
2KINGS 21: 1 Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign; and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Hephzibah.

Manasseh succeeds his father Hezekiah, reigns fifty-five years, and fills Jerusalem and the whole land with abominable idolatry and murder, 2Kgs 21:1-9. God denounces the heaviest judgments against him and the land, 2Kgs 21:10-15. Manasseh's acts and death, 2Kgs 21:16-18. Amon his son succeeds him, and reigns two years; is equally profligate with his father; is slain by his servants, and buried in the garden of Uzza; and Josiah his son reigns in his stead, 2Kgs 21:19-26.

Verse 1

Manasseh was twelve years old - He was born about three years after his father's miraculous cure; he was carried captive to Babylon, repented, was restored to his kingdom, put down idolatry, and died at the age of sixty-seven years. See 2 Chronicles 33:1-20.

2KINGS 21: 2 He did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, after the abominations of the nations whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel.

Verse 2

After the abominations of the heathen - He exactly copied the conduct of those nations which God had cast out of that land.

2KINGS 21: 3 For he built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; and he reared up altars for Baal, and made an Asherah, as did Ahab king of Israel, and worshipped all the army of the sky, and served them.

Verse 3

Made a grove - He made Asherah, the Babylonian Melitta or Roman Venus. See 2Kgs 17:10, and the observations at the end of that chapter; and see here on 2Kgs 21:7 (note).

Worshipped all the host of heaven - All the stars and planets, but particularly the sun and the moon.

2KINGS 21: 4 He built altars in the LORD's house, of which the LORD said, "I will put my name in Jerusalem."

Verse 4

Built altars - He placed idolatrous altars even in the temple.

2KINGS 21: 5 He built altars for all the army of the sky in the two courts of the LORD's house.

2KINGS 21: 6 He made his son to pass through the fire, and practised sorcery, and used enchantments, and dealt with those who had familiar spirits, and with wizards: he worked much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.

Verse 6

Made his son pass through the fire - Consecrated him to Moloch.

Observed times - וַעֲוֹן veonen; he practiced divination by the clouds; by observing their course at particular times, their different kinds, contrary directions, etc., etc.

Used enchantments - וַנְּחַשׁ venichesh; he used incantations, spells, and charms.

Dealt with familiar spirits - וַעֲשֵׂה אוֹב veasah ob; he was a necromancer; was a raiser of spirits, whom he endeavored to press into his service; he had a Python.

And wizards - וַיִּדְּעוּ veyiddeonim; the knowing ones, the white witches, and such like; see on Lev 19:26-31 (note), where most of these terms are particularly explained and illustrated.

2KINGS 21: 7 He set the engraved image of Asherah, that he had made, in the house of which the LORD said to David and to Solomon his son, "In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, will I put my name forever;

Verse 7

He set a graven image of the grove that he had made in the house - Every one may see that Asherah here must signify an idol, and not a grove; and for the proof of this see the observations at the end of the chapter, 2Kgs 21:26 (note).

2KINGS 21: 8 neither will I cause the feet of Israel to wander any more out of the land which I gave their fathers, if only they will observe to do according to all that I have commanded them, and according to all the law that my servant Moses commanded them."

Verse 8

Neither will I make the feet of Israel - Had they been faithful to God's testimonies they never had gone into captivity, and should even at this day have been in possession of the promised land.

2KINGS 21: 9 But they didn't listen: and Manasseh seduced them to do that which is evil more than the nations did whom the LORD destroyed before the children of Israel.

Verse 9

Seduced them to do more evil - He did all he could to pervert the national character, and totally destroy the worship of the true God; and he succeeded.

2KINGS 21: 10 The LORD spoke by his servants the prophets, saying,

Verse 10

The Lord spake by - the prophets - The prophets were Hosea, Joel, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Isaiah. These five following verses contain the sum of what these prophets spoke. It is said that Isaiah not only prophesied in those days, but also that he was put to death by Manasseh, being sawn asunder by a wooden saw.

2KINGS 21: 11 "Because Manasseh king of Judah has done these abominations, and has done wickedly above all that the Amorites did, who were before him, and has made Judah also to sin with his idols;

2KINGS 21: 12 therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Behold, I bring such evil on Jerusalem and Judah, that whoever hears of it, both his ears shall tingle.

Verse 12

Both his ears shall tingle - תצלנה titstsalnah; something expressive of the sound in what we call, from the same sensation, the tingling of the ears. This is the consequence of having the ears suddenly pierced with a loud and shrill noise; the ears seem to ring for some time after. The prophets spoke to them vehemently, so that the sound seemed to be continued even when they had left off speaking. This was a faithful and solemn testimony.

