

The First Book of Kings

1

And now David had grown old, and so chilled with age that there was no warming him by heaping coverlets on his bed; so his attendants asked leave of him to go and find a young maid, who should be brought to the court and cherish him by sleeping in his bosom, to give their royal master warmth. And out of all the fair maids in Israel they chose one, Abishag from Shunem, who was brought into the king's presence; a fair maid indeed, who now shared the king's bed and waited on him, yet never did the king mate with her.

Meanwhile Adonijah, David's son by Haggith, aspired to win the throne; he must drive in state, with chariots and outriders, and fifty men to run before him; and never a word did his father say to check or challenge him. He came next to Absalom in birth, and was like Absalom for beauty. Joab, son of Zeruiah, and the priest Abiathar were in his confidence; but, while these favored Adonijah's cause, he could not win over the priest Zadok, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada, and the prophet Nathan, Shimei and Rei and the picked men of David's army.

Adonijah, then, would offer sacrifice of rams and calves and other fattened beasts at the Stone of Zoheleth, by the spring Enrogel; bidding his brother princes there as guests, and the men of Judah that were in David's service, but not the prophet Nathan, or Benaiah, or the leaders of the army, or his brother Solomon.

Thereupon Nathan said to Solomon's mother Bathsheba, "Have you heard the news that Haggith's son Adonijah has come to the throne, and our lord King David none the wiser? Act quickly, following the advice I now give you, if you would protect yourself, and your son Solomon, from mortal peril.

"Go and demand access to King David's presence; ask him openly, 'My lord King, did you not promise me, your handmaid, upon oath, to let my son Solomon be your heir, and succeed to your throne? How comes it that Adonijah is king?' And while you are still speaking, I will come in after you, and lend weight to these words of yours."

So Bathsheba gained access to the king's own room, where he sat, an old, old man, with Abishag the Shunammite in attendance on him. Low was the reverence Bathsheba made, and when the king asked what was her will, she answered, "My lord, you did swear to me by the Lord your God that my son Solomon should be your heir, and succeed to your throne; and here is Adonijah already reigning, while you, my lord king, are kept in ignorance.

"Nay, he has sacrificed bulls, fattened beasts, and rams without number, with the priest Abiathar, and Joab, the commander of your men, for his guests, and all the princes except your servant Solomon. My lord king, all Israel looks to you for a sign, to know who shall sit on your royal throne after you. How shall we fare, my son Solomon and I, when the king's grace has been laid to rest with his fathers? Our lives will be forfeit."

She was still speaking with the king when the prophet Nathan arrived, and word was brought in that the prophet Nathan was in attendance. So in he came, and made his reverence before the king, with his face bowed to the ground.

"Lord King," he said, "was it your decree that Adonijah should be your heir, and succeed to your throne? Away he goes, to offer up bulls, fatten beasts, and rams without number; all the

princes are summoned to the feast, and the chiefs of the army, and the priest Abiathar; and there they sit, eating and drinking, while the cry goes up, 'Long live King Adonijah!' As for me, your servant, and the priest Zadok, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada, and Prince Solomon, no summons came to us. Can it be that the king's grace has made this decree, without a word to me, his servant, to say who should succeed my lord the king on his throne?"

"Send for Bathsheba," King David answered; and when she had come in, and stood there in the royal presence, the king took an oath: "As the Lord is a living God, he who has preserved my life against all perils, my sworn word to you, in the name of the Lord God of Israel, that your son Solomon should be my heir and succeed to my throne, shall be fulfilled this day."

And Bathsheba, bowing her face to the ground, did reverence; "Unending life," said she, "to my lord King David!"

Then King David would have the priest Zadok, and the prophet Nathan, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada, summoned to his presence, and when these waited on him, his orders were:

"Take the royal troops with you, and escort my son Solomon, mounted upon my own mule, to Gihon; there let him be made king of Israel, with the priest Zadok and the prophet Nathan to anoint him; there sound the trumpet, and make proclamation, 'Long live King Solomon!' Then bring him back, to sit on my throne and reign instead of me; to him I commit the charge of Israel and Judah alike."

And Benaiah son of Jehoiada cried, "Well said! May the Lord, the God who protects the king's grace, decree no otherwise; as he has been with you, so may he be with your son, and make Solomon's throne more glorious than the throne of David himself."

Then Zadok and Nathan and Benaiah, mustering the Cherethites and the Pelethites, mounted Solomon on King David's own mule, and escorted him to Gihon; there, with a vial of oil brought out from the tabernacle, the priest Zadok anointed Solomon king; and they sounded the trumpet, while the cry went up everywhere, "Long live King Solomon!" All the common folk went with him, and there was playing of flutes and great rejoicing, till earth echoed again with the noise of it.

It reached Adonijah and his guests when the banquet was already over; and Joab, as he heard the cries of the multitude, began asking what this uproar in the city might mean. The words were still on his lips when Jonathan approached, that was son to the priest Abiathar.

"Come in," cried Adonijah; "a brave fellow such as you are surely brings good news."

"Of that have I none," Jonathan answered him; "our lord King David has given the throne to Solomon. Mounted on the royal mule, with the priest Zadok and the prophet Nathan and Benaiah son of Jehoiada, with the Cherethites, too, and the Pelethites for his escort, he has ridden to Gihon, where Zadok and Nathan anointed him king. And now they have come back in triumph, and all the city is echoing with it; that is the noise which has reached your ears. There Solomon sits on the royal throne, while the courtiers shower blessings on our lord King David, praying God to make Solomon's renown greater than his, Solomon's domains wider than his; and he, lying on his bed, cries out in adoration, 'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, that has given me this day an heir to my throne, while I still have eyes to see it!'"

His words spread terror, and all Adonijah's guests rose up, and scattered to their homes. As for Adonijah himself, in his great fear of Solomon he left the place and made his way to the altar, and clung to one of its horns. So news came to Solomon that Adonijah, in fear of his

royal brother, was clinging to the altar's horn, crying out, "I must have King Solomon's oath this day that my life shall be spared!"

"Why," answered Solomon, "prove he a loyal man, never a hair shall fall from his head; if he is found to be plotting mischief, he shall die for it." Then he sent to bring him away from the altar, and Adonijah came into King Solomon's presence, and did reverence there. And with that, Solomon sent him away to his house.

2

And now the time drew near when David must die; but first he left with his son Solomon this charge. "I am going," said he, "the way all mortal things go at last; do you keep your courage high and play the man. Hold ever true to the Lord your God, following the paths he has shown us, observing his ceremonies, and all those commands and awards and decrees that are contained in the law of Moses; so shall you be well advised in all you do, at every turn of the way. So will the Lord make good his promise to me, that if my sons would but tread those paths of his, still proving loyal to him with the whole purpose of their heart and soul, the throne of Israel should never lack one of my race to fill it."

"And now to speak of Joab, son of Zeruah. You know well the ill turn he has done me; here were two commanders of the Israelite army, Abner son of Ner and Amasa son of Jether, that fell by his hand. They were at peace with him when he struck the warrior's blow, stained himself, from the shoes on his feet to the girdle on his loins, with the blood that should have been spilled in war. Let prudence be your guide, do not allow those grey hairs to find a peaceful end.

"To the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite you must show gratitude, and let them be among those who eat at your table; they made me welcome when I fled to escape from your brother Absalom.

"You have to reckon, moreover, with Shimei son of Gera, the Benjamite from Bahurim. Foul were the curses he hurled at me on my way to the Encampment; but when I crossed the Jordan again he came out to meet me, and I swore to him in the Lord's name that I would not slay him. You have no cause to leave him unharmed; you have wit enough to resolve what to do with him, how to prepare a bloody end for his grey hairs."

So David was laid to rest with his fathers, and the City of David was his burial-place; he had ruled Israel forty years, seven at Hebron and thirty-three at Jerusalem. And Solomon, who succeeded as his father's heir, established himself firmly on the throne.

As for Adonijah, son of Haggith, he gained access to Bathsheba, King Solomon's mother, telling her that he came on a peaceful errand; there was a matter he would confide to her. So she bade him speak out, but still he hesitated; "Once," said he, "the throne was mine, and all Israel had chosen me for their king; now the royal power has changed hands, and gone to my brother; it was God's will. There is only one request now that I would make of you; pray do not disappoint me." And still she bade him speak out.

"My request is," said he, "that you would say a word for me to King Solomon; there is nothing he can refuse you. Bid him give me Abishag the Shunammite for my wife."

"Why, yes," answered Bathsheba, "I will speak to the king on your behalf." Bathsheba, then, made her way to King Solomon, to prefer Adonijah's request; the king rose to meet her and

bowed low, then he sat down on his throne again, and a throne was brought for her, the king's mother, to sit down at his right hand.

"There is a light request," she told him, "that I would make of you; pray do not disappoint me."

"Make your request, mother," said he; "I will not turn a deaf ear to it."

"It is," said she, "that your brother Adonijah should be given Abishag the Shunammite for his wife."

But this was King Solomon's answer to his mother, "What, Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? Ask me to give him the kingdom, too; he is my elder brother, and has the priest Abiathar, and Joab son of Zeruiah, to maintain his cause."

And hereupon King Solomon took an oath in the Lord's name; "May the Lord punish me as I deserve, and more than I deserve, if this plea Adonijah has made does not cost him his life! As the Lord is a living God, he that has established me firmly on my father David's throne, and made the dynasty mine, as he promised, Adonijah shall die this day!"

So King Solomon gave orders to Benaiah son of Jehoiada, and by his hand Adonijah was put to death. The king had a command, too, for the priest Abiathar; "Go back to your lands at Anathoth. Nothing better do you deserve than death, but I will spare your life this day; yours it was to carry the ark in my father's presence, and to share all the perils he endured." Thus King Solomon deprived Abiathar of his priesthood, in fulfillment of that sentence which the Lord passed on the race of Eli, long ago at Shiloh.

Tidings of this came to Joab, that had taken part with Adonijah, not with Solomon; and he took refuge in the Lord's tabernacle, where he clung to one of the altar horns. And King Solomon, hearing he had fled to the tabernacle and was to be found there, close by the altar, sent Benaiah son of Jehoiada with orders to kill him. So Benaiah went to the Lord's tabernacle and bade Joab remove from it, in the king's name. "Not I," said Joab, "I will die here."

When Benaiah brought tidings of the answer Joab had made him, the king said, "Let him have his will; put him to death there, and give him burial. Only rid me, and my father's kindred, of the blood-guilt Joab has brought upon us. On his head may the Lord's vengeance fall; did he not slay two innocent men that were his betters, Abner son of Ner that commanded Israel, and Amasa son of Jether that commanded Judah, drawing his sword on them with no word said to my father, King David? On Joab let the blood-guilt fall, and on his race for ever; to David and David's race, to David's throne and dynasty, may the Lord grant eternal prosperity!"

With that, Benaiah son of Jehoiada went back and gave Joab his death blow. He was buried at his own home, out in the wilderness; command of the army the king gave to Benaiah son of Jehoiada, and the high-priesthood to Zadok instead of Abiathar.

Then the king bade Shimei come before him; "You must build yourself a house," he told him, "here at Jerusalem, and come to live there, instead of travelling freely this way and that. The day on which you leave Jerusalem to cross the river Kidron shall be your last, and the blame will lie only on yourself."

To this Shimei agreed, promising obedience to the royal command; and for a long time he continued to live at Jerusalem. Then, after three years, it chanced that some of his servants ran away, and took refuge with Achish son of Maacah, king of Gath. And when Shimei was told that

his servants were in Gath, he saddled his ass for a journey; to Gath he went and to the court of Achish in search of them, and brought them home with him.

The news that Shimei had journeyed to Gath and back reached Solomon's ears, and thereupon he sent for him. "Did I not bind you by an oath in the Lord's name," said he, "warning you that the day when you should begin to travel this way and that should be your last? And did you not agree to the conditions I made? Forgotten, your oath to the Lord, forgotten, the warning I gave you!"

Then he added, "Bethink you, for it rankles yet in your heart, of your malice towards my father King David. Now the Lord has made your ill will recoil on yourself; it is a blessing, not a curse, King Solomon inherits, and David's dynasty remains firm on the throne, to serve the Lord for ever." Then the king gave orders to Benaiah son of Jehoiada, and he followed Shimei out and put him to death.

