were probably the prophets of Asherah or Venus, maintained by Jezebel, who were not present at the contention on Mount Carmel. See 1Kgs 18:19, etc.

1KINGS 22: 7 But Jehoshaphat said, "Isn't there here a prophet of the LORD, that we may inquire of him?"

1KINGS 22: 8 The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "There is yet one man by whom we may inquire of the LORD, Micaiah the son of Imlah; but I hate him; for he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil."

Jehoshaphat said, "Don't let the king say so."

Verse 8

Micaiah the son of Imlah - The Jews suppose that it was this prophet who reproved Ahab for dismissing Ben-hadad, 1Kgs 20:35, etc. And that it was because of the judgments with which he had threatened him, that Ahab hated him: I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil.

1KINGS 22: 9 Then the king of Israel called an officer, and said, "Quickly get Micaiah the son of Imlah."

Verse 9

The king of Israel called an officer - סריס saris, literally a eunuch; probably a foreigner, for it was not lawful to disgrace an Israelite by reducing him to such a state.

1KINGS 22: 10 Now the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah were sitting each on his throne, arrayed in their robes, in an open place at the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets were prophesying before them.

1KINGS 22: 11 Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah made him horns of iron, and said, "Thus says the LORD, 'With these you shall push the Syrians, until they are consumed.'"

Verse 11

Zedekiah - made him horns of iron - This was in imitation of that sort of prophecy which instructed by significant actions. This was frequent among the prophets of the Lord.

1KINGS 22: 12 All the prophets prophesied so, saying, "Go up to Ramoth Gilead, and prosper; for the LORD will deliver it into the hand of the king."

1KINGS 22: 13 The messenger who went to call Micaiah spoke to him, saying, "See now, the prophets declare good to the king with one mouth. Please let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak good."

Verse 13

The words of the prophets declare good - What notion could these men have of prophecy, when they supposed it was in the power of the prophet to model the prediction as he pleased, and have the result accordingly?

1KINGS 22: 14 Micaiah said, "As the LORD lives, what the LORD says to me, that I will speak."

1KINGS 22: 15 When he had come to the king, the king said to him, "Micaiah, shall we go to Ramoth Gilead to battle, or shall we forbear?" He answered him, "Go up and prosper; and the LORD will deliver it into the hand of the king."

Verse 15

Go, and prosper - This was a strong irony; as if he had said, All your prophets have predicted success; you wish me to speak as they speak: Go, and prosper; for the Lord will deliver it into the hand of the king. These were the precise words of the false prophets, (see 1Kgs 22:6, 1Kgs 22:12), and were spoken by Micaiah in such a tone and manner as at once showed to Ahab that he did not believe them; hence the king adjures him, 1Kgs 22:16, that he would speak to him nothing but truth; and on this the prophet immediately relates to him the prophetic vision which pointed out the disasters which ensued.

It is worthy of remark that this prophecy of the king's prophets is couched in the same ambiguous terms by which the false prophets in the heathen world endeavored to maintain their credit, while they deluded their votaries. The reader will observe that the word it is not in the original: The Lord will deliver it into the hand of the king; and the words are so artfully constructed that they may be interpreted for or against; so that, be the event whatever it might, the juggling prophet could save his credit by saying he meant what had happened. Thus then the prophecy might have been understood: The Lord will deliver (Ramoth-gilead) into the king's (Ahab's) hand; or, The Lord will deliver (Israel) into the king's hand; i.e., into the hand of the king of Syria. And Micaiah repeats these words of uncertainty in order to ridicule them and expose their fallacy.

The following oracles among the heathens were of this same dubious nature, in order that the priests' credit might be saved, let the event turn out as it might. Thus the Delphic oracle spoke to Croesus words which are capable of a double meaning, and which he understood to his own destruction: -

Croesus, Halym penetrans, magnam subvertet opum vim,

Which says, in effect: - "If you march against Cyrus, he will either overthrow you, or you will overthrow him."

He trusted in the latter, the former took place. He was deluded, and yet the oracle maintained its credit. So in the following: -

Aio te, Aeacida, Romanos vincere posse

Ibis redibis nunquam in bello peribis.

Pyrrhus, king of Epirus, understood by this that he should conquer the Romans, against whom he was then making war; but the oracle could be thus translated: "The Romans shall overcome thee." He trusted in the former, made unsuccessful war, and was overcome; and yet the juggling priest saved his credit. The latter line is capable of two opposite meanings: - "Thou shalt go, thou shalt return, thou shalt never perish in war."

Or, "Thou shalt go, thou shalt never return, thou shalt perish in war."

When prophecies and oracles were not delivered in this dubious way, they were generally couched in such intricate and dark terms that the assistance of the oracle was necessary to explain the oracle, and then it was *ignotum per ignotius*, a dark saying paraphrased by one yet more obscure.