2KINGS 21: 13 I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria, and the plummet of the house of Ahab; and I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down.

Verse 13

The line of Samaria - I will treat Jerusalem as I have treated Samaria. Samaria was taken, pillaged, ruined, and its inhabitants led into captivity; Jerusalem shall have the same measure.

And the plummet of the house of Ahab - The house of Ahab was totally destroyed, and not a man of his race left to sit upon the throne of Israel: so shall it be done to the house or royal family of Judah; they shall be all finally destroyed, and not a man of their race shall any more sit on the throne of Judah; nor shall Judah have a throne to sit on. Thus Jerusalem shall have the same weight as well as the same measure as Samaria, because it has copied all the abominations which brought that kingdom to total destruction.

I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish - The Vulgate translates this clause as follows: Delebo Jerusalem, sicut deleri solent tabulae; "I will blot out Jerusalem as tablets are wont to be blotted

out." This is a metaphor taken from the ancient method of writing: they traced their letters with a stile on boards thinly spread over with wax; for this purpose one end of the stile was sharp, the other end blunt and smooth, with which they could rub out what they had written, and so smooth the place and spread back the wax, as to render it capable of receiving any other word. Thus the Lord had written down Jerusalem, never intending that its name or its memorial should be blotted out. It was written down The Holy City, The City of the Great King; but now God turns the stile and blots this out; and the Holy Jerusalem, the City of the Great King, is no longer to be found! This double use of the stile is pointed out in this ancient enigma: -

De summo planus; sed non ego planus in imo:

Versor utrinque manu, diverso et munere fungor:

Altera pars revocat, quicquid pars altera fecit. "I am flat at the top, but sharp at the bottom;

I turn either end, and perform a double function:

One end destroys what the other end has made."

But the idea of emptying out and wiping a dish expresses the same meaning equally well. Jerusalem shall be emptied of all its wealth, and of all its inhabitants, as truly as a dish turned up is emptied of all its contents; and it shall be turned upside down, never to be filled again. This is true from that time to the present hour. Jerusalem is the dish turned upside down, the tablet blotted out to the present day! How great are God's mercies! and how terrible his judgments!

2KINGS 21: 14 I will cast off the remnant of my inheritance, and deliver them into the hand of their enemies. They will become a prey and a plunder to all their enemies;

Verse 14

I will forsake the remnant of mine inheritance - One part (the ten tribes) was already forsaken, and carried into captivity; the remnant (the tribe of Judah) was now about to be forsaken.

2KINGS 21: 15 because they have done that which is evil in my sight, and have provoked me to anger, since the day their fathers came out of Egypt, even to this day."

2KINGS 21: 16 Moreover Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, until he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another; besides his sin with which he made Judah to sin, in doing that which was evil in the sight of the LORD.

Verse 16

Shed innocent blood very much - Like the deities he worshipped, he was fierce and cruel; an unprincipled, merciless tyrant: he slew innocent people and God's prophets.

2KINGS 21: 17 Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and all that he did, and his sin that he sinned, aren't they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

Verse 17

Now the rest of the acts - In 2Chr 33:11, etc., we read that the Assyrians took Manasseh, bound him with fetters, and took him to Babylon; that there he repented, sought God, and was, we are not told how, restored to his kingdom; that he fortified the city of David, destroyed idolatry, restored the worship of the true God, and died in peace.

In 2Chr 33:18, 2Chr 33:19, His prayer unto God is particularly mentioned. What is called his prayer, is found in the Apocrypha, just before the first book of the Maccabees. There are some good sentiments in it; but whether it be that which was made by Manasseh is more than can be proved. Even the Romish Church have not received it among the canonical books.

Are they not written - There are several particulars referred to here, and in 2Chr 33:11-19, which are not found in any chronicles or books which now remain, and what the books of the seers were, mentioned in Chronicles, we cannot tell.

2KINGS 21: 18 Manasseh slept with his fathers, and was buried in the garden of his own house, in the garden of Uzza: and Amon his son reigned in his place.

Verse 18

In the garden of his own house - It was probably a burying-place made for his own family, for Amon his son is said to be buried in the same place, 2Kgs 21:26.

2KINGS 21: 19 Amon was twenty-two years old when he began to reign; and he reigned two years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Meshullemeth the daughter of Haruz of Jotbah.

Verse 19

He reigned two years in Jerusalem - The remark of the rabbins is not wholly without foundation, that the sons of those kings who were idolaters, and who succeeded their fathers, seldom reigned more than two years. So Nadab, the son of Jeroboam, 1Kgs 15:25; Elah, the son of Baasha, 1Kgs 16:8; Ahaziah, the son of Ahab, 1Kgs 22:51; and Amon, the son of Manasseh, as mentioned here, 2Kgs 21:19.