3

By now, Solomon's power was firmly established, and he allied himself by marriage to the king of Egypt, whose daughter he wedded. He took her to live in the City of David; not yet had he built his own palace, or the Lord's house; not yet had he finished walling in Jerusalem. In those days, the Lord had no temple built for him, and men used to sacrifice on hilltops.

Great love had Solomon for the Lord, and followed the counsel of his father David, though indeed he too went to mountain shrines, to sacrifice and offer up incense. Once he had betaken himself to Gibeon, where there was a famous mountain shrine, to worship there; a thousand victims King Solomon offered in burnt sacrifice, there on the altar at Gibeon. And that night the Lord appeared to him in a dream, bidding him choose what gift he would.

"You have been very merciful," answered Solomon, "to my father David, a servant of yours that ever showed himself loyal and observant, and kept his heart true to you; and one great mercy you did keep till the last; you have granted the succession to a son of his own, the man you see.

"Yes, Lord God, you have bidden this servant of yours reign where his father reigned; but, Lord, what am I? No better than a little child, that has no skill to find its way back and forth. And here am I, your servant, lost among the thousands of the people you have chosen, a people whose numbers are beyond all count and reckoning.

"Be this, then, your gift to your servant: a heart quick to learn, so that I may be able to judge your people's disputes, and discern between good and ill. How else should a man sit in judgment over such a people as this, great as your people is great?"

The Lord listened, well pleased, and looked with favor on the choice he had made.

"For this request of yours," he told Solomon, "you shall be rewarded. You did not ask for a long life, or riches, or vengeance upon your enemies, but for wisdom to administer justice.

"Your prayer is granted; hereby I grant you a heart full of wisdom and discernment, beyond all that went before you or shall come after you. And I grant you, moreover, all you did not ask for; in wealth, in glory, no king that ever was may compare with you. And if you will follow the paths I have chosen for you, as your father did, keeping charge and commandment of mine, long life you shall have, too."

With that, Solomon awoke; it was a dream. But when he came back to Jerusalem, he stood before the ark that bears record of the Lord's covenant, and brought burnt sacrifice, and made welcome-offerings, with a great feast for all his servants.

And now two women, harlots both of them, came and stood in the royal presence.

"Justice, my lord!" said one of them. "This woman and I share a single house, and there, in her presence, I gave birth to a child; three days after my delivery, she too gave birth. We were still living together; none else was in the house but we two.

"Then, one night, she lay upon her child as she slept, and it died. So, rising at dead of night, when all was still, she took my son from beside me, my lord, while I slept, put him in her own bosom, and her dead son in mine. In the morning, when I raised myself to give my child suck, a dead child was there; and it was not till I looked at it more closely under the full light of day that I found this was never the child I bore."

And when the other woman said, "No, it is your child that is dead, mine that is alive," she persisted in answering, "You lie; it is my child that lives, yours that is dead." Such was the angry debate they held in the king's presence.

"See," said the king, "it is all, 'My child lives and yours is dead,' on the one side, and 'Your child is dead and mine lives,' on the other. Bring me a sword."

So a sword was brought out before the king. "Cut the living child in two," he said, "and give half to one, half to the other."

Whereupon the true mother of the living child, whose heart went out to her son, cried out, "No, my lord, give her the living child; never kill it!"

Not so the other; "Neither mine nor thine," she said; "let it be divided between us."

"No," said the king, "do not kill the living child, give it to the first; she is its mother."

This award was talked of throughout all Israel, and men feared the king, that was so inspired by divine wisdom in the judgments he gave.

4

All the tribes of Israel were under King Solomon's rule. These are the names of his ministers: Azariah, son of the priest Zadok; and the two sons of Shisha, Elihoreph and Ahijah, were secretaries; Jehoshaphat, son of Ahilud, kept the records; Benaiah, son of Jehoiada, commanded the army; Zadok and Abiathar were the chief priests; Azariah, son of Nathan, was head of the royal prefects; Zabud, son of Nathan, a priest, was the king's privy counsellor; Ahishar was controller of the household; and Adoniram, son of Abda, controller of the revenues.

Solomon appointed twelve commissioners in the various parts of Israel to secure the maintenance of the king and his court, each of them providing the revenues needed for one month in the year. They were these: the son of Hur, for the hill country of Ephraim; the son of Deker for Makaz, Shaalbim, Bethshemesh, Elon and Bethhanan; the son of Hessed for Arubboth, with Socoh and the whole of Hopher; the son of Abinadab, who married Solomon's daughter Taphath, for the whole of Naphath-dor. Baana, son of Ahilud, for Taanach and Megiddo and the whole region of Bethshean (close by Zarethan that lies under Jezreel) from Bethshean itself to Abel-meholah, that faces Jokmeam. The son of Geber for Ramoth-gilead, with the townships

Jair, son of Manasseh, conquered in Gilead; he controlled all the Argob district of Bashan, containing sixty great walled cities that had bolts of bronze. Ahinadab, son of Iddo, for Mahanaim; Ahimaaz (husband of Solomon's daughter Basemath) for Naphtali; Baana, son of Hushai, for Asher and Bealoth; Jehoshaphat, son of Paruah, for Issachar; Shimei, son of Elah, for Benjamin; Geber, son of Uri, for Gilead, that once belonged to the Amorite king Sihon and to Og, king of Bashan; for all that country he alone was answerable.

So Judah and Israel, countless in number as the sand by the sea, ate, drank, and were merry. As for Solomon, he bore rule over all the kingdoms between Euphrates and the Philistine country, right up to the frontiers of Egypt, enjoying the tribute they brought him and the service they did him all his life long. Sixty quarters of flour went every day to Solomon's household, and a hundred and twenty of meal, ten oxen from the stall, and twenty from the meadow, and a hundred rams; besides venison of red deer and roe deer and gazelle, and farmyard birds. All the country that lies west of the Euphrates, from Tiphseh to Gaza, was subject to him, with all the kings that dwelt in those parts; look about him where he would, all was peace. As long as the reign of Solomon lasted, Judah and Israel lived secure from alarm, each man under vine and fig tree of his own, all the land's length from Dan to Beersheba. Forty thousand stalls King Solomon had for his chariot horses, and twelve thousand mounted men; the keep of these was a charge on the royal commissioners aforesaid, beside the great ado they had to furnish the king's table month by month; barley and straw for horse and mule must be conveyed to this place or that, according to the king's own movements.

Wisdom, too, God gave to Solomon, and great discernment, and a store of knowledge wide as the sand on the seashore. For that, no king of the east or of Egypt could vie with him, of all men the wisest; wiser than Ethan the Ezrahite, or Heman, or Calcol, or Darda, that were sons of Mahol; no nation round about but had heard of his fame. Three thousand parables King Solomon uttered, and of songs he made a thousand and five; and he discoursed of all the trees there are, from the cedar on Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out from the wall; and of beasts, and birds, and creeping things, and fish. From all peoples and all kings of the world, when his fame reached them, men came to take back word of Solomon's wisdom.

5

Messengers, too, were sent by Hiram, king of Tyre, when he heard that Solomon had been anointed king in place of his father David, that had ever been Hiram's friend. And this message Solomon sent to Hiram in return;

"My father David, as you know, was for building a house in honor of the Lord his God; but there were threats of war all about him, and he must needs defer his purpose till the Lord should have crushed his enemies under his feet. Now, the Lord my God has given me security on every side; neither foe nor ill chance assails me, and I have a mind to build a temple dedicated to the Lord my God. He himself promised my father David, 'The son I will give you for your successor shall build a house in honor of my name.' If you will bid your workmen to cut down cedars for me in Lebanon, and let my workmen take part with yours, your workmen shall have whatever pay you demand. As you know, there is no woodman's craft among my people such as the Sidonians have."

When Solomon's message reached Hiram, great was the joy it gave him; "Blessed be the Lord God," said he, "for what he has done this day, in granting David so wise a son to rule so populous a kingdom." Then he sent Solomon his answer:

"I have heard your message, and therewith granted your request; cedar and fir you shall have to your heart's content. My workmen shall convey them from Lebanon to the sea; on the sea I will embark them in rafts for whatever port you shall name; and when I have landed them there, it shall be your part to carry them away. And meanwhile, you shall supply the needs of my own household."

So Hiram gave Solomon cedar and fir wood to his heart's content, while Solomon provided Hiram with forty thousand quarters of wheat to feed his household, and forty quarters of pure oil; such was the payment he made each year. Solomon had the gift of wisdom the Lord had promised him; he kept peace with Hiram, and a treaty was made between them.

And now Solomon picked out Israelites for his workmen, levying thirty thousand of them to that end; and he used to send them to Lebanon for a month at a time by turns, so that each man should spend two out of every three months at home; it was Adoniram who was in charge of the levy. Seventy thousand men King Solomon had to carry loads for him, and eighty thousand to cut wood on the mountainside, not counting the overseers who were in charge of the work done, three thousand three hundred overseers to give the workmen their orders. And the king bade them bring great stones, costly stones, to be the foundations of his temple, and to hew them into shape. This work of hewing was shared between Solomon's masons and Hiram's; and the men of Gebal, too, prepared wood and stone for the building of the house.

6

It was in the four hundred and eightieth year after the Israelites left Egypt, in the second month (Ziv, as it is called) of the fourth year of Solomon's reign in Israel, that the building of the Lord's house began.

This house built by Solomon in the Lord's honor was sixty cubits long, twenty wide, and thirty high; in front of the temple was a porch whose length, like the width of the temple itself, was twenty cubits, but it was only ten cubits wide. Slanting windows he made to light his temple, and about its walls he built storied galleries, that ran all round the sides of the temple and its shrine with penthouses round about them; the lowest of these galleries was five, the middle six, and the highest seven cubits broad; and they rested on beams close to the outside of the building all about, they were not attached to the temple walls.

All the time the temple was a-building, the stones used were ready hewn and shaped, so that there was no ringing of hammer or axe or iron tool in the house itself, while it was being built.

There was a door in the middle of the penthouse on the southern side of the building; from this a spiral staircase led to the first floor, and another to the top floor. When he had finished building the walls of the house, Solomon covered it in with cedar rafters; then, over the whole of it, he built an added story five cubits high, and roofed the house with planks of cedar.

This was a message the Lord sent to Solomon: "So you are building me a house? Follow, then, my commandments, execute my decrees, hold fast to all the laws I have given you, and by

these guide your steps. So I will grant you fulfillment of the promise I made to your father David; I will come and live among the sons of Israel, and not forsake my people any more.”

So Solomon pressed on with the building of the house, until all was finished. Its walls within were cedar-paneled, from the floor to the top of the walls, where the rafters sprang, no panel but was of cedar; only the floor was covered with planks of fir. The furthest part of the temple was cedar-paneled to a height of twenty cubits from top to bottom; it was this inmost recess that he made into a shrine, a place all holiness, and before the doors of this shrine the remaining forty cubits of length made up the temple proper. All was cedar paneling, rounded and fitted with the craftsman’s utmost skill, embossed with carving, cedar everywhere, and no stone in the walls allowed to shew itself. And there in the midst, in the inmost part of the building, stood the shrine in which the ark of the Lord was to rest; twenty cubits in length, width, and height, and covered with plates of pure gold; plated, too, was the cedar altar. Then he covered all the rest of the building, the anteroom of the shrine, with plates of pure gold, fastened with golden nails. Nothing in the temple but was sheathed in gold, the altar that stood before the shrine with the rest.

Within the shrine stood two cherubim, made of olivewood, ten cubits high; each of these had wings of five cubits’ breadth, so that there was ten cubits’ distance between the tips of them. The second cherub matched the first in height, no difference of size or of workmanship between them. Ten cubits high they stood, there in the midst of the inner shrine, each touching the wall with one wing and its fellow’s wing with the other. The cherubim, too, he plated with gold. All the walls of the temple were adorned with bands of carved and embossed work, cherubim and palm trees and other patterns, standing out in high relief; the floor, within the sanctuary and without, he covered with gold.

