

CHAPTER 13

INTRODUCTION TO 1 KINGS 13

In this chapter is an account of a man of God being sent to exclaim against Jeroboam's altar, and threaten its destruction, of which he gave a sign, which was accomplished, and with it the withering of the king's hand, which was healed upon the prophet's prayer for him, (^{<1130>}1 Kings 13:1-7), who would have entertained him at his house, but he refused the offer, and departed, (^{<1133>}1 Kings 13:8-10), but an old prophet in Bethel hearing of him, rode after him, and fetched him back to eat bread with him, through a lie he told him, (^{<1131>}1 Kings 13:11-19) upon which the word came to the old prophet, threatening the man of God with death for disobeying his command, and which was accordingly executed by a lion that met him in the way, and slew him, (^{<1133>}1 Kings 13:20-24), of which the old prophet being informed, went and took up his carcass, and buried it in his own sepulchre, where he charged his sons to bury him also when dead, believing that all the man of God had said would be fulfilled, (^{<1135>}1 Kings 13:25-30) and the chapter is closed with observing the continuance of Jeroboam in his idolatry, (^{<1133>}1 Kings 13:33-34).

Ver. 1. *And, behold, there came a man of God out of Judah*, etc.] Whom Josephus ^{f322} calls Jadon, perhaps the same with Iddo, who is by the Jewish writers ^{f323} generally thought to be this man of God, and which may seem to be countenanced by (^{<4129>}2 Chronicles 9:29) but cannot be, because this man was quickly slain, whereas Iddo lived after Rehoboam, and wrote his acts, first and last, nay, after Ahijah his son, (^{<4132>}2 Chronicles 13:22) and for the same reason Shemaiah cannot be the man of God, (^{<1122>}1 Kings 12:22), though Tertullian ^{f324} calls him Sameas, and designs Shemaiah: but, whoever he was, he came

by the word of the Lord to Bethel: that is, by his command:

and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense; at the time he came, (^{<1123>}1 Kings 12:33).

Ver. 2. *And he cried against the altar in the word of the Lord*, etc.] By his order and command:

and said, O altar, altar; addressing himself not to Jeroboam, but the altar, thereby reproving his stupidity, the altar being as ready to hear as he; and because that was what moved the indignation of the Lord; and the word is repeated, to show the vehemency of the prophet's spirit, and his zeal against it; though the Jews commonly say it respects both altars, that at Dan, as well as this at Bethel:

thus saith the Lord, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; who was not born until three hundred years after this, according to the Jewish writers ^{f325}: but it is generally reckoned to be more, even three hundred and fifty or three hundred and sixty years; this is a clear proof of the prescience, predetermination, and providence of God with respect to future events, contingent ones, such as depend upon the will of men; for what more so than giving a name to a child?

upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee; all which was fulfilled by Josiah, (^{<12315>}2 Kings 23:15,16,20), it may be read, "the bones of a man", which the Jews understand of Jeroboam; but may only signify that, instead of the bones of beasts, which were burnt on it, the bones of men should be burnt, and even of the priests themselves; a glaring proof this of the truth of prophecy, and of divine revelation.

Ver. 3. *And he gave a sign the same day, saying, this is the sign which the Lord hath spoken*, etc.] As a confirmation of the truth of what the prophet had said, and for the proof of his being a true prophet of the Lord:

behold, the altar shall be rent; of itself, by an invisible hand, by the power of God:

and the ashes that are upon it shall be poured out; signifying it should be entirely demolished, not only shaken but destroyed, so as not to be capable of retaining the ashes on it; this was an emblem of the utter abolition of idolatry here in future times.

