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2KINGS 13: 1 In the twenty-third year of Joash the son of Ahaziah, king of Judah, Jehoahaz the son of Jehu began to reign over Israel in Samaria for seventeen years.

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Jehoahaz reigns in Israel seventeen years; his various acts, and wars with the Syrians, 2Kgs 13:1-8. He dies, and Joash reigns in his stead, and does evil in the sight of the Lord, 2Kgs 13:9-13. Elisha's last sickness; he foretells a three-fold defeat of the Syrians, and dies, 2Kgs 13:14-20. A dead man raised to life by touching the bones of Elisha, 2Kgs 13:21. Hazael dies, having long oppressed Israel; but Jehoash recovers many cities out of the hands of Ben-hadad, his successor, and defeats him three times, 2Kgs 13:22-25.

Verse 1

In the three and twentieth year of Joash - The chronology here is thus accounted for; Jehoahaz began his reign at the commencement of the twenty-third year of Joash, and reigned seventeen years, fourteen alone, and three years with his son Joash; the fourteenth year was but just begun.

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2KINGS 13: 2 He did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, and followed the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, with which he made Israel to sin; he didn't depart from it.

2KINGS 13: 3 the LORD's anger was kindled against Israel, and he delivered them into the hand of Hazael king of Syria, and into the hand of Benhadad the son of Hazael, continually.

2KINGS 13: 4 Jehoahaz begged the LORD, and the LORD listened to him; for he saw the oppression of Israel, how that the king of Syria oppressed them.

2KINGS 13: 5 (the LORD gave Israel a saviour, so that they went out from under the hand of the Syrians; and the children of Israel lived in their tents as before.

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Verse 5

And the Lord gave Israel a savior - This was undoubtedly Joash, whose successful wars against the Syrians are mentioned at the conclusion of the chapter. Houbigant recommends to read the seventh verse after the fourth, then the fifth and sixth, and next the eighth, etc.

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2KINGS 13: 6 Nevertheless they didn't depart from the sins of the house of Jeroboam, with which he made Israel to sin, but walked therein: and there remained the Asherah also in Samaria.)

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Verse 6

The grove also in Samaria - Asherah, or Astarte, remained in Samaria, and there was she worshipped, with all her abominable rites.

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2KINGS 13: 7 For he didn't leave to Jehoahaz of the people any more than fifty horsemen, and ten chariots, and ten thousand footmen; for the king of Syria destroyed them, and made them like the dust in threshing.

2KINGS 13: 8 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoahaz, and all that he did, and his might, aren't they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

2KINGS 13: 9 Jehoahaz slept with his fathers; and they buried him in Samaria: and Joash his son reigned in his place.

2KINGS 13: 10 In the thirty-seventh year of Joash king of Judah, Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz began to reign over Israel in Samaria for sixteen years.

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#### Verse 10

In the thirty and seventh year - Joash, the son of Jehoahaz, was associated with his father in the government two years before his death. It is this association that is spoken of here. He succeeded him two years after, a little before the death of Elisha. Joash reigned sixteen years, which include the years he governed conjointly with his father. - Calmet.

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2KINGS 13: 11 He did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD; he didn't depart from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, with which he made Israel to sin; but he walked therein.

2KINGS 13: 12 Now the rest of the acts of Joash, and all that he did, and his might with which he fought against Amaziah king of Judah, aren't they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

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#### Verse 12

Wherewith he fought against Amaziah - This war with Amaziah may be seen in ample detail 2 Chron. 25; it ended in the total defeat of Amaziah, who was taken prisoner by Joash, and afterwards slain in a conspiracy at Lachish. Joash took Jerusalem, broke down four hundred cubits of the wall, and took all the royal treasures, and the treasures of the house of God. See 2Chr 25:20-27.

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2KINGS 13: 13 Joash slept with his fathers; and Jeroboam sat on his throne: and Joash was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel.

2KINGS 13: 14 Now Elisha was fallen sick of his sickness of which he died: and Joash the king of Israel came down to him, and wept over him, and said, "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen!"

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#### Verse 14

Now Elisha was fallen sick - This is supposed to have taken place in the tenth year of Joash; and if so, Elisha must have prophesied about sixty-five years.