At the entrance to the shrine he made doors of olivewood, between five-sided pilasters; doors of olivewood, carved with figures of cherubim and palm trees, and other sculptures in high relief; doors and cherubim and palm trees and all the rest were covered with gold. At the entrance to the temple were square posts of olivewood; and the door on either side was of fir wood; each door was double, but the two halves were connected, so that they opened together. Cherubim, and palm trees, and other sculptures stood out in high relief, and he covered all with gold plates squared by rule. He also built an inner courtyard, whose walls had three courses of dressed stone and one of cedar wood.

So, in the month of Ziv of the fourth year of his reign, the foundations of the building were laid; and it was finished, in all its parts and with all its appurtenances, in the eighth month (Bul, as it is called) of his eleventh year; so that it was seven years in building.

Then, for thirteen years, Solomon was engaged in building a palace for himself; so long was it before all was finished. It was then that he set up the building known as the Forest of Lebanon. This was a hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide, and thirty cubits high, containing four galleries that ran between pillars cut from the trunks of cedars; he roofed it in, too, with cedar rafters, supported by forty-five pillars. The galleries were divided by rows of fifteen pillars placed at fixed intervals so as to face one another, with equal spaces between pillar and

pillar; and these supported square beams of cedar that matched one another. There was a pillared hall fifty cubits long and thirty wide, and a second hall in front of it, with pillars to support the architrave. And there was a hall containing his judgment-seat, paneled in cedar from floor to ceiling; within it was a private apartment which he used when he was administering justice. The house he built for Pharaoh's daughter that he had married was of the same workmanship as this hall.

All was built of costly stone, cut to exact shape and measure within and without, from top to bottom of the walls, from the entrance up to the great courtyard; the foundations, too, were of costly stones, some ten, some eight cubits long; nor were the stones above less in measurement, with cedar panels to match them. The great courtyard, which was round, had three courses of dressed stone and one of planed cedar wood; thus the court around the palace porch was to match the inner court of the temple.

There was a craftsman named Hiram, living at Tyre, that King Solomon sent for; his father had been a Tyrian, but his mother, now a widow, belonged to the tribe of Naphtali. A craftsman in bronze, wise, adroit and skillful at doing a brazier's work; and to do such work King Solomon had now summoned him. Two brazen pillars he made, eighteen cubits in height and twelve in girth, and cast the two capitals of bronze that were to rest on them, each five cubits high, with a pattern of network and of chains cunningly enlaced. There were seven rows of chainwork on either capital, all cast in metal. The pillars, too, had their capitals covered with two rows of pomegranates, all round the network, both pillars alike. On the base of either capital there was a chain of lily-work, four cubits long; it was the remaining part of the capitals, above, that had the network pattern, which went the full round of the pillar; on this second part of them, too, were the rows of pomegranates, two hundred in number. He set up the two pillars before the porch of the temple, calling the one on the right Jachin and the other Boaz. Above the pillars he did work in lily pattern, and so the making of the pillars was finished.

He cast, too, a great round basin of molten work, ten cubits from brim to brim, five cubits high, and with a girth of thirty cubits. Under the rim ran a molding ten cubits long; two rows of fluted molding, all cast in metal. The basin stood on the figures of twelve oxen, three facing north, three west, three south, three east, so resting on them that their hindquarters, turned inwards, could not be seen. The basin was three inches thick, and its brim curved as the brim of a cup does, or a lily-leaf; it held sixty-four tuns.

He also made ten brazen stands for smaller basins, four cubits long, four cubits wide, and three cubits high. Even these stands were of embossed work; there was molding between the shafts; molding, too, between the upper and the lower rims, of lions and bulls and cherubim, and between the shafts above them the same pattern; and under the lions and oxen hung thongs, as it were, of bronze. Each stand had four wheels, with axles of bronze; and on each of its four corners it had a bracket of molten work, to take the basin, four brackets facing one another at opposite corners. These supported a rest on which the extremity of the basin was to stand; a round rest which measured a cubit across, or a cubit and a half with the basin. At the corners round it there were engraved columns, and the space between them was filled by other columns, square, not round. The four wheels were at the four corners of the stand, each pair connected under the stand itself; every wheel was a cubit and a half in height; such wheels were they as might be found in a chariot, axles and spokes and rims and naves all of molten work, just as the

four brackets, springing from the corners of each stand, were of molten work and part of the stand itself. At the top of each stand was a round rim, half a cubit across, carefully made so that the foot of the basin could rest upon it; a rim covered with engraving, that had embossed work springing from it. The rings of which I have spoken were of bronze, and around these, and at the corners about them, were cherubim and lions and palm trees, standing out like statues, as if they had been added on, instead of being cast with the rest. Thus he made the ten stands, all alike in the manner of their casting, in their measurements, and in their figured work.

Then he made the ten bronze basins, each holding three hundred gallons, four cubits across, and set one basin on each stand. Five of the stands were on the right side of the temple, five on the left, and the great basin itself on the right, towards the southeast.

Pot and shovel and bucket Hiram made, all that King Solomon needed for the service of the Lord's temple. He made the two pillars; and the chainwork for their capitals, and the network to cover the chainwork; and four hundred pomegranates to go with the network, two rows of them for each piece of network, to adorn the capitals of the pillars; ten stands, and a basin for each stand; the single great basin, and the twelve oxen that supported it; and pot and shovel and bucket besides.

All the appurtenances of the Lord's temple which Hiram made for Solomon were of burnished bronze, and the king had them cast in the clay soil of the Jordan valley, between Succoth and Zarethan; a great multitude of them, such a multitude that he did not reckon the weight of all the bronze he used.

Other appurtenances, too, of the Lord's house did Solomon make: the golden altar, and the golden table upon which the hallowed loaves were set out; the golden lampstands, five on the right and five on the left, in front of the shrine, all of pure gold; the lily-work, and the golden lamps that rested in them; the golden tongs, and pot and fork and bowl and saucer and censer, all of pure gold. Of gold, too, were the door hinges, both for the inner sanctuary and for the temple building. Thus Solomon completed all the work needed for the service of the Lord's house; and he brought into it all the silver and gold and other ware that his father David had consecrated, laying them up among its treasures.

8

Then all the elders of Israel, the chiefs of the tribes, and the heads of clans, met in Jerusalem to help King Solomon bring the ark home; the ark then rested in the City of David, which we call Zion. It was on the great feast day of the seventh month (Ethaniam, as it is called) that King Solomon sent out this summons to the whole of Israel, and the elders, one and all, came in answer to it. The priests took up the ark, and soon ark and tabernacle and all the tabernacle's appurtenances were borne aloft, with priests and Levites to carry them. King Solomon walked before the ark, and with him all the throng of Israelites that had assembled; no reckoning made, no count taken, of the sheep and oxen they offered up as victims. So the ark that bears witness of the Lord's covenant was borne by the priests to the place designed for it, there in the temple's inner shrine, where the cherubim spread their wings; spread them over the very place where the ark rested, to protect it and protect the poles that bore it. These poles jutted out indeed, so that the ends of them could be seen by one standing before the shrine, beyond the

limits of the inner sanctuary; but never again were they seen in the open; they have remained in the temple to this day. And nothing was in the ark except the two stone tablets Moses laid up there on Mount Horeb, when the Lord made his covenant with the sons of Israel after their escape from Egypt.

As soon as the priests had left the inner sanctuary, the whole of the Lord's house was wreathed in cloud; lost in that cloud, the priests could not wait upon the Lord with his accustomed service; his own glory was there, filling his own house.

"Where the cloud is," cried Solomon, "the Lord has promised to be; it is true, then, the house I have built is to be your dwelling, your throne for ever immovable." With that, the king turned to bless the whole assembly of Israel; all Israel, that stood to receive his blessing.

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel," he said, "who has now fulfilled in act the promise he made to my father David. So many years since he had rescued his people from Egypt, and never a city among all the tribes of Israel had he chosen to be the site of his dwelling place or the shrine of his name; but a man he did choose out to rule his people: King David. And when he, my father, would have built a house in honor of the Lord God of Israel, the Lord told him that he had done well to conceive such a purpose in his heart; 'But it is not for you,' he said, 'to build me a house. A house shall be built in my honor, but by your son, the heir of your body.' That promise of his the Lord has fulfilled; I have come forward in my father's place, to sit upon the throne of Israel, as the Lord promised I should; it has been mine to build a house to the honor of the Lord, Israel's God, and to find a home for this ark, witness of the covenant made with our fathers when they escaped from Egypt."

Then Solomon stood before the Lord's altar in full view of all Israel, and lifted his hands to heaven; and thus he prayed: "Lord God of Israel, you reign without rival in heaven and earth, making good your merciful promises to all who follow you with undivided hearts. And you have not disappointed your servant, my father David; your act matches your word; this day, who doubts it? Do not forget, Lord God of Israel, that other promise of yours to David, that he should always have an heir to sit on the throne of Israel, would but his sons guide their steps, like David himself, as in your presence; let that promise, too, Lord God of Israel, be ratified!

"Folly it were to think that God has a dwelling place on earth. If the very heavens, and the heavens that are above the heavens, cannot contain you, what welcome can it offer you, this house which I have built? Yet, O Lord my God, do not let this prayer go all unheeded, that sues for your favor; listen to the cry of entreaty your servant makes before you this day! This I ask, that your eyes should be ever watching, night and day, over this temple of yours, the chosen sanctuary of your name; be this the meeting-place where you will listen to your servant's prayer. Whatever requests I or your people Israel make shall find audience here; you will listen from your dwelling place in heaven, and listening, will forgive.

"Has a man wronged his neighbor, and is he bidden to clear himself of the charge by an oath? Then, if he comes to this house of yours, to swear the lie before your altar, you, in heaven, will be listening, and ready to strike the blow; yours to do justice between your servants, passing sentence on the guilty and avenging the wrong, acquitting the innocent and granting him due redress.

"Are your people of Israel condemned to flee before their enemies, in punishment of the sins they will surely commit? Then, if they come here repentant, and acknowledging your power,

pray to you and plead with you in this temple of yours, do you, in heaven, listen to them, and forgive the sins of your people Israel, and restore them to the land which you gave to their fathers.

“Does the sky bar its gates against them, and give no rain, in punishment for their sins? Then, if they come here acknowledging you with prayer and repentance, and turn away, in their sore need, from their sins, do you, in heaven, listen, and grant your servants the people of Israel forgiveness; teach them to guide their steps aright, and send rain on the land you have given them for their home.

“Is there famine in the land, or pestilence, blight or rust, locust or mildew? Does some enemy press hard on it, besieging our city gates? Many are the forms of plague and sickness, of curse and ban, that may fall upon all Israel without distinction. But each heart knows the wound that galls it; and if any one man stretches out his hand to you in this temple, you, in heaven, your dwelling place, will listen and relent. You know the hearts of all human kind, and will send to each man, according to the dispositions of his heart, the lot his deeds deserve; so will men learn to fear you, long as they live to enjoy the land you gave to our fathers.

“Nay, is it some stranger, with no part in your people Israel, who yet comes here from distant lands for love of your renown? For indeed there will be talk of your renown, of the constraining force your power displays, all the world over. When such a man comes to pray in this temple, you, in heaven, in your secure dwelling place, will listen to the alien’s prayer and will answer it. So all the world shall learn to fear your name, no less than Israel itself, and shall doubt no more that this temple I have built claims your protection.

“Sometimes your people will go out to levy war upon their enemies, here and there at your bidding. Then, as they fall to prayer, let them but turn in the direction of the city you have chosen, the temple I have built there in your honor, and you, in heaven, will listen to their prayer for aid, will maintain their cause.

“But what if they have offended you by their faults? No man but is guilty of some fault; it may be you will give them up, in your anger, into the power of their enemies, and as prisoners they will endure exile in neighboring countries, or countries far away. But ere long, in their banishment, they will come back to you with repentant hearts, crying out, poor exiles, ‘We are sinners, we have done amiss, rebels all!’ In that alien land, the land of their captivity, they will come back to you with all the purpose of their heart and soul. Then, if they turn in prayer towards the land you gave to their fathers, the city of your choice, and the temple I have built there in your honor, you, in heaven, on your peaceful throne, will once more listen to their prayer for aid, will maintain their cause still. You will relent towards your people, though they have sinned against you, will pardon the wrong their transgressions have done you, will melt the hearts of their captors into pity. Are they not your own people, your coveted possession, the men you did rescue from Egypt’s furnace of iron? Ever let your eyes be watchful, to look down upon me, your servant, and upon your people, when they cry for aid; give all their requests a hearing. Have you not set them apart, among all the peoples of the world, to be your coveted possession? Was not this your promise, given through your servant Moses when you did rescue our fathers from Egypt, O Lord our God?”