Ver. 4. *And it came to pass, when King Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God, who had cried against the altar in Bethel*, etc.] He was highly provoked: so that he put forth his hand from the altar; on which he was burning incense:

saying, lay hold on him; he put forth his hand, and either shook it at the prophet, threatening what he would do to him; or as beckoning to the people to seize him, and which he also expressed:

and his hand, which he put forth against him, dried up, so that he could not pull it in again to him; he could not move it one way nor another, but it remained in the same position, the nerves and muscles being shrunk; which was a further confirmation of the prophet's mission from God, being one of those concerning whom he says, "do my prophets no harm", and a fresh token of the certain performance of what he had said.

Ver. 5. *The altar also was rent*, etc.] Split into two parts perhaps, and one fell one way, and the other another;

and the ashes poured out from the altar; the ashes of the burnt offering, these were spilled on the ground; all which was done without any outward force, or any visible means thereof:

according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the Lord; by his direction and order.

Ver. 6. *And the king answered and said unto the man of God*, etc.] In another tone than when he bid the people lay hold on him; not in a haughty, but humble manner; not as threatening, but supplicating:

entreat now the face of the Lord thy God; he does not say "my God", for he had apostatized from him, and served other gods, but "thy" God, whose prophet he was, and who had an interest in him, as clearly appeared by what he had said and done by him;

and pray for me, that my hand may be restored me again; not that the anger of God might be turned away from him, and he enjoy the divine favour, and have an application of pardoning grace made to him, only to have this outward mercy, this temporal favour restored to him, the use of his hand:

and the man of God besought the Lord; not rendering evil for evil; but being of a forgiving spirit, though the king had stretched out his hand against him, he lifted up his hands to heaven for him:

and the king's hand was restored again, and became as it was before; which was another instance of divine power, and a further proof of the prophet's divine mission; from whence it might be concluded, that what he

had prophesied of would be fulfilled, and was an instance also of divine goodness to the king, which should have led him to repentance, but did not.

Ver. 7. *And the king said unto the man of God, come home with me, and refresh thyself,* etc.] By eating a meal with him, after such a journey he had taken, and delivered his prophecies, and put up his prayers for the king:

and I will give thee a reward; for his prayers, by means of which his hand was restored to him; but takes no notice of the Lord, the author of this miraculous cure, nor expresses the least degree of thankfulness and gratitude to him.

Ver. 8. *And the man of God said unto the king,* etc.] In answer to his civility to him, to assure him it was not out of contempt to him, or ill will to him, or slight of his favour, but in obedience to the will of God:

if thou wilt give half of thine house; of the riches in it, and even of his kingdom:

I will not go in with thee, neither will I eat bread nor drink water in this place; this idolatrous place; the reason follows.

Ver. 9. *For so it was charged me by the word of the Lord,* etc.] The command of the Lord, by which he came to Bethel, and cried against the altar there, (^{<1133>}1 Kings 13:1,2)

saying, eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that thou camest: signifying that no communion was to be had with idolaters, nor any example to be set and followed; but the way to them, and to their idolatry, was to be shunned and avoided.

Ver. 10. *So he went another way, and returned not by the way that he came to Bethel.*] Neither ate nor drank with the king, though that is not expressed; nor did he go back the same way he came; but in each particular observed the divine command, and was obedient to it.

Ver. 11. *Now there dwelt an old prophet in Bethel,* etc.] The Targum is, a false prophet, so Josephus^{f326}; it is hard to say what he was, a good man or a bad man; if a good man, he was guilty of many things which are not in his favour, as dwelling in such an idolatrous place suffering his sons to attend idolatrous worship, and telling the man of God a premeditated lie; and yet there are several things which seem contrary to his being a bad man, and of

an ill character, since he is called an old prophet, did not attend idolatrous worship, showed great respect to the man of God, had the word of God sent unto him concerning him, believed that what he had prophesied should come to pass, buried the man of God in his own grave, and desired his sons to bury him with him. In some copies his name is said to be Micah, as Kimchi observes, and other Jewish writers^{f327} say the same; though some take him to be Amaziah the priest of Bethel, and others Gersom the son of Moses^{f328}, but without any foundation; though he now dwelt at Bethel, he was originally of Samaria, (^{<12318>}2 Kings 23:18),

and his sons came and told him all the works that the man of God had done that day in Bethel; that the altar was rent, and the ashes poured out, as he had said, and that Jeroboam's hand withered, and was restored upon his prayer to God:

the words which he had spoken unto the king; that one should be born of the family of David, Josiah by name, that should offer the idolatrous priests, and burn the bones of men upon that altar, and that that should be rent, and its ashes poured forth, which was done:

them they told also their father; gave him a particular account of his actions and words.