1KINGS 22: 16 The king said to him, "How many times do I have to adjure you that you speak to me nothing but the truth in the LORD's name?"

1KINGS 22: 17 He said, "I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd. The LORD said, 'These have no master. Let them each return to his house in peace.'"

Verse 17

These have no master - Here the prophet foretells the defeat of Israel, and the death of the king; they were as sheep that had not a shepherd, people that had no master, the political shepherd and master (Ahab) shall fall in battle.

1KINGS 22: 18 The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Didn't I tell you that he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?"

1KINGS 22: 19 Micaiah said, "Therefore hear the LORD's word. I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the army of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left.

Verse 19

I saw the Lord sitting on his throne - This is a mere parable, and only tells in figurative language, what was in the womb of providence, the events which were shortly to take place, the agents employed in them, and the permission on the part of God for these agents to act. Micaiah did not choose to say before this angry and impious king, "Thy prophets are all liars; and the devil, the father of lies, dwells in them;" but he represents the whole by this parable, and says the same truths in language as forcible, but less offensive.

1KINGS 22: 20 The LORD said, 'Who shall entice Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth Gilead?' One said one thing; and another said another.

1KINGS 22: 21 A spirit came out and stood before the LORD, and said, 'I will entice him.'

1KINGS 22: 22 The LORD said to him, 'How?' He said, 'I will go out and will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' He said, 'You will entice him, and will also prevail. Go out and do so.'

Verse 22

Go forth, and do so - This is no more than, "God has permitted the spirit of lying to influence the whole of thy prophets; and he now, by my mouth, apprises thee of this, that thou mayest not go and fall at Ramoth-gilead." Never was a man more circumstantially and fairly warned; he had counsels from the God of truth, and counsels from the spirit of falsity; he obstinately forsook the former and followed the latter. He was shown by this parable how every thing was going on, and that all was under the control and direction of God, and that still it was possible for him to make that God his friend whom by his continual transgressions he had made his enemy; but he would not: his blood was therefore upon his own head.

1KINGS 22: 23 Now therefore, behold, the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets; and the LORD has spoken evil concerning you."

Verse 23

The Lord hath put a lying spirit - He hath permitted or suffered a lying spirit to influence thy prophets. Is it requisite again to remind the reader that the Scriptures repeatedly represent God as doing what, in the course of his providence, he only permits or suffers to be done? Nothing can be done in heaven, in earth, or hell, but either by his immediate energy or permission. This is the reason why the Scripture speaks as above.

1KINGS 22: 24 Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah came near, and struck Micaiah on the cheek, and said, "Which way did the Spirit of the LORD go from me to speak to you?"

Verse 24

Which way went the Spirit of the Lord from me - This is an expression of as great insolence as the act was of brutal aggression. "Did the Spirit of the Lord, who rests solely upon me, condescend to inspire thee? Was it at this ear [where he smote him] that it entered, in order to hold communion with thee?" Josephus tells an idle rabbinical tale about this business, which is as unworthy of repetition as it is of credit. See his Antiq. of the Jews, book viii., c. 10.

1KINGS 22: 25 Micaiah said, "Behold, you will see on that day, when you go into an inner room to hide yourself."

Verse 25

When thou shalt go into an inner chamber - It is probable that this refers to some Divine judgment which fell upon this deceiver. Hearing of the tragical result of the battle, he no doubt went into a secret place to hide himself from the resentment of Jezebel, and the Israelitish courtiers, and there it is probable he perished; but how, when, or where, is not mentioned.

1KINGS 22: 26 The king of Israel said, "Take Micaiah, and carry him back to Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son.

1KINGS 22: 27 Say, 'Thus says the king, "Put this fellow in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and with water of affliction, until I come in peace.'"

Verse 27

Feed him with bread of affliction - Deprive him of all the conveniences and comforts of life; treat him severely; just keep him alive, that he may see my triumph.

1KINGS 22: 28 Micaiah said, "If you return at all in peace, the LORD has not spoken by me." He said, "Listen, all you people!"

1KINGS 22: 29 So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramoth Gilead.

1KINGS 22: 30 The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "I will disguise myself, and go into the battle; but you put on your robes." The king of Israel disguised himself, and went into the battle.

Verse 30

I will disguise myself - Probably he had heard of the orders given by Ben-hadad to his thirty-two captains, to fight with the king of Israel only; that is, to make their most powerful attack where he commanded, in order to take him prisoner, that he might lead him captive whose captive he formerly was; and therefore he disguised himself that he might not be known.