So prayed King Solomon, so pleaded he with the Lord; and when he had finished, he rose up from before the Lord's altar, where he had knelt on the ground with his hands outstretched towards heaven, and standing there, gave his blessing aloud to the whole assembly of Israel.

"Blessed be the Lord," he said, "that he has given his people of Israel the repose he promised them; of all the hopes his word through Moses gave us, never one has been left unfulfilled. May the Lord our God be with us still, as he was with our fathers, never forsaking us, never casting us away; may he turn our hearts towards himself, ready to follow every path he has shown us, keep every command, observance and decree he bade our fathers keep. May this prayer I have uttered before him plead with the Lord our God day and night, to win redress, for me, and for his people Israel, as the time shall need it; proving to the whole world that the Lord alone is God, there can be no other. Wholly be our hearts given to the Lord our God, ready (as we are ready this day) to live by his laws, and keep true to his commandments."

Then the king and all Israel with him immolated their victims in the Lord's presence; twenty-two thousand oxen and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep were slaughtered as Solomon's welcome-offering to the Lord. Thus the king and the men of Israel dedicated the temple. That day, the king hallowed the middle part of the court before the Lord's house, burning there the burnt sacrifice, and the bloodless offerings, and the fat taken from the welcome-victims; there was no room for these on the brazen altar that stood there in the Lord's presence.

A high festival King Solomon kept at this time before the Lord our God, and with him a great multitude from the whole land of Israel, that stretched from the pass of Hamath down to the river of Egypt. Fourteen days it lasted, a whole week and then a second week; and at last, when the eighth day came, the king sent the people home. So back they went to their dwelling places, rejoicing with full hearts over all the mercies the Lord had shewn to his servant David, and to his own people of Israel.

9

When Solomon had finished building temple and palace, and achieved all his purpose, the Lord appeared to him a second time, as he had appeared to him once at Gibeon.

"I have listened to your prayer," the Lord told him, "to the suit you have preferred before me; and this temple you have built I myself have hallowed, to be the everlasting shrine of my name; never a day but my eyes shall be watching, my heart attentive here.

"Guide your steps, like your father, as in my presence, with an undivided heart and steadfastly; fulfill all that I command, hold true to my observances and my decrees; and I will grant to your line dominion over Israel eternally. Such was my promise to your father David, that he should always have an heir to sit on the throne of Israel.

"But if you and your children are content to turn your backs on me, following me no more, neglecting the commands and observances I have enjoined on you, betaking yourselves to the service and worship of alien gods, then I will sweep Israel away from the land I gave them, and this temple which I have hallowed as the shrine of my name, shall be thrust away out of my sight. Israel shall become a proverb and a byword among all the nations, and this house shall be the monument of its fall. The passerby will stand wondering, and hiss in derision; 'What means it,' he will ask, 'that the Lord has treated this land, this house so cruelly?' And the answer will

come, 'Because they forsook the Lord their God, who rescued their fathers from the land of Egypt, and betook themselves to the worship and service of alien gods; that is why the Lord brought all this ruin upon them.'"

It was twenty years after Solomon had finished the two buildings, temple and palace, that Hiram, king of Tyre, who had sent him the cedar and the fir wood and the gold he needed for his undertaking, received twenty townships from him, belonging to the land of Galilee. And when he came on a visit from Tyre to see the townships Solomon had allotted to him, he liked them but little; "What, brother," he cried, "were these the only cities you could spare me?" And he gave that region the name of Cabul, which it bears to this day. It was twenty thousand talents' weight of gold that Hiram sent to King Solomon.

As for the reasons why King Solomon made such heavy disbursements, they were these; he must build the temple, and the palace, and Millo, and Jerusalem wall, and Hazor, and Megiddo, and Gezer. Gezer had been taken and burnt by the invading army of Pharaoh, king of Egypt; its inhabitants, who were Canaanites, he put to the sword, and later gave it by way of dowry when his daughter married King Solomon. It was for Solomon, therefore, to rebuild it, together with Lower Beth-horon, and Baalath, and Tamar out in the desert. And in general he fortified the unwallied towns in his dominions; he must have cities, too, in which his chariots and horsemen could be quartered. Much else, too, he had the whim to build in Jerusalem, and in Lebanon, and in all parts of his kingdom. (Many of the former inhabitants still remained, not of Israelite stock, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites; and these descendants of the races which Israel could never exterminate, King Solomon made into bondservants, as they are to this day. Among the Israelites, he would make no man his slave; it was from these that he drew his warriors and his courtiers, his princes and his captains, the commanders of his chariots and horsemen.) Five hundred and fifty overseers King Solomon had, to hold the people to their appointed tasks. And no sooner had Pharaoh's daughter removed from the City of David to her new palace, than Solomon set about building up Millo.

Three times a year Solomon offered burnt sacrifice and welcome-offerings on the altar he had made in the Lord's honor, and burned incense in the Lord's presence; and he kept the temple in repair.

King Solomon also built a fleet at Ezion-geber, near Elath on the shore of the Red Sea, in the territory of Edom. In this fleet, Hiram sent men of his own, mariners that had long experience of the sea, to serve with King Solomon's men. They sailed as far as Ophir, and thence brought back to Solomon four hundred and twenty talents' weight of gold.

And now Solomon was visited by the queen of Sheba. She had heard by report of the wisdom with which the Lord's favor had endowed him, and came to make trial of his powers with knotty questions. Magnificent was the retinue with which she entered Jerusalem; spices and abundant gold and precious stones were the lading of her camels. And when she met King Solomon, she told him all the thoughts that exercised her mind; every doubt he resolved, no question of hers but found an answer. And when she saw how wise a man he was, saw, too, the house he had built, the food that was on his table, the lodging of his servants, the order and

splendor of his court, how the wine went round, and what burnt sacrifice he offered in the Lord's temple, she stood breathless in wonder.

And she said to the king, "It was no false tale I heard in my own country, of all you do and of all the wisdom that is yours. I could not believe what they told me, without coming and seeing it for myself; and now I find that half of it was lost in the telling; here is greater wisdom, greater prosperity than all the tales that reached me. Happy your folk, happy these servants of yours who wait ever upon your presence and listen to your wise words. Blessed be the Lord your God, who, in his eternal love for Israel, has brought you, his favorite, to the throne, given you a king's power to do justice and to make award!"

A hundred and twenty talents' weight of gold she gave to King Solomon, with many spices and precious stones; never did such abundance of spices come to Israel as those which the queen of Sheba gave. (Though indeed Hiram's fleet, when it brought back the gold from Ophir, brought rich store of sandalwood, as well as precious stones; and of this sandalwood King Solomon made pedestals for temple and palace, harps and zithers for his musicians; finer sandalwood never reached us, no, nor was ever seen.) Solomon, in his turn, gave the queen of Sheba all she desired and asked for; gave her much, too, unasked, in the royal munificence that was his. And so she went back to her own country, with all her retinue.

The weight of gold that reached Solomon every year was six hundred and sixty-six talents, not counting what was brought him by his revenue officers, merchants and peddlers, from the kings of Arabia, and from his own commissioners. Two hundred shields King Solomon made of the purest gold, allowing six hundred shekels of gold to the plating of each; three hundred bucklers, too, of assayed gold, with three minas of gold to cover each; and all these the king put in the building that was called the Forest of Lebanon. He also made a great throne of ivory, and lined it with gold unalloyed; six steps led up to it, and at the back the upper part of it was rounded. The seat itself had two supporters, with a lion standing by each, and on each step there was a lion at either side; no other kingdom could show such workmanship. Of gold were all the goblets from which King Solomon drank, of purest gold all the furniture in the building called the Forest of Lebanon; no silver was used, for indeed in King Solomon's day silver was little thought of. And every three years the king's fleet and Hiram's would sail to Tarshish, whence they came back laden with gold and silver; with ivory, too, and apes, and peacocks for their freight.

So, both in riches and in wisdom, Solomon outvied all the kings of the world; and from every part of the world men craved his audience, to make proof for themselves of the wisdom God had put in his heart. And all these brought him gifts, so that gold and silver ware, presents of clothes and of armor, spices too, and horses and mules, came in year by year. Of chariots and horsemen King Solomon mustered a great force, fourteen hundred chariots and twelve thousand horsemen; of these, some were in the fortified towns, and some at the king's side in Jerusalem. Silver he made as common in Jerusalem as stone, and cedars plentiful as the sycamores that grow in the plains. And horses were brought to Solomon from Egypt and from Cilicia, where his agents bought them and sent them to him for a fixed sum. Six hundred pieces of silver was the cost of a chariot brought from Egypt, and fifty of a horse; the kings of the Hittites and of Syria, too, sold him horses at the same price.

But King Solomon gave his heart to many women of alien birth, not only to Pharaoh's daughter, but to Moabites and Ammonites, Edomites and Sidonians and Hittites. It was of such races that the Lord had warned Israel, "You must not mate with them, or let them mate with your daughters; no question but they will beguile your hearts into the worship of their own gods." Hotly he loved and close he clung to them; seven hundred wives, each with a queen's rights, and three hundred concubines besides; what marvel if they beguiled his heart? So, an old man now, he was enticed by women into the worship of alien gods, and his heart was not true to the Lord, his own God, like his father David's before him. To Ashtoreth, goddess of the Sidonians, Solomon bowed down, and to Moloch, the false god of Ammon, and set the Lord's will at defiance, instead of shewing his father's loyalty. To Chemosh, the false god of Moab, and to Moloch, the false god of Ammon, Solomon built shrines, there on the mountainside in full view of Jerusalem, and humored thus all those foreign wives of his, that must burn incense, each to her own god, and offer victims.

So the Lord was angry with Solomon for playing him false, when he, the Lord God of Israel, had twice appeared to him, and warned him against this very sin of alien worship; a warning that went unremembered. "Since this is your mind," he told Solomon, "to disregard my covenant and the bidding I gave you, I will not scruple to tear the kingdom from your grasp, and give it to one of your own servants. Only, for the love of your father David, I will not do it in your lifetime; it is your son that shall lose his kingdom. Nor will I take away the whole of it; one tribe he shall have left to him, for the sake of my servant David, and Jerusalem, the city of my choice."

And the Lord gave Solomon an enemy to contend with, Hadad the Edomite, of the royal dynasty of Edom. This man had made his escape, at the time when David invaded Edom, and Joab, the commander of his army, was seeing to the burial of all its male inhabitants, who had been put to the sword. Joab, with all the fighting men of Israel, had spent six months there, exterminating every male survivor of the Edomite race, and meanwhile Hadad, still in early boyhood, took refuge in Egypt, under the charge of certain Edomites, that had been his father's servants. It was from Midian they began their journey, and when they reached Paran they found adherents there; with these, they made their way into Egypt and had recourse to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who gave Hadad a house of his own, with an allowance of food and lands to cultivate. Great favor Hadad won with Pharaoh, who gave him his own sister-in-law, the sister of Queen Taphenes, for his wife; by her he had a son, Genubath, whom Taphenes brought up at Pharaoh's palace, so that he lived at court among Pharaoh's own children.

When news reached Hadad, there in Egypt, that David had been laid to rest with his fathers, and that Joab, too, the commander of his army, was dead, he asked Pharaoh's leave to go back to his own country. "Why," Pharaoh asked, "what is lacking to you here, that you should be pining for your home?"

"Nothing," said he, "but give me leave for all that." (Meanwhile, God gave Solomon another enemy to contend with, Rezon, son of Eliada, that ran away from his master, Hadadezer king of Zobah, and levied war on him. When David conquered Zobah, Rezon became leader of a robber band that went and settled in Damascus, where they made him king; and all through

Solomon's reign he was the enemy of Israel.) Such was the cause of Hadad's rebellion and his ill will against Israel, and he set up a kingdom in Syria.