Ver. 12. *And their father said unto them, what way went he?* etc.] Having a strong inclination to see him, and converse with him:

for his sons had seen what way the man of God went which came from Judah; they took notice of it; and, as the Targum, they showed it to their father.

Ver. 13. *And he said unto his sons, saddle me the ass,* etc.] Which he used to ride on; intimating he had a mind to ride after him, and overtake him, as he might reasonably think he might, since the man of God was on foot:

so they saddled him the ass, and he rode thereon; after the man of God, taking the way his sons directed.

Ver. 14. *And went after the man of God, and found him sitting under an oak,* etc.] To shelter him from the heat, and being faint, hungry, and thirsty; so the ancients of old made use of oaks for a covering, before houses were invented^{f329}; thus Abraham pitched his tent in the plain, or under the oak, of Mamre, (^{<011318>}Genesis 13:18)

and he said unto him, art thou the man of God that camest from Judah? which he might guess at from his habit, and from the description his sons had given of him:

and he said, I am; owned himself to be the person he inquired after.

Ver. 15. *Then said he unto him, come home with me, and eat bread.*] In which invitation no doubt he was hearty, and might have no ill design in it, only to have some conversation with him, as being a good man, and a prophet of the Lord, especially upon the subject of his prophecies at Bethel.

Ver. 16. *And he said, I may not return with thee, nor go in with thee,* etc.]. Into the city, and into his house in it, being such an idolatrous place, and especially being forbidden of God:

neither will I eat bread nor drink water with thee in this place; he was resolute and determined to abide by the commandment of the Lord, though there is reason to believe that he was now both hungry and thirsty.

Ver. 17. *For it was said to me by the word of the Lord,* etc.]. By the angel that was sent to him, who gave him his message and instructions; which he was persuaded came from the Lord himself, and therefore looked upon himself under obligation to regard them as such:

thou shall eat no bread, etc. the same that he observed to the king, (^{<1113>}1 Kings 13:9).

Ver. 18. *And he said unto him,* etc.]. That is, the old prophet said to the man of God:

I am a prophet also as thou art; meaning, that he was a prophet of the true God, and not of any idol deity; that he not only believed in him, and was a worshipper of him, but had revelations from him, and of the same things this man of God had, and that he believed that what he had prophesied of would certainly come to pass:

and an angel spoke unto me by the word of the Lord; was sent and dispatched by the order of the Lord with the following message:

saying, bring him back with thee into thine house, that he may eat bread and drink water; and so be refreshed, and be fit to proceed on in his journey:

[but] he lied unto him; no messenger nor message being sent to him by the Lord, but was wholly a device and stratagem of his own to persuade the man of God to return with him, that he might have his company and conversation.

Ver. 19. *So he went back with him*, etc.] In which he sinned; for as he had most certainly the command of God not to eat and drink in that place, he ought to have had the countermand from the Lord, and not trusted to another person. There are some things indeed which may be said in his favour, and be an apology for him, as that this man was an ancient prophet of the Lord, as he appeared to him; and that though he was forbid to eat and drink with idolaters, yet he thought he might with a prophet of the Lord, and especially as he affirmed he had the direction of an angel of the Lord for it; nor could he conceive that the prophet had any interest to serve by it, but rather it might be chargeable and burdensome to him; and he might think the Lord, out of compassion on him, had countermanded his former orders, and the circumstances he was in might the more incline him to listen to these plausible pretences; but, after all, he ought to have taken no directions but from the Lord himself; in this he failed:

and did eat bread in his house, and drink water; contrary to the express command of God.