But put thou on thy robes - What is meant by this? He could not mean, "Appear as the king of Judah, for they will not molest thee, as the matter of contention lies between them and me;" this is Jarchi's turn. For if Jehoshaphat aided Ahab, is it to be supposed that the Syrians would spare him in battle? A general in the civil wars of England, when he had brought his army in sight of their foes, thus addressed them: "Yonder are your enemies; if you do not kill them, they will kill you." So it might be said in the case of Jehoshaphat and the Syrians.

The Septuagint gives the clause a different and more intelligible turn: "I will cover (conceal) myself, and enter into the battle; και ου ενδυσσαι τον ιματισμον μου, but put thou on My robes." And does it not appear that he did put on Ahab's robes? And was it not this that caused the Syrians to mistake him for the king of Israel? 1Kgs 22:32.

1KINGS 22: 31 Now the king of Syria had commanded the thirty-two captains of his chariots, saying, Fight neither with small nor great, except only with the king of Israel.

1KINGS 22: 32 When the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, they said, "Surely that is the king of Israel!" and they turned aside to fight against him. Jehoshaphat cried out.

1KINGS 22: 33 When the captains of the chariots saw that it was not the king of Israel, they turned back from pursuing him.

1KINGS 22: 34 A certain man drew his bow at random, and struck the king of Israel between the joints of the armour. Therefore he said to the driver of his chariot, "Turn your hand, and carry me out of the battle; for I am severely wounded."

Verse 34

Drew a bow at a venture - It is supposed that he shot, as the archers in general did, not aiming at any person in particular.

The word *לתמו* lethummo, which we translate in his simplicity, has been variously understood; in his integrity, his uprightness; in his perfection; i.e., to the utmost of his skill and strength. This is most probably the meaning; and may imply both aim and power, having his butt full in view.

In cases where the archers wished to do the greatest execution, they bent their bows, and pulled till the subtending string drew back the arrow up to its head. This they could not do always, because it required their whole strength; and they could not put forth their utmost effort each time and continue to discharge many shots. Our old national ballad of the Chevy-chace mentions the slaying of Sir Hugh Montgomery, who had slain Earl Percy, in nearly the same way that Ahab appears to have been shot: - "And thus did both these nobles die,

Whose courage none could stain:

An English archer then perceived

His noble lord was slain,

Who had a bow bent in his hand

Made of a trusty tree;

An arrow, of a cloth-yard long,

Up to the head drew he; Against

Sir Hugh Montgomery then

So right his shaft he set,

The gray goose wing that was thereon

In his heart's blood was wet."

Between the joints of the harness - "Between the cuirass and the lower part of the helmet;" and then the arrow must pass through the neck, just above the breast: or "between the cuirass and the cuissarts;" and then the arrow must pass through the abdomen, or just where the armor of the thighs joins to that which covers the breast and belly.

The Vulgate has *Inter pulmonem et stomachum*; "Between the lungs and the stomach;" consequently, in the region of the heart.

1KINGS 22: 35 The battle increased that day. The king was propped up in his chariot facing the Syrians, and died at evening. The blood ran out of the wound into the bottom of the chariot.

Verse 35

The king was stayed up - He did not wish his misfortune should be known, lest his troops should be discouraged.

1KINGS 22: 36 A cry went throughout the army about the going down of the sun, saying, "Every man to his city, and every man to his country!"

Verse 36

Every man to his city - It appears that the Israelites and Jews maintained the fight the whole of the day; but when at evening the king died, and this was known, there was a proclamation made, probably with the consent of both Syrians and Israelites, that the war was over. Ahab being dead, his subjects did not choose to contend for Ramoth-gilead; so the Israelites went to their own cities, and the Syrians to their own country.

1KINGS 22: 37 So the king died, and was brought to Samaria; and they buried the king in Samaria.

1KINGS 22: 38 They washed the chariot by the pool of Samaria; and the dogs licked up his blood where the prostitutes washed themselves; according to the LORD's word which he spoke.

Verse 38

The dogs licked up his blood - Some of the rabbins think that this was in the very place where Naboth was stoned; see on 1Kgs 21:19 (note). The Septuagint translates this verse strangely: "And the swine and the dogs licked his blood, and the whores bathed themselves in his blood, according to the word of the Lord." It is certain that the Hebrew words, *הזנות רחצו* *hazzonoth rachatsu*, "washed his armor," might be translated as the Septuagint have done; "and the whores (or public women) washed," etc. And so the rabbins seem to have understood the words; but then they suppose that Jezebel had made him two images of prostitutes, which he had with him in the chariot. It is not worth inquiring into the use for which they say these images were made. See Kimchi and Jarchi.

1KINGS 22: 39 Now the rest of the acts of Ahab, and all that he did, and the ivory house which he built, and all the cities that he built, aren't they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

Verse 39

Ivory house - A royal palace which he built in Samaria, decorated with ivory, and hence called the ivory house. Amos the prophet speaks against this luxury, Amo 3:15.

1KINGS 22: 40 So Ahab slept with his fathers; and Ahaziah his son reigned in his place.

1KINGS 22: 41 Jehoshaphat the son of Asa began to reign over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel.

1KINGS 22: 42 Jehoshaphat was thirty-five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Azubah the daughter of Shilhi.

1KINGS 22: 43 He walked in all the way of Asa his father; He didn't turn aside from it, doing that which was right in the eyes of the LORD: however the high places were not taken away; the people still sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places.

Verse 43

The high places were not taken away - In 2Chr 17:6, it is expressly said, that he did take away the high places. Allowing that the text is right in 2 Chron., the two places may be easily reconciled. There were two kinds of high places in the land:

1. Those used for idolatrous purposes.
2. Those that were consecrated to God, and were used before the temple was built. The former he did take away; the latter he did not.

But some think the parallel place in 2Chr 17:6 is corrupted, and that, instead of ועוד הסיר veod hesir, "and moreover he took away," we should read, ולא הסיר velo hesir, "and he did Not take away."

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

1KINGS 22: 45 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, and his might that he showed, and how he fought, aren't they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

1KINGS 22: 46 The remnant of the sodomites, that remained in the days of his father Asa, he put away out of the land.

Verse 46

The remnant of the sodomites - הקדש of the consecrated persons; or it may rather apply here to the system of pollution, effeminacy, and debauch. He destroyed the thing itself; the abominations of Priapus, and the rites of Venus, Baal, and Ashtaroth. No more of that impure worship was to be found in Judea.

1KINGS 22: 47 There was no king in Edom: a deputy was king.

 Verse 47

There was no king in Edom - It is plain that the compiler of this book lived after the days of Jehoshaphat, in whose time the Edomites revolted; see 2Kgs 8:22. David had conquered the Edomites, and they continued to be governed by deputies, appointed by the kings of Judah, till they recovered their liberty, as above. This note is introduced by the writer to account for Jehoshaphat's building ships at Ezion-geber, which was in the territory of the Edomites, and which showed them to be at that time under the Jewish yoke.

1KINGS 22: 48 Jehoshaphat made ships of Tarshish to go to Ophir for gold: but they didn't go; for the ships were broken at Ezion Geber.

Verse 48

Ships of Tharshish to go to Ophir for gold - In the parallel place (2Chr 20:36) it is said that Jehoshaphat joined himself to Ahaziah, to make ships to go to Tharshish; and they made the ships in Ezion-geber. Concerning these places, and the voyage thither, see the notes on 1Kgs 9:26-28 (note); 1Kgs 10:11 (note), 1Kgs 10:22 (note). Some translate, instead of ships of Tharshish, ships of burden. See Houbigant, who expresses himself doubtful as to the meaning of the word.

1KINGS 22: 49 Then Ahaziah the son of Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, "Let my servants go with your servants in the ships." But Jehoshaphat would not.

Verse 49

But Jehoshaphat would not - It appears from the above cited place in Chronicles that Jehoshaphat did join in making and sending ships to Tharshish, and it is possible that what is here said is spoken of a second expedition, in which Jehoshaphat would not join Ahaziah. But instead of ולא אבה *velo abah*, "he would not," perhaps we should read ולו אבה *velo abah*, "he consented to him;" two words pronounced exactly in the same way, and differing but in one letter, viz., an א aleph for a ו vau. This reading, however, is not supported by any MS. or version; but the emendation seems just; for there are several places in these historical books in which there are mistakes of transcribers which nothing but violent criticism can restore, and to this it is dangerous to resort, but in cases of the last necessity. Critics have recommended the 48th and 49th verses to be read thus: "Jehoshaphat had built ships of burden at Ezion-geber, to go to Ophir for gold. 49. And Ahaziah, the son of Ahab, had said to Jehoshaphat, Let my servants, I pray thee, go with thy servants in the ships: to which Jehoshaphat consented. But the ships went not thither; for the ships were broken at Ezion-geber." This is Houbigant's translation, who contends that "the words of the 48th verse, but they went not, should be placed at the end of the 49th verse, for who can believe that the sacred writer should first relate that the ships were broken, and then that Ahaziah requested of Jehoshaphat that his servants might embark with the servants of Jehoshaphat?" This bold critic, who understood the Hebrew language better than any man in Europe, has, by happy conjectures, since verified by the testimony of MSS., removed the blots of many careless transcribers from the sacred volume.

1KINGS 22: 50 Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father; Jehoram his son reigned in his place.

1KINGS 22: 51 Ahaziah the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria in the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and he reigned two years over Israel.

1KINGS 22: 52 He did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of his father, and in the way of his mother, and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, in which he made Israel to sin.

1KINGS 22: 53 He served Baal, and worshipped him, and provoked to anger the LORD, the God of Israel, according to all that his father had done.