There was a servant, too, of King Solomon's that turned against him, Jeroboam son of Nebat, an Ephraimite that lived at Zeredah with his widowed mother, Zeruah. And this is the story of his rebellion against his master. At the time when Solomon was building Millo, and filling up the gap his father had left in the walls of David's City, this Jeroboam was a warrior at the height of his strength, and Solomon marked him out for a young man gifted and active, so he put him in charge of the labor that was exacted from the northern tribes. And now, as Jeroboam was leaving Jerusalem, he met the prophet Ahijah, of Shiloh, that was clad in a new cloak, out in the open country, where none else was by. And Ahijah, tearing the new cloak he wore into twelve pieces, bade Jeroboam take ten of them.

"This message," said he, "the Lord God of Israel sends you: 'I mean to wrest the kingship from the power of Solomon, and make over ten tribes to you. One tribe shall remain his, for the sake of my servant David, and of Jerusalem, among all the cities of Israel the city of my choice. He has forsaken me, to worship Ashtoreth, goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh, god of Moab, and Moloch, god of Ammon; he has not followed the path I bade him follow, by doing my will and keeping command and decree of mine, like his father David before him. Not from his hand will I take the kingdom away, nor all of it; while he lives, I will grant him rule over it, for love of my chosen servant David, that kept command and decree of mine faithfully; but his son shall lose it. Ten tribes I will give to you, and to his son one tribe only, so that my servant David may still have his lamp alight in my presence, there in Jerusalem, the favored sanctuary of my name. On you my choice shall fall; you shall have power to your heart's content, the king of Israel. And if you will attend to the charge I lay upon you, following the ways I bid you follow and doing my will, keeping command and decree of mine as my servant David once did, then I will be with you, and grant you a dynasty abiding as David's was. I will make Israel over to you; such sorrow I will bring on the race of David, but not for ever.'"

Solomon would fain have put Jeroboam to death, but he was up and gone; he took refuge with Shishak king of Egypt, and remained there till Solomon's death. As for the rest of Solomon's life and doings, and the stories told of his wisdom, they are all to be found in the Annals of King Solomon. He was forty years on the throne, with his capital at Jerusalem, but with all Israel for his subjects; and when he was laid to rest with his fathers, they buried him, David's heir, in David's City. And he was succeeded by his son Rehoboam.

This Rehoboam betook himself to Shechem; at Shechem the whole of Israel had assembled to crown him king. But meanwhile Jeroboam, son of Nebat, who had fled to Egypt to be out of King Solomon's reach, had come back home upon hearing the news of his death; and he, too, was summoned to meet them. He, and all Israel with him, came to make a request of Rehoboam; "Your father," they said, "made us bear a bitter yoke. That cruel sway of his, that hard yoke, do you mitigate, and we will be your servants on that condition."

“Give me two days,” said he, “and then come back to hear my answer.” So, when the people had left him, King Rehoboam asked advice first of the older men that had been courtiers in the lifetime of his father, King Solomon; what answer should he make to the people?

“Why,” they told him, “if you do defer to them and do their will, granting this request of theirs and speaking graciously to them, they will never cease giving you loyal service.”

But he left their advice unheeded, and took counsel instead with the younger men who had grown up with him; “How think you,” he asked, “I should make answer to the people’s request, that I would lighten the yoke my father laid on them?”

And these, men of his own upbringing, gave him advice in their turn. “Do they complain that your father laid a heavy yoke on them, and ask for relief? Then tell them there is more strength in your little finger than in all the breadth of your father’s back; if his yoke fell heavy on them, yours shall be heavier still; if your father’s weapon was the lash, yours shall be the scorpion.”

So the third day came, and Jeroboam, with all the people at his back, kept the tryst which the king had made with them for the third day following. And the king, instead of heeding the advice which the older men had given, spoke to the people harshly, with such words as the younger men had prescribed to him. “If my father’s yoke fell heavy on you,” he told them, “mine shall be heavier still; if his weapon was the lash, mine shall be the scorpion.” Thus the king refused to fall in with his people’s will; the Lord had left him to his own devices, in fulfillment of the promise Ahijah the Shilonite made, in his name, to Jeroboam son of Nebat. And when the people found that the king would not listen to them, they were quick with their answer.

“David is none of ours,” they cried; “not for us the son of Jesse; go back, men of Israel, to your homes! Let David look to the affairs of his own tribe!” And with that, the people dispersed to their homes; none but the Israelites living in the cities of Judah would acknowledge Rehoboam as king.

And now, when Adoram, who had charge of the levy, came to them in the king’s name, the Israelites stoned him to death; whereupon Rehoboam mounted his chariot and betook himself, with all speed, to Jerusalem. From that day to this, the men of Israel have refused allegiance to the dynasty of David. Hearing of Jeroboam’s return, they met and summoned him to be present; and so they made him king of all Israel, leaving none to take part with David’s line except the one tribe of Judah. Rehoboam, indeed, upon reaching Jerusalem, mustered the whole tribe of Judah, including Benjamin, a hundred and eighty thousand choice warriors, to make war on the men of Israel; their cry was that Rehoboam, Solomon’s heir, must be restored to his kingdom.

But the Lord sent word to the prophet Shemaiah, “Here is a message for Rehoboam, son of Solomon, king of Judah, and for the men of Judah and Benjamin, the loyal remnant of the people.”

“‘You are not to march out’, the Lord says, ‘and make war upon the sons of Israel, your own brethren; go home, every man of you; all this is my doing.’” So they obeyed the Lord’s will, and gave up their journey at his bidding.

As for Jeroboam, he fortified Shechem, in the hill country of Ephraim, to be his capital; then he went on to fortify Penuel. And it came into his mind, “The kingdom will go back to the dynasty of David if these subjects of mine are allowed to go and sacrifice in the Lord’s house at

Jerusalem. Their loyalties will go out again to their old master, King Rehoboam of Judah; they will kill me, and return to his allegiance.”

And this was the plan he devised; he made two golden calves, and said to the men of Israel, “Here are your gods; the same gods that rescued you from the land of Egypt; no need to make pilgrimage to Jerusalem anymore.” One of the calves he set up at Bethel, and the other at Dan. Here was great sin caused; all the way to Dan men would go on pilgrimage, to worship a calf. Jeroboam made shrines, too, on the hilltops, and chose men to be priests here and there and everywhere among the people, men that were not of Levi’s race. And he appointed a feast day of his own, on the fifteenth day of the month, to match the feast day kept in Judah, but it was in the eighth month. He too, in Bethel, would mount the steps of the altar and do sacrifice, but to calf-gods of his own making. And at Bethel he established the priests that served the hill shrines he had made.

On the fifteenth day, then, of the eighth month, his self-devised feast day for the sons of Israel, Jeroboam went up to the altar he had built in Bethel, and began, standing there, to offer incense.

13

At that very moment, as Jeroboam stood at the altar and cast the incense down, a prophet came to Bethel, sent by the Lord from Judah; and in the Lord’s name he cried aloud against the altar, “Listen, you altar, listen to a message from the Lord. ‘I see a prince that is to come, born of David’s race, Josiah by name, that shall sacrifice on you the very priests who now feed you with incense; the bones of dead men shall be your sacrifice.’”

And he offered them proof, there and then; “Here is a sign,” he told them, “to prove that this message comes from the Lord; see if this altar does not fall apart, and spill the ashes it holds!”

So cried the prophet against the altar at Bethel; and the king, hearing it, lifted his hand from the altar, pointed to the prophet and cried, “Seize him!” With that, his outstretched hand withered up; no more could he bring it back to his side; and meanwhile, the altar fell apart, spilling its ashes; the very sign which the Lord had inspired his prophet to foretell.

“Plead with the Lord your God,” the king said to him, “and pray for me, that I may have the use of my hand again.”

So the prophet entreated God’s mercy for him, and his hand was restored to him, as sound as before. And now the king would have the prophet come home with him to take food, and to be rewarded with gifts, but he answered, “You might offer me half your kingdom before I would come with you, before a crust of bread or a drop of water should pass my lips. Such is the charge the Lord’s word laid upon me; I must neither eat nor drink, nor go home by the way I came hither.” So he set out home by another road, not retracing the journey by which he had come to Bethel.

There was an old seer dwelling at Bethel, whose sons came and told him what deeds the prophet of God had done in the town that day; told what words had passed, too, between him and the king. Whereupon their father asked what road he had taken, this prophet from Judah; and when he had found out this from his sons, he bade them saddle the ass for him. Saddle it they

did, and he mounted, and went out in search of the prophet, whom he found sitting under an oak tree. Asking whether he were the prophet from Judah, and learning that he was, he bade him come home and share his meal. But the other said, "I must not turn back and go with you, must not take food or drink here; when the Lord spoke to me, it was part of his message that I must neither eat nor drink at Bethel, nor leave it by the way I entered it."

But he would take no denial; "I, too," said he, "am a prophet like yourself, and an angel has brought me a message from the Lord that I am to take you home and give you food and drink." With such words the prophet was beguiled, and went back to eat and drink with him.

Even as they sat at table, the Lord's word came to the seer that had detained him. "A message from the Lord," cried he to the prophet from Judah. "You have disobeyed him; he, the Lord your God, gave you a strict injunction, and you have not kept it. You have turned back, there to eat and drink where he bade you leave food and drink untasted. For your punishment, your body shall not be laid to rest in the burying-place of your fathers."

When their meal was done, he saddled his own ass for the prophet, his guest. And he, setting out on his journey, met with a lion, that slew him. There lay his body on the open road, with the ass close by; the lion, too, remained standing there beside its prey. Passersby told how they had seen it, a lion standing beside a dead man's body that lay in the road, when they reached the township where the old seer lived, and when it came to his ears, he bethought him of his guest; "It must be the prophet," said he, "that was disobedient to the Lord's command; the Lord has suffered this lion to maul and kill him, in fulfillment of the divine threat that was made to him."

Then he bade his sons saddle him an ass; and when it was saddled, he set out on his journey, and found the body lying there by the road with ass and lion standing over it; never a morsel of its prey had the lion eaten, and to the ass it did no harm. So the old seer took up the prophet's body and put it on the ass, and returned with it to his own city, to mourn over the dead. In his own tomb he laid the corpse down, and they mourned for him, crying out, "Alas, brother, alas the day!"

And after they had finished mourning, he said to his sons, "When I die, bury me in this tomb where God's prophet rests, laying my bones beside his. It will come true past all doubt, the threat which he uttered in the Lord's name against the altar at Bethel, and the hill shrines in the cities of Samaria."

All this notwithstanding, Jeroboam would not amend his sinful ways; still he appointed priests here and there and everywhere among the people, consecrating the first comer to minister at his hill shrines. So it was that the race of Jeroboam became tainted with guilt, doomed to perish and to leave no trace behind it.

And now Jeroboam's son Abijah fell sick. Whereupon Jeroboam said to his wife, "Here is a journey needs to be made; but first disguise yourself, so that none may know you are the wife of Jeroboam. It is to Shiloh you must go, where Ahijah lives, the prophet who foretold that I should be king of this realm; to him betake yourself, bearing ten loaves with you, and some pastry, and a pot of honey; from him you will learn what is to become of the boy."

So Jeroboam's wife did his bidding; to Shiloh she made her way, and found Ahijah's house. Ahijah had no sight left now, so dim were his eyes grown with old age; but the Lord made it known to him that Jeroboam's wife was coming to ask him about her son, that had fallen sick, and told him what words he must use to her. She, as she entered, would have given herself out to be other than she was; but Ahijah, as soon as he heard the fall of her feet on the threshold, cried out, "Come in, wife of Jeroboam; why do you feign yourself to be another? I am charged with bitter tidings for you."

"Go and give Jeroboam this message from the Lord God of Israel: 'Was it for this I chose you out among the common folk, and gave you command of my people Israel, tearing David's kingdom asunder to enthrone you? My servant David was not such a man as you are. He kept my commandments, obeying me with all his heart, and doing my will. And you? You have done more amiss than any who went before you, making yourself molten images of alien gods; me you have defied, me you have rejected.

"And I, in return, mean to bring ruin on all Jeroboam's race, smiting every man that belongs to it, bondman or free man, throughout all Israel; I mean to sweep away the last remnants of his race, like the dung that must be swept away till all is clean. Die they in the city, they shall be food for the dogs; die they in the open country, they shall be food for all the birds of heaven; it is the Lord's decree.'

"Up, then, betake yourself home, and as your feet cross the threshold of the city, your son will die. Lament and burial he shall have from the people of Israel; in him alone, of all Jeroboam's race, some loyalty to the God of Israel is found, and he alone, of all Jeroboam's race, shall be carried to the grave. This day, even as I speak, the Lord has marked out for the throne of Israel one who shall destroy the race of Jeroboam. And as for Israel itself, it shall tremble under the hand of the Lord God, as a reed trembles in the water; he will root them out from the fair land which he gave to their fathers, and scatter them beyond the Great River, men that defied the Lord with forest shrines of their own fashioning. And if the Lord abandons Israel thus, it is for the guilt of Jeroboam, that sinned, and taught Israel to sin."

So Jeroboam's wife left him, and made her way back to Tirzah, where her feet no sooner crossed the threshold than her son died. Burial he had, and all Israel mourned for him, as the prophet Ahijah had promised in the Lord's name. What else Jeroboam did, how he fought and how he reigned, is to be found written in the Annals of the Kings of Israel. When his reign had lasted twenty-two years, he was laid to rest with his fathers, and the throne passed to his son Nadab.

Meanwhile King Solomon's son Rehoboam was reigning in Judah. He was forty-one years old when he came to the throne, and for seventeen years he reigned as king at Jerusalem, the city which the Lord chose out of all the cities of Israel to be the sanctuary of his name. His mother was an Ammonitess called Naamah. In his reign the men of Judah earned the Lord's displeasure by sinning against him more defiantly than their fathers ever had before them. They, like the men of Israel, raised altar and image and shrine, on every high hill and under every spreading tree; and these shrines had their prostitutes; they flourished again, all the unnatural deeds of the heathen, whom the Lord dispossessed at Israel's coming.

In Rehoboam's fifth year, Shishak king of Egypt marched on Jerusalem, and took away all the treasures from temple and palace, plundering everywhere; took away, too, the shields of

gold which Solomon had fashioned. In place of these, Rehoboam made shields of bronze, which he entrusted to the captains of his shield-bearers and palace guards; when he made a progress into the Lord's house, they were carried by the officers that marched before him, and afterwards taken back to the shield-bearers' armory. What else Rehoboam did, all the history of his reign, is to be found in the Annals of the Kings of Judah. All through his reign there was war between him and Jeroboam. So Rehoboam, son of the Ammonitess Naamah, was laid to rest with his fathers, with the City of David for his burying-place; and the throne passed to his son Abijam.

15

Abijam, coming to the throne of Judah in the eighteenth year of Jeroboam, reigned three years at Jerusalem. (His mother was called Maacah, daughter of Abishalom.) Everywhere he followed the sinful example his father had set him, unworthy heir of David, that ever kept faith with the Lord his God. Yet, for David's sake, the Lord suffered him to keep the lamp of the royal dynasty burning at Jerusalem; a son he must have to follow him, for the city's preservation. Such reward David had for doing the Lord's will, nor ever swerving, while life lasted, from his decrees, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite. While Rehoboam lived, he was at war with Jeroboam, and there was war, too, between Jeroboam and Abijam. What else Abijam did, all the history of his reign, is to be found in the Annals of the Kings of Judah. So Abijam was laid to rest with his fathers, with the City of David for his burying-place, and the throne passed to his son Asa.

Asa, coming to the throne of Judah in the twentieth year of Jeroboam, reigned as king at Jerusalem for forty-one years. His mother was called Maacah, daughter of Abishalom. And Asa did the Lord's will, like King David, his ancestor, ridding the land of shrine prostitutes, and sweeping away all the filth of idolatry his fathers had brought in with them. He even deprived his mother Maacah of her queenly rank, for her worship of Asherah and for dedicating a forest shrine to him; the grotto she had made he overthrew, broke the image and burnt the fragments of it and cast the ashes into the river Kidron. He did not abolish the hill shrines; but all his days his heart was true to the Lord; and he enriched the Lord's house with gold and silver and other offerings for its use, some dedicated by his father and some in performance of his own vows.

This Asa and Baasha king of Israel were at war continually. Baasha would not be content with his own Israelite territory; he invaded Judah and began making a fortified city of Ramah, so as to deny Asa's subjects free passage. Whereupon Asa took out all the silver and gold that was left in the treasure chambers of temple and palace; this was to be conveyed by his messengers to Damascus, to Ben-hadad, son of Tabrimmon, son of Hezion, king of Syria. "There is an alliance between us," he said, "inherited from your father and mine; witness these gifts of silver and gold I send you. Do you annul the treaty you have made with Baasha, king of Israel, and help me drive him out of my country."

Ben-hadad, falling in with the request, sent out his generals with orders to attack the cities of Israel; Ijon they overcame, and Dan, and Abel-beth-maacah, and all Chinneroth, till Naphtali had no land remaining. So Baasha, when the news reached him, went back to Tirzah, leaving the defenses of Ramah half finished; and the men of Judah, summoned by a royal decree which admitted of no denial, carried off all the stones and woodwork he had erected there; Asa

made use of it to fortify Geba in Benjamin, and Mizpah. What else Asa did, the power he wielded, all his history, and the record of the cities he built, are to be found in the Annals of the Kings of Juda. At last old age came upon him, and with old age, disease attacked his feet. So he was laid to rest with his fathers, in the City of his ancestor David, and the throne passed to his son Jehoshaphat.

It was in the second year of Asa that Jeroboam's son Nadab came to the throne of Israel, and his reign over Israel lasted two years; he defied the Lord's will, following the evil example of his father, that sinned and taught Israel to sin. Then, while he was laying siege to the Philistine city of Gibbethon, at the head of the Israelite army, Baasha son of Ahijah, a man of Issachar, conspired against him and killed him there. So, in the third year of Asa, Baasha succeeded Nadab as king. And he, on coming to the throne, put all Jeroboam's kindred to death; not a man did he spare, so that the whole race perished, as the Lord's servant, Ahijah the Shilonite, had prophesied in his name. So deep was Jeroboam's guilt, that sinned and taught Israel to sin; so was he punished for defying the Lord God of Israel. What else Nadab did, all his history, is to be found in the Annals of the Kings of Israel.

It was this Baasha that was at war with Asa continually; Baasha, son of Ahijah, who came to the throne in Asa's third year, and for twenty-four years reigned over Israel at Tirzah. He too defied the Lord's will, and followed the sinful ways by which Jeroboam taught Israel to sin.

16

To this Baasha the Lord sent a message by Jehu, son of Hanani: "Was it for this I raised you up out of the dust, and made you ruler of my people Israel, that you should follow the ways of Jeroboam, teaching my people Israel to sin, and by their sins to defy my anger? See if I do not sweep away every trace of Baasha and Baasha's line, treating your race as I treated the race of Jeroboam son of Nebat. Die they in the city, they shall be food for the dogs, die they in the open country, they shall be food for all the birds of heaven."

What else Baasha did, all his history and the record of all his battles, is to be found in the Annals of the Kings of Israel. So he was laid to rest with his fathers, with Tirzah for his burying-place, and the throne passed to his son Elah. (It was through the prophet Jehu, son of Hanani, that the Lord pronounced sentence upon Baasha and his line, and on all the provocations by which he had earned the Lord's displeasure, following the example of Jeroboam's race; and Baasha, for that reason, put the prophet Jehu to death.)

It was in the twenty-sixth year of Asa that Baasha's son Elah came to the throne of Israel; and when he had reigned two years at Tirzah, his own servant Zimri, that led half his cavalry, rebelled against him. Elah was at Tirzah, drinking himself drunk at the house of Arza, that was prefect of the city, when Zimri rushed in and gave him a mortal blow, taking the throne for himself, in the twenty-seventh year of Asa's reign over Judah.

Once he was king, and settled on the throne, he struck down all Baasha's descendants, leaving no male among them alive, his kinsfolk, too, and his friends. When Zimri thus made an end of Baasha's race, the sentence which the Lord had passed on Baasha through the prophet Jehu was carried out; they must atone for their guilt, Baasha and his son Elah, that sinned and

taught Israel to sin, defying the Lord God of Israel with their false worship. What else Elah did, all his history, is to be found in the Annals of the Kings of Israel.

So, in the twenty-seventh year of Asa, Zimri reigned in Tirzah for seven days. The army of Israel were then laying siege to the Philistine city of Gibbethon; and when news reached them of Zimri's conspiracy and the king's death, they chose, by common consent, a king of their own. This was Omri, who was then in command of the Israelite forces, and was present there in the camp. So Omri with all his men left Gibbethon and laid siege to Tirzah; and Zimri, seeing that the city must needs fall, retired into the palace and burned it over his own head. So he died, in all the guilt of defying the Lord by following the example of Jeroboam; in all the guilt, too, he had brought on Israel by teaching them to sin. What else Zimri did, the story of his plot and of his tyranny, are to be found in the Annals of the Kings of Israel.

Thereupon the Israelite people divided itself into two factions; half of them espoused the cause of Tibni, son of Ginath, and would have made a king of him, the other half followed Omri. But Omri's party gained the victory over Tibni's; so Tibni came to his death, and Omri to a throne. It was in the thirty-first year of Asa that Omri began his reign over Israel, which lasted twelve years. For the first six, his capital was at Tirzah; then, for two talents of silver, he bought the hill of Samaria from Shemer, and built on it a city which he called Samaria, after Shemer's name. This Omri defied the Lord's will more recklessly than any king before him, following the wicked ways of Jeroboam, son of Nebat, that taught Israel to sin, and provoking the Lord God of Israel to anger with his false worship. What else Omri did, the record of all the battles he fought, is to be found in the Annals of the Kings of Israel. So Omri was laid to rest with his fathers, with Samaria for his burying-place, and the throne passed to his son Ahab.

It was in the thirty-eighth year of Asa that Ahab, son of Omri, came to the throne of Israel; and for twenty-two years he reigned over Israel at Samaria. This Ahab, son of Omri, defied the Lord's will as no other had done before him; not content with following the evil example of Jeroboam, son of Nebat, he married Jezebel, daughter of the Sidonian king Ethbaal, and thenceforward enslaved himself to Baal's worship. To Baal he built a temple, to Baal he raised an altar, in Samaria; planted, too, a sacred wood, and did more to earn the Lord's displeasure than any king of Israel in earlier times.

It was in his days that Hiel, a man of Bethel, rebuilt Jericho; the foundation of it cost him his eldest son Abiram, and the gates of it his youngest son Segub; such was the doom pronounced by Joshua, son of Nun, in the Lord's name.

And now word came to Ahab from Elijah, the man of Tishbe, that dwelt in Gilead, "As the Lord I serve is a living God, in these years that are coming neither dew nor rain shall fall, without word of mine to command it."

Upon this, Elijah himself had a message from the Lord, "Withdraw yourself, and make your way eastwards; you shall find a hiding place in the valley of the Cherith, that flows to meet the Jordan. There the river shall provide drink for you, and the ravens, at my command, shall feed you." Withdraw himself he did, as the Lord bade him, and made his way to the river Cherith, that flows to meet the Jordan; there he took up his abode. Morn and eve the ravens

brought him bread, morn and eve they brought him meat, and of the river's water he drank, till, after a while, the land was parched, and the river dried up.

Then the Lord said to him, "Bestir yourself, and make your way to Zarephath, a town in Sidon, where you shall make your dwelling; at my command, a widow there will support you."

So he rose up and went to Zarephath, and he had but reached the city gate when he met a woman gathering firewood; whereupon he called out to her, asking her to give him a cup of water to drink. And as she went to fetch it, he cried after her, "And when you do bring it, bring me, too, a mouthful of bread."

"Why," she told him, "as surely as the Lord you serve is a living God, I have no food except a handful of flour at the bottom of a jar, and a drop of oil left in a cruet. Even now I am gathering a stick or two, to serve my son and me for our last meal."

"Have no fear," Elijah said; "go home on this errand of yours; only use the flour to make me a little griddlecake first, and bring it me here; cook what is left for yourself and your son. This message the Lord God of Israel has for you: 'There shall be no lack of flour in the jar, nor shall the oil waste in the cruet, till the Lord sends rain on this parched earth.'"

At that, she went and did Elijah's bidding, and there was a meal for him and for her and for all her household; and from that day onwards there was still flour in the jar, still oil left in the cruet, as the Lord's message through Elijah had promised her.

Afterwards, the housewife's son fell sick; and so violently did his disease take hold of him that at last he breathed no longer. Upon this, the woman said to Elijah, "Servant of God, why did you meddle with me? Did you come here to confront me, after all, with the record of my sins, and hand over my son to death?"

"Give me your son," said Elijah, and took the boy from her bosom; then carried him up to the room where he himself lodged, and laid him down on the bed. "O Lord my God," said he, "must you bring trouble even upon this widow, who is all my support, by taking her son's life away?"

Then, three times, he measured his whole length upon the child's body, crying out to the Lord, "O Lord my God, send back life into the boy's limbs." So Elijah prayed, and the Lord granted his prayer; the boy's life returned to him, and he revived.

And when Elijah took him down from the upper room into the house below, gave him back to his mother and showed her that her son lived, the woman said to Elijah, "This proves to me that you are God's servant indeed, and his promise on your lips is true."

It was long before the Lord's word came to Elijah; but at last, when two years had gone by, he said, "Go and confront Ahab; it is time I should send rain on this parched earth."

So Elijah went out to confront Ahab. Sore famine there was in Samaria; and Ahab had called his steward Obadiah to his aid. This Obadiah was one that held the Lord in great reverence; and when Jezebel killed the Lord's prophets, he rescued a hundred of them, by hiding them in two caves, fifty in each, and supplying them with food and water. To him Ahab said, "Go through the whole land in search of grass wherever it may be found, by spring or mountain torrent, to keep the horses and the mules alive, or we shall lose all the beasts."

So they divided up the country into circuits and separated, Ahab taking one way and Obadiah the other; and it was Obadiah that fell in with Elijah in the course of his journey.

“Why,” said he, bowing to the earth as he recognized him, “it is my lord Elijah!”

“None other,” said he; “go and tell your master that Elijah is here.”

“Ah, my lord,” answered Obadiah, “what wrong have I done you, that you would hand me over to Ahab to be slain? As the Lord your God is a living God, there is never race or realm to which my master has not sent in search of you; and as each answered, ‘Not here,’ he would take an oath of them, race by race and realm by realm, that you were not to be found.

“‘Go and tell your master,’ say you, ‘that Elijah is here;’ and what will be the issue of it? Why, when I have left you, the spirit of the Lord will carry you off I know not where; my errand done, and you nowhere to be found, Ahab will put me to death; and am not I, your servant, one that has feared the Lord since he was a child? Have you never had tidings, good master, of what I did when Jezebel was slaying the Lord’s prophets; how I rescued a hundred of them, by hiding them in two caves, fifty in each, and supplying them with food and water? Why would you bid me court death by telling my master, ‘Elijah is here?’”

“Nay,” answered Elijah, “as the Lord I serve is a living God, I mean to confront Ahab this day.”

So Obadiah went to find Ahab, and gave him the message. Whereupon Ahab came to meet Elijah; and his greeting was, “So it is you, the man that gives Israel no rest?”

“Nay,” answered he, “if Israel finds no rest, the fault lies not with me, but with you and with your father’s race, that have neglected the Lord’s command, and betaken yourselves to the gods of the countryside. But there is work to do; send out couriers, and gather me all Israel on Mount Carmel, with Baal’s four hundred and fifty prophets, and those four hundred, prophets of the forest shrines, that feed on Jezebel’s bounty.”

So Ahab sent word to all the men of Israel, and gathered the prophets together, there on Mount Carmel.

And now Elijah appeared before the whole of Israel, and thus reproached them, “Will you never cease to waver between two loyalties? If the Lord is God, then take his part; if Baal is God, then take his.”

No word did the people give him in answer, and Elijah began speaking to them again; “Here am I,” he said, “the only prophet of the Lord left, while Baal has four hundred and fifty. Bring us two bulls; let them choose which they will, cut it up into pieces, and set these upon firewood, without kindling it. I will prepare the other bull, and I too will set it on firewood still unkindled. Then call upon the names of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord I serve; and the God who sends fire in answer shall be acknowledged as God.”

“Well said,” cried all the people, “well said!”

Thereupon Elijah bade them choose their bull, and offer sacrifice first, since theirs was the greater number; let them call upon the names of their gods as they would, but kindle no fire. And they, accepting one of the bulls he offered them, prepared it for sacrifice; all day long they cried out on the name of Baal, “Lord Baal, hear us;” but never a sound came, and there was none to answer, dance as they would on the altar they had built there.

When midday came, Elijah fell to mocking them; “Cry louder,” he said, “a god Baal is, past doubt, but it may be he is detained in talk, or lodging abroad, or on a journey; or he has

fallen asleep, and needs awakening.” Cry louder they did, cutting themselves with knives and lancets, till they were all bathed in blood; but midday passed, and they were still prophesying; and now it was time for the evening sacrifice to be offered, but still no sound came; there was none to answer them or listen to their supplications.

Then Elijah bade the people come near; and when they were standing close to him, he began repairing the altar of the Lord, that was broken down. Twelve stones he took, one for each tribe that sprang from the sons of Jacob, to whom the divine voice gave the surname of Israel; and with these stones he built up the altar again, calling on the Lord’s name as he did it. Then he made a trench round the altar, of some two furrows’ breadth; piled the wood high, cut the bull into joints, and laid these on the wood.

“Now,” he said, “fill four buckets with water, and pour it over victim and wood alike.” And again he bade them do it, and when they had finished, a third time. When they had poured it out a third time, the water was running all round the altar, and the trench he had dug for it was full.

The time was now come for offering the evening burnt sacrifice; and as the prophet Elijah went to the altar, thus he prayed, “Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, give proof this day that you are the Lord God, and I am your servant, and all I have done was done at your command. Audience, Lord, give audience! Prove to all the people that you are the Lord God, and are calling their hearts back to you!”

With that, the divine fire fell, consuming victim and wood and stones and dust, and swallowing up the very water in the trench. At the sight, the whole people fell face to earth, and raised a cry, “It is the Lord is God, it is the Lord is God!”

“Seize the prophets of Baal,” Elijah told them, “and do not let one of them slip through your hands.” Seize them they did, and Elijah took them down to the valley of Kishon, where he put them to death.

Then Elijah said to Ahab, “Go back now, eat and drink; I hear a noise like a storm of rain.” So Ahab went back to eat and drink, while Elijah climbed the heights of Mount Carmel, and there sat, his face bowed to the ground between his knees. And he bade his servant go to the hilltop and look out seawards; so he went and looked, but came back with word that he had seen nothing. Seven times he must go back on the same errand; and at the seventh time, a little cloud showed, no bigger than a man’s footprint, rising up out of the sea.

“Go back,” Elijah said, “and bid Ahab mount his chariot and return home, before the rain overtakes him.” This way and that he turned; and now the whole sky was dark, and clouds came, and a wind with the clouds, and a great storm of rain began. So Ahab mounted his chariot and betook himself to Jezreel; as for Elijah, the power of the Lord came upon him, so that he girded his cloak about him and ran all the way to Jezreel at Ahab’s bridle.

But when Ahab told Jezebel of what Elijah had done, how he had put all her prophets to the sword, she sent Elijah a message, “The gods punish me as I deserve, and more, if by this time tomorrow I have not sent you the way yonder prophets went.”

Whereupon he took fright, and set out upon a journey of his own devising; made his way to Beersheba in Judah, and left his servant to wait there, while he himself went on, a whole day's journey, into the desert. Betaking himself there, and sitting down under a juniper tree, he prayed to have done with life.

"I can bear no more, Lord," he said; "put an end to my life; I have no better right to live than my fathers." With that, he lay down and fell asleep under the juniper tree; but all at once an angel of the Lord roused him, bidding him awake and eat. Then he found, close to where his head lay, a griddlecake and a pitcher of water; so he ate and drank and lay down to sleep again.

But once more the angel of the Lord roused him; "Awake and eat," said he, "you have a journey before you that will tax your strength." So he rose up, and ate and drank; strengthened by that food he went on for forty days and forty nights, till he reached God's own mountain, Horeb.

There he made his lodging in a cave; and all at once the Lord's word came to him, "Elijah, what do you here?"

"Why," he answered, "I am all jealousy for the honor of the Lord God of hosts; see how the sons of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and put your prophets to the sword! Of these, I only am left, and now my life, too, is forfeit."

Then word came to him to go out and stand there in the Lord's presence; the Lord God himself would pass by. A wind there was, rude and boisterous, that shook the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind, an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire, the whisper of a gentle breeze. Elijah, when he heard it, wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out to stand at the cave door.

There a voice came to him, "Elijah, what do you here?"

"I am all jealousy," said he, "for the honor of the Lord God of hosts; see how the sons of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and put your prophets to the sword! Of these, I only am left, and now my life, too, is forfeit."

Then the Lord said to him, "Retrace your journey through the desert all the way to Damascus, and there anoint Hazael to be king of Syria. Over Israel, too, you shall anoint a king, Jehu the son of Nimshi. And for yourself, you shall anoint a new prophet, Elisha, the son of Shaphat, from Abel-mehola, to take your place. Those who escape the sword of Hazael shall be slain by Jehu, and those who escape the sword of Jehu shall be slain by Elisha. Yet I mean to leave myself seven thousand men out of all Israel; knees that have never bowed to Baal, lips that have never kissed hand to do him worship."

Even as he went on his journey, Elijah found Elisha, that was son of Shaphat, ploughing with twelve pairs of oxen. He was with the last pair of all; and Elijah, upon reaching him, threw his own cloak about the man's shoulders. There and then he left his oxen behind, and ran after Elijah; "Give me leave," he said, "to embrace my father and my mother in parting."

"Back home with you," said Elijah; "I have but fulfilled my errand."

Back then Elisha went, and chose out a pair of oxen, which he slaughtered, and cooked there with the plough for firewood. Such was the feast he made for the folk with him; then he rose up and left them, to follow Elijah and be his servant.

After this, Ben-hadad king of Syria mustered his whole army; with thirty-two princes at its head, he mustered all his horses and chariots, and would take Samaria by siege. Ahab, king of Israel, was within the city; and to him Ben-hadad sent messengers demanding the surrender of his silver and gold, his wives, too, and all the likeliest of his sons.

“My lord king,” answered Ahab, “I accept your terms; all that I have is at your disposal.”

But now the messengers came back to him with a fresh demand from Ben-hadad, “Silver and gold, wives and sons, you must hand over to me; and meanwhile, at this time tomorrow, envoys of mine shall visit your, to search your palace and your courtiers’ houses; to these you must give up all they have a mind to carry away with them.”

Thereupon the king of Israel summoned all the elders of his land; “Mark well,” he said, “how craftily this man deals with us; this is my reward for consenting to give up wives and sons, silver and gold, at his demand.” Elders and people had but one thought; there must be no listening to Ben-hadad, no granting his will.

Ahab, then, thus answered Ben-hadad’s messengers, “Tell my lord the king, I am your servant, and ready to carry out that first demand of yours; but this I cannot grant.”

And he, when the answer was reported to him, sent them back with this message, “May the gods punish me as I deserve, and more than I deserve, if I do not beat Samaria to dust! I have more than enough warriors here at my back to carry it away in handfuls.”

To that, the king of Israel made reply, “Boast he may who ungirds, not he who girds for battle.”

This taunt came to the ears of Ben-hadad when he sat drinking with his princes in his royal pavilions. “Besiege me the city,” he told his men, and besiege it they did.

And now a prophet came with a message from the Lord to Ahab, king of Israel: “You can see for yourself what a great multitude of warriors is here; over all that multitude I mean to give you victory this day, and prove to you that I am the Lord.”

“Victory?” said Ahab. “And who shall win it for us?”

Whereupon the prophet gave him this answer from the Lord, “It shall be the lackeys the chiefs have brought with them.” And when Ahab asked who should lead them, he told him, “You yourself.”

So he took count of the lackeys the chiefs had in their retinue, and found there were two hundred and thirty-two of these; then he took count of his army, the whole army of Israel, seven thousand strong. When it was high noon, they sallied out from the city, while Ben-hadad still drank deep in his pavilion, with the princes that had come to aid him; and the lackeys marched at their head. Ben-hadad, when his scouts told him that a sally was being made from Samaria, gave orders that the men should be taken alive, came they out peaceably or for battle. So on they went, the lackeys in the van, and the rest of the army at their heels, and none but slew the first enemy he met; so that the Syrians were routed, and Israel went in pursuit of them. Ben-hadad king of Syria escaped on horseback among his cavalry, and still horse and chariot fell before the king of Israel’s sally, till he won a great victory over the men of Syria. But the prophet sought him out again and warned him, “Go back and strengthen your forces; take good heed what you are doing; in this next year the king of Syria will be marching against you.”

In Syria, the king's advisers told him, "If the Israelites have defeated us, that is because their gods are gods of the hills; best to offer them battle on the low-lying ground, where we shall have them at our mercy. Meanwhile, something remains to be done; remove the princes, one and all, from their posts, and appoint commanders of your own in place of them. Then fill up the gaps in the ranks of your army, muster as many horses and chariots as you had of old, and we will fight them in the plains; see if we do not get the mastery of them."

Ben-hadad was won over by their advice, and took it; when a year had passed, he marshalled the Syrian forces and led them out to Aphek, where he offered Israel battle. The men of Israel marshalled their forces too, provided themselves with food for the march and went out to meet the enemy. Where they lay encamped opposite, they seemed like two little herds of goats, while the Syrians swarmed over the countryside.

To the king of Israel God sent out one of his servants with this message: "Thus says the Lord, 'Thinks Syria that I am God of the hills, and not of the valleys too? Over all this great array I will give you victory; such proof you shall have that I am the Lord.'" So, for seven days, the armies stood threatening one another, and on the seventh battle was joined; on that one day the men of Israel routed a hundred thousand Syrians that fought on foot. Those who survived took refuge in the city of Aphek, where the wall fell on them, twenty-seven thousand in number.

As for Ben-hadad, when he made his way into the city he took refuge in an inner room; and there his courtiers told him, "This is the tale we have heard about the kings of Israel, that they are merciful men. Let us put sackcloth on our loins, and ropes on our heads, and give ourselves up to the king of Israel; it may be he will spare our lives."

So, with sackcloth on their loins and ropes on their heads, they betook themselves to the king of Israel; "Your servant Ben-hadad," they told him, "pleads for his life."

And Ahab answered, "Lives he yet, he is my brother."

Whereupon, seizing from his lips that word of welcome augury, they cried, "Ben-hadad! He is your brother!" So Ahab bade them fetch him; and when Ben-hadad came out, would have him mount his own chariot.

And now Ben-hadad promised, "I will give you back the cities my father took from yours, and you shall have streets in Damascus, as my father had in Samaria, and I will go home at peace with you." So Ahab made peace with him, and let him go his way.

But now the Lord sent his inspiration to a disciple in the schools of the prophets. He bade one of his fellow disciples strike him a blow, and when he refused, told him, "You shall be punished for disobeying the Lord's voice thus. You shall be mauled by a lion," said he; and they had barely parted when his fellow disciple met a lion, and was mauled by it.

Meanwhile, his fellow disciple sought out another; "Strike me a blow," he asked of him, and strike he did, leaving a wound on him. So the prophet went out to meet the king on the open road, first smearing his face and eyes with dust; and as the king passed, he cried out to him, "My lord, a word with you! I was lately in the thick of the battle, and one brought a fugitive to me, bidding me mount guard over him; did he slip through my hands, it was my life for his, or else I must pay a talent of silver. And then, as I looked this way and that in the press, all at once he was gone."

"Why then," said the king of Israel, "you must pay the forfeit that was named."

With that, he wiped the dust from his face, so that the king of Israel knew him for one of the prophets; and he gave him this message from the Lord, "And you, have you not let a man worthy of death slip through your hands? Your life shall pay for his life, your people for his people." A sullen man was the king of Israel and an ill man to cross when he reached his home in Samaria.

21

Now turn we to the vineyard at Jezreel, which belonged to Naboth the Jezreelite, close to Ahab's palace, that was king of Samaria. "Give me that vineyard of yours," Ahab said to Naboth, "so near adjoining my house, to make a herb garden of it. In its place, I will give you a better vineyard of my own, or its worth in money, if that you like better."

"The Lord be merciful to me," Naboth answered; "should I give you the land that was my fathers' patrimony?" And at that, Ahab went home sullen and ill to cross, only because Naboth had refused to give up his fathers' patrimony. Down on his bed he lay, face to wall, and would take no food. So his wife Jezebel came in to see him, and know what ailed him, that he should refuse to eat; and he told her the story, how he had offered Naboth the Jezreelite a sum of money for his vineyard, or a better vineyard, if he would, in place of it, and Naboth had refused to give the vineyard up.

"A fine king you are," she said, "as ever ruled in Israel! Up with you, and eat; set your heart at rest; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite."

Then she wrote a letter in Ahab's name, sealing it with his own seal, and dispatched it to the elders and chief men that were Naboth's fellow citizens. The tenor of it was this; They were to proclaim a solemn fast, and where the greatest of the townspeople sat, there must be a seat for Naboth. Then two rogues must be suborned to bear false witness against him, accusing him of blasphemous speech about God and the king; and so they were to have him out, and stone him to death. So the elders and chief men, Naboth's fellow citizens, obeyed the instructions Jezebel's letter had given them; they proclaimed a fast, and would have Naboth sit among the greatest of the townspeople; and there, opposite him, sat two rogues, whom they had brought in to that end. These, like the slanderers they were, accused Naboth of cursing God and the king; whereupon he was led out beyond the city walls, and stoned to death. Then a message was sent to Jezebel, telling her how Naboth had died by stoning; and no sooner had she heard of his death, than she bade the king bestir himself.

"Take for your own," she said, "the vineyard which Naboth the Jezreelite would not sell you; Naboth is dead, and can thwart your will no longer." And away went Ahab to take possession of Naboth's vineyard; Naboth was dead.

Thereupon the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, "Up, and go to meet Ahab, king of Israel, that dwells in Samaria; you will find him now in the vineyard of Naboth; he has gone to take possession of it. And this message you will give him from the Lord: 'Would you slay, and dispossess the slain?' Then tell him, thus says the Lord: 'Here, where the dogs licked the blood of Naboth, they shall lick yours.'"

"Here is one comes to seek me out," was Ahab's greeting, "that is no friend of mine."

“Seek you out I must,” said he, “to tell you that you are a slave. You have given yourself up to such doings as are hateful in the Lord’s sight. And hateful is the ruin I mean to bring on you, sweeping away every trace of you; every male of Ahab’s house shall die, be he bondman or free man in the realm of Israel. No better shall your race fare than Jeroboam’s, that was son of Nebat, or Baasha’s, that was son of Ahijah; you too have earned my displeasure, you too have taught Israel to sin. And of Jezebel the Lord said, ‘Here, in the purlieus of Jezreel, the dogs shall have Jezebel for their food. As for Ahab, die he in the city, he shall be food for the dogs, die he in the open country, he shall be food for all the birds of heaven.’”

Never was such another as Ahab, that gave himself up to doings hateful in the Lord’s sight, his wife Jezebel prompting him; very foully he did, in paying worship to the false gods of those Amorites whom the Lord dispossessed to make room for Israel. Yet Ahab, when he heard Elijah’s warning, tore his garments and clothed himself in sackcloth, fasted and made sackcloth his bed, and went ever with head bowed, till the Lord sent this word to Elijah the Tishbite: “Ahab, as you see, humbles his pride before me. Humbled for my sake, he shall have this reward; the doom shall not fall in his days. I will wait till his son is on the throne, and then bring calamity upon all his race.”

22

The peace between Syria and Israel lasted three years. In the third year, during a visit from King Jehoshaphat, of Judah, the king of Israel said to his courtiers, “Here is Ramoth-gilead, a city (as you all know) that belongs to us; and yet we leave it in the king of Syria’s hands!”

Then he turned to Jehoshaphat and asked, “Shall I have your aid in attacking Ramoth-gilead?”

“Why,” said he, “you and I are at one; my army, my horses, they are all yours.” But Jehoshaphat would have Ahab consult the Lord first. So Ahab sent for his prophets, some four hundred in number, and asked whether he should attack Ramoth-gilead or let it be?

“Go to the attack,” they said; “the Lord means to make the king’s grace master of it.” But still Jehoshaphat asked whether there was no prophet of the Lord to be found, so that they could make enquiry through him.

“Why yes,” the king of Israel told him, “there is one man through whom we might ask for the Lord’s counsel, Micaiah the son of Imla, yet is he no friend of mine; still he will be prophesying that ill fortune is to befall me, never good.”

“Nay, my lord king,” said Jehoshaphat, “think better of it.” So Ahab summoned one of his chamberlains, and bade him fetch Micaiah the son of Imla with all speed.

There sat the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah, each on his throne, in all their royal state, in an open space by the gate of Samaria; and there in their presence all the prophets said their say. One of them, Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah, had provided himself with a pair of horns fashioned in iron; “With these,” he said, “you shall toss Syria about, till you have made an end of it.”

And all the prophets had the same word for him; “Go and attack Ramoth-gilead,” they told him, “and a blessing on your journey! The Lord means to make the king’s grace master of it.”

So the messenger who went to summon Micaiah told him, "Here are all the prophets bidding the king good speed, like one man; do you join your voice to theirs, and prophesy good fortune."

"Nay," said Micaiah, "as the Lord is a living God, the word I speak shall be the word he gives me."

So he came into the king's presence, and when he was asked whether it were better to attack Ramoth-gilead, or to let it be, he answered, "Go to the attack, and a blessing on your journey! The Lord means to make the king's grace master of it."

"What!" cried Ahab, "must I never cease adjuring you in the Lord's name to tell me only the truth?"

"Listen then," said he; "I had a vision of all Israel as sheep, that strayed because they had no shepherd, and the Lord's word came, 'They have no master now; let them disperse to their home in peace.'"

"It is as I told you," Ahab said to Jehoshaphat; "still he prophesies ill fortune, never good."

Then Micaiah went on, "Here is a message to you from the Lord. I had a vision of the Lord sitting on his throne, with all the host of heaven waiting on his pleasure, to right and left.

"And the Lord said, 'Who is to beguile Ahab, king of Israel, so that he will march to Ramoth-gilead, and there meet his fall?' One said this, one that; till at last a spirit came forward and stood in the Lord's presence, offering to beguile Ahab.

"And how will you beguile him?" the Lord asked.

"I will go abroad," said he, "and on the lips of all his prophets I will make myself an influence to deceive."

"Deceive them you shall," the Lord said, "and have your way with them; go abroad, then, and carry out your errand." And now, see what a lying influence the Lord has spread among these prophets of yours! For indeed the Lord has determined on your ruin."

At that, Zedekiah son of Chenaanah went up and gave Micaiah a blow on the cheek; "Has the spirit of the Lord passed me by," he asked, "and spoken to none but you?"

And Micaiah only answered, "You shall live to see the day when you must needs take refuge in an inner room, to hide there."

Then the king of Israel said, "Take Micaiah hence, and put him in the charge of Amon, the city governor, and of Joash, son of Amelech. And give them this royal command of mine, that they are to imprison him, and give him scant allowance of food and drink till I come back safe and sound."

"Come you back safe and sound," Micaiah said, "and mine was no message from the Lord. Witness my words, all you that stand here!"

So the king of Israel, and Jehoshaphat king of Judah, marched out to attack Ramoth-gilead. And Ahab would have Jehoshaphat go to battle in full armor and all his royal array, while he himself went to battle in disguise. Meanwhile, to all the thirty-two commanders who now marshalled his chariots, the king of Syria had given the same orders: Press for no other mark, high or low, but the king of Israel himself. And these, upon sight of Jehoshaphat, supposed that they had the king of Israel here; it was against him, then, that they directed their onslaught; but when he cried aloud, they knew that this was not the king of Israel, and so let him be. It was an

archer who bent his bow and let fly a shaft at haphazard that gave Ahab a chance wound; it fell between lungs and gullet, and Ahab bade his charioteer wheel about, and carry him away from the fight, so grievous his wound was. All that day the battle raged, and still the king of Israel stood