Ver. 20. *And it came to pass, as they sat at the table*, etc.] The old prophet, with his sons, and the man of God; the Arabic version adds, “and did eat”, there being a pause in the Hebrew text, as if something was wanting, and to be understood and supplied:

that the word of the Lord came unto the prophet that brought him back; that is, to the old prophet, who was the means of bringing back the man of God; the word did not come to him who had transgressed the command of the Lord, but to him who was the occasion of it; though Abarbinel is of opinion that the word came to the latter, and so some versions, both ancient and modern, render the clause, “to the prophet whom he had brought back”^{f330} and which is countenanced by what is said, (^{<1136>}1 Kings 13:26),

according to the word of the Lord which he spoke unto him: but the former sense best agrees with what follows.

Ver. 21. *And he cried unto the man of God that came from Judah*, etc.] His mind being greatly affected with the word brought to him, partly on his

own account, who, by a lie his conscience must accuse him of, had been the means of seducing the man of God, and partly on his account, who was threatened with death for complying with him:

saying, thus saith the Lord; being obliged to deliver, in the name of the Lord, what was said unto him:

forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed the mouth of the Lord; the order that came out of his mouth, as follows:

and hast not kept the commandment which the Lord thy God commanded thee; not to eat nor drink in Bethel.

Ver. 22. *But camest back, and hast eaten bread and drunk water in the place, of the which the Lord did say to thee, eat no bread, nor drink no water*, etc.] Which command he observed when first there, though invited by the king; and yet, after he had got out of the place, was prevailed upon to return and transgress the command:

thy carcass shall not come unto the sepulchre of thy fathers; signifying that he should die before he came to the land of Judah, and he should be buried in another place, and which was verified.

Ver. 23. *And it came to pass, after he had eaten bread, and after he had drunk*, etc.] That is, had finished the meal; for he had begun to eat and drink before the word came, which came while they were eating and drinking; and it seems this did not hinder their proceeding to make an end of their meal, which one would have thought would have spoiled their appetite:

that he saddled for him the ass, [to wit], for the prophet whom he had brought back; he ordered his sons to get it ready for him, that he might not walk on foot as he had; though it does not appear that either he or any of his servants accompanied him, but the contrary.

Ver. 24. *And when he was gone, a lion met him by the way, and slew him*, etc.] Perhaps not far from Bethel; and this lion might come out of the same wood the she bears did, that devoured the children that mocked the prophet, as Bishop Patrick conjectures, (¹¹²³2 Kings 2:23,24)

and his carcass was cast in the way; in the high road, where it seems the lion seized him, and he fell:

and the ass stood by it; disregarded and unhurt by the lion, though the prophet was pulled off of the back of him:

the lion also stood by the carcass: not offering to tear it in pieces and devour it, but rather, as if he was the guard of it, to keep off all others from meddling with it; these circumstances are very surprising, and show the thing to be of God; for when the lion had done what he had a commission to do, which was to kill the prophet, he was to do no more.

Ver. 25. *And, behold, men passed by*, etc.] Travellers on the road; nor did the lion offer to seize on them, nor desert the carcass upon their approach:

and saw the carcass cast in the way, and the lion standing by the carcass; as before described:

and they came and told it in the city where the old prophet dwelt; which was Bethel, by which means he came to have knowledge of it.

Ver. 26. *And when the prophet that brought him back from the way heard thereof*, etc.] The old prophet, that had deceived him, by telling him a lie:

he said, it is the man of God, who was disobedient unto the word of the Lord; but not a syllable does he say of his own sin in deceiving him; though one would think his own conscience must smite him for it:

therefore the Lord hath delivered him unto the lion, which hath torn him, and slain him, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake unto him; and that by himself, (^{<11123>}1 Kings 13:21,22).