2KINGS 21: 20 He did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, as Manasseh his father did.

2KINGS 21: 21 He walked in all the way that his father walked in, and served the idols that his father served, and worshipped them:

2KINGS 21: 22 and he abandoned the LORD, the God of his fathers, and didn't walk in the way of the LORD.

2KINGS 21: 23 The servants of Amon conspired against him, and put the king to death in his own house.

Verse 23

The servants of Amon conspired - What their reason was for slaying their king we cannot tell. It does not seem to have been a popular act, for the people of the land rose up and slew the regicides. We hear enough of this man when we hear that he was as bad as his father was in the beginning of his reign, but did not copy his father's repentance.

2KINGS 21: 24 But the people of the land killed all those who had conspired against king Amon; and the people of the land made Josiah his son king in his place.

2KINGS 21: 25 Now the rest of the acts of Amon which he did, aren't they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

2KINGS 21: 26 He was buried in his tomb in the garden of Uzza: and Josiah his son reigned in his place.

Verse 26

The garden of Uzza - The family sepulcher or burying-place.

It is said 2Kgs 21:3, 2Kgs 21:7, that "Manasseh made a grove; and he set a graven image of the grove," etc. וַיַּאֲשֶׁם אֶת פֶּסֶל הָאֲשֵׁרָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה vaayasem eth pesel haasherah, asher asah: "And he put the graven image of Asherah, which he had made," into the house.

Asherah, which we translate grove, is undoubtedly the name of an idol; and probably of one which was carved out of wood.

R. S. Jarchi, on Gen 12:3, says, "that אֲשֵׁרָה asherah means a tree which was worshipped by the Gentiles;" like as the oak was worshipped by the ancient Druids in Britain.

Castel, in Lex. Hept. sub voce אֲשֵׁרָה, defines אֲשֵׁרָה asherah thus, Simulacrum ligneum Astartae dicatum; "A wooden image dedicated to Astrate or Venus."

The Septuagint render the words by ἄλσος; and Flamminius Nobilis, on 2Kgs 23:4, says Rursus notat Theodoretus το ἄλσος esse Astartem et Venerem, et ab aliis interpretibus dictum Ashatroth; i.e. "Again Theodoret observes, ἄλσος is Astarte and Venus; and by other interpreters called Ashtaroth."

The Targum of Ben Uzziel, on Deu 7:5, וַאֲשֵׁרֵיהֶם תִּגְדְּעוּן vaasheyrethem tegaddeun; i.e., "Their groves shall ye cut down" - translates the place thus, וְאִילָנֵי סִגְדֵיהוֹן תִּקְצְצוּן, suht ecalp e veilaney sigedeyhon tekatsetsun; "And the oaks of their adoration shall ye cut down."

From the above it is pretty evident that idols, not groves, are generally intended where אֲשֵׁרָה asherah and its derivatives are used.

Here follow proofs: -

In 2Kgs 23:6, it is said that "Josiah brought out the grove from the house of the Lord." This translation seems very absurd; for what grove could there be in the temple? There was none planted there, nor was there room for any. The plain meaning of ויצא את השרה מבית יהוה vaiyotse eth haasherah mibbeyth Jehovah, is, "And he brought out the (goddess) Asherah from the house of the Lord, and burnt it," etc.

That this is the true meaning of the place appears farther from 2Kgs 23:7, where it is said, "He broke down the houses of the sodomites," (הקדשים hakkedeshim, of the whoremongers), "where the women wove hangings for the grove" (בתיים לאשרה bottim laasherah, "houses or shrines for Asherah.") Similar perhaps to those which the silversmiths made for Diana, Act 19:24. It is rather absurd to suppose that the women were employed in making curtains to encompass a grove.

The Syriac and Arabic versions countenance the interpretation I have given above. In 2Kgs 23:6, the former says, "He cast out the idol, dechlotho, from the house of the Lord;" and in 2Kgs 23:7 : "He threw down the houses, dazoine, of the prostitutes; and the women who wove garments, ledechlotho, for the idols which were there." The Arabic is exactly the same.

From the whole it is evident that Asherah was no other than Venus; the nature of whose worship is plain enough from the mention of whoremongers and prostitutes.

I deny not that there were groves consecrated to idolatrous worship among the Gentiles, but I am sure that such are not intended in the above-cited passages; and the text, in most places, reads better when understood in this way.