O my father, my father - "What shall I do now thou art dying? thou art the only defense of Israel." He accosts him with the same words which himself spoke to Elijah when he was translated; see 2Kgs 2:12 (note), and the note there.

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2KINGS 13: 15 Elisha said to him, "Take bow and arrows"; and he took to him bow and arrows.

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Verse 15

Take bow and arrows - The bow, the arrows, and the smiting on the ground, were all emblematical things, indicative of the deliverance of Israel from Syria.

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2KINGS 13: 16 He said to the king of Israel, "Put your hand on the bow"; and he put his hand on it. Elisha laid his hands on the king's hands.

2KINGS 13: 17 He said, "Open the window eastward"; and he opened it. Then Elisha said, "Shoot!" and he shot. He said, "The LORD's arrow of victory, even the arrow of victory over Syria; for you shall strike the Syrians in Aphek, until you have consumed them."

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Verse 17

Open the window eastward - This was towards the country beyond Jordan, which Hazael had taken from the Israelites.

The arrow of - deliverance from Syria - That is, As surely as that arrow is shot towards the lands conquered from Israel by the Syrians, so surely shall those lands be reconquered and restored to Israel.

It was an ancient custom to shoot an arrow or cast a spear into the country which an army intended to invade. Justin says that, as soon as Alexander the Great had arrived on the coasts of Iona, he threw a dart into the country of the Persians. "Cum delati in continentem essent, primus Alexander jaculum velut in hostilem terram jacit." - Just. lib. ii.

The dart, spear, or arrow thrown, was an emblem of the commencement of hostilities. Virgil (Aen. lib. ix., ver. 51) represents Turnus as giving the signal of attack by throwing a spear: -

Ecquis erit mecum, O Juvenes, qui primus in hostem?

En, ait: et jaculum intorquens emittit in auras,

Principium pugnae; et campo sese arduus infert. "Who, first," he cried, "with me the foe will dare?"

Then hurled a dart, the signal of the war.

Pitt.

Servius, in his note upon this place, shows that it was a custom to proclaim war in this stay: the pater patratus, or chief of the Feciales, a sort of heralds, went to the confines of the enemy's country, and, after some solemnities, said with a loud voice, I wage war with you, for such and such reasons; and then threw in a spear. It was then the business of the parties thus defied or warned to

take the subject into consideration; and if they did not, within thirty days, come to some accommodation, the war was begun.

Thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek - This was a city of Syria, and probably the place of the first battle; and there, it appears, they had a total overthrow. They were, in the language of the text, consumed or exterminated.

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2KINGS 13: 18 He said, "Take the arrows"; and he took them. He said to the king of Israel, "Strike the ground"; and he struck three times, and stopped.

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#### Verse 18

Smite upon the ground - As he was ordered to take his arrows, the smiting on the ground must mean shooting arrows into it.

He smote thrice, and stayed - The prophet knew that this shooting was emblematical: probably the king was not aware of what depended on the frequency of the action; and perhaps it was of the Lord that he smote only thrice, as he had determined to give Israel those three victories only over the Syrians. Elisha's being wroth because there were only three instead of five or six shots does not prove that God was wroth, or that he had intended to give the Syrians five or six overthrows.

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2KINGS 13: 19 The man of God was angry with him, and said, "You should have struck five or six times. Then you would have struck Syria until you had consumed it, whereas now you shall strike Syria just three times."

2KINGS 13: 20 Elisha died, and they buried him. Now the bands of the Moabites invaded the land at the coming in of the year.

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#### Verse 20

And Elisha died - The two prophets, Elijah and Elisha, were both most extraordinary men. Of the former, it is difficult to say whether he was a man, or an angel in a human body. The arguments for this latter opinion are strong, the objections against it very feeble. His being fed by an angel is no proof that he was not an angel incarnate, for God manifest in the flesh was fed by the same ministry. Of him the following from Ecclesiasticus (chap. 48:1-11) is a nervous character: -

1. Then stood up Elias the prophet as fire, and his word burned like a lamp.
2. He brought a sore famine upon them, and by his zeal he diminished their number.
3. By the word of the Lord he shut up the heaven, and also three times brought down fire.
4. O Elias, how wast thou honored in thy wondrous deeds! and who may glory like unto thee!
5. Who didst raise up a dead man from death, and his soul from the place of the dead, by the word of the Most High:
6. Who broughtest kings to destruction, and honorable men from their bed:

7. Who heardest the rebuke of the Lord in Sinai, and in Horeb the judgment of vengeance:
8. Who anointedst kings to take revenge, and prophets to succeed after him:
9. Who wast taken up in a whirlwind of fire, and in a chariot of fiery horses:
10. Who wast ordained for reproofs in their times to pacify the wrath of the Lord's judgment, before it brake forth into fury; and to turn the heart of the father unto the son, and to restore the tribes of Jacob.
11. Blessed are they that saw thee, and slept in love; for we shall surely live.

Elisha was not less eminent than Elijah; the history of his ministry is more detailed than that of his master, and his miracles are various and stupendous. In many things there is a striking likeness between him and our blessed Lord, and especially in the very beneficent miracles which he wrought. Of him the same author gives this character, Ecclus. 48:12-14: Elisha was filled with his spirit: whilst he lived he was not moved with the presence of any prince; neither could any bring him into subjection. Nothing could overcome him; and after his death his body prophesied, i.e., raised a dead man to life, as we learn from the following verse. He did wonders in his life, and at his death there his works marvellous; perhaps referring to his last acts with Joash.

The bands of the Moabites - Marauding parties; such as those mentioned 2Kgs 5:2.

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2KINGS 13: 21 As they were burying a man, behold, they saw a band of raiders; and they threw the man into Elisha's tomb. As soon as the man touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet.

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#### Verse 21

They spied a band - They saw one of these marauding parties; and through fear could not wait to bury their dead, but threw the body into the grave of Elisha, which chanced then to be open; and as soon as it touched the bones of the prophet, the man was restored to life. This shows that the prophet did not perform his miracles by any powers of his own, but by the power of God; and he chose to honor his servant, by making even his bones the instrument of another miracle after his death. This is the first, and I believe the last, account of a true miracle performed by the bones of a dead man; and yet on it and such like the whole system of miraculous working relics has been founded by the popish Church.

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2KINGS 13: 22 Hazael king of Syria oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz.

2KINGS 13: 23 But the LORD was gracious to them, and had compassion on them, and had respect to them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, neither cast he them from his presence as yet.

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#### Verse 23

And the Lord was gracious unto them - וַיַּיָּאֲחֹן vaiyachon, he had tender affection for them, as a husband has for his wife, or a father for his own children.

And had compassion on them - וַיִּרְחַמֶּם vairachamem, his bowels yearned over them; he felt for them, he sympathized with them in all their distress: Therefore are my bowels troubled; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord, Jer 31:20.

And had respect unto them - וַיַּיִּפֶּן vaiyiphen, he turned face towards them, he received them again into favor; and this because of his covenant with their fathers: they must not be totally destroyed; the Messiah must come from them, and through them must come that light which is to enlighten the Gentiles, and therefore he would not make an entire end of them.

Neither cast he them from his presence as yet - But now they are cast out from his presence; they have sinned against the only remedy for their souls. They sit in darkness and the shadow of death; the veil is upon their face; but if they yet turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.

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2KINGS 13: 24 Hazael king of Syria died; and Benhadad his son reigned in his place.

2KINGS 13: 25 Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz took again out of the hand of Benhadad the son of Hazael the cities which he had taken out of the hand of Jehoahaz his father by war. Joash struck him three times, and recovered the cities of Israel.

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#### Verse 25

Three times did Joash beat him - The particulars of these battles we have not; but these three victories were according to the prediction of Elisha, 2Kgs 13:19. That these victories were very decisive we learn from their fruits, for Joash took from the Syrians the cities which Hazael had taken from Israel: viz., Gilead, the possessions of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, and the country of Bashan; see 2Kgs 10:33.

Thus God accomplished his word of judgment, and his word of mercy. The Syrians found themselves to be but men, and the Israelites found they could do nothing without God. In the dispensations of his justice and mercy, God has ever in view, not only the comfort, support, and salvation of his followers, but also the conviction and salvation of his enemies; and by his judgments many of these have been awakened out of their sleep, turned to God, learned righteousness, and finally become as eminent for their obedience, as they were before for their rebellion.