Ver. 27. *And he spoke to his sons, saying, saddle me the ass*, etc.] For it seems he had more than one, for he had sent away the man of God with one before: and they saddled him; the ass he commonly rode on.

Ver. 28. *And he went and found his carcass cast in the way, and the ass and the lion standing by the carcass*, etc.] As before described:

the lion had not eaten the carcass, nor torn the ass; both which were very marvellous; as also that the ass should stand so quietly, and without fear, by the carcass along with the lion and not run away; but here both stayed till the prophet came to take care of the carcass, which shows the singular providence of God in this affair; and that though he chastised the man of God with a temporal judgment for his offence, yet he was dear to him, and even his carcass precious in his sight.

Ver. 29. *And the prophet took up the carcass of the man of God,* etc.] The lion perhaps made off as soon as he came, or, if he stayed, the prophet was not afraid of him, seeing he did not attempt to devour the carcass, nor touch the ass, nor do any hurt to those that passed by:

and laid it upon the ass, and brought it back; to his own city:

and the old prophet came to the city to mourn, and to bury him; to perform the funeral rites, according to the custom of the place.

Ver. 30. *And he laid his carcass in his own grave,* etc.] Which he had prepared for himself; for, as he came from Samaria, it could not be the sepulchre of his fathers; and this was showing all the respect, and doing all the honour to him, he well could:

and they mourned over him; the prophet and his sons: saying,

alas, my brother; which was an usual form of lamentation at funerals in later times, (see ^{<4218>}Jeremiah 22:18).

Ver. 31. *And it came to pass, after he had buried him, that he spoke to his sons, saying,* etc.] He gave them the following charge:

when I am dead, then bury me in the sepulchre wherein the man of God is buried; as it was his own, it might be reasonably thought they would bury him in it without such a charge; but, lest they should not, he gives it:

lay my bones beside his bones; his view in this was, that when Josiah came to burn the bones of the priests, he would spare the bones of this man of God; and so his, lying by them, and mingled with them, would be spared also, and so it proved, (^{<42318>}2 Kings 23:18).

Ver. 32. *For the saying which he cried by the word of the Lord against the altar in Bethel,* etc.] That the priests should be offered on it, and men's bones be burnt upon it; for as for its being rent, and the ashes of it poured out, that had been done already:

and against all the houses of the high places which are in Samaria, shall surely come to pass: by which it appears that there were temples, and high places, and altars built in other parts of the kingdom besides Dan and Bethel, of the destruction of which the man of God prophesied, though not before mentioned; all which the old prophet gave credit to, and firmly believed would be accomplished. The kingdom of Israel, in later times, had

the name of Samaria, from the chief city of it, (~~2300~~Isaiah 7:9), here spoken of by anticipation, for as yet it was not in being, (see ~~11624~~1 Kings 16:24) and either it has its name here by way of prophecy, or else given by the writer of this book, as what it went by in his time.

Ver. 33. *After this thing Jeroboam returned not from his evil way*, etc.] From the idolatrous practices he had started, and was establishing; though he had seen his altar rent, and the ashes poured out as the man of God predicted, his own hand withered, and that restored again upon the prayer of the prophet; and though he had heard of the death he died for his disobedience to the command of God, and the several marvellous things that attended it; these were so far from reforming him, that he seemed to be the more hardened thereby:

but made again of the lowest of the people priests of the high places: and officiated there, and indeed those of the tribe of Levi would not serve there, and therefore were expelled their cities; (see ~~44114~~2 Chronicles 11:14).

Ver. 34. *And this thing became sin unto the house of Jeroboam*, etc.] All the above things were sins in themselves, as building high places, and putting priests in them, whoever would; but the sense is, that these were the causes of punishment, or of evil things being inflicted on Jeroboam's family; sin is put for the punishment of sin, as it often is:

even to cut it off, and to destroy it from off the face of the earth; so that it become utterly extinct; and the next thing we hear of is the sickness and death of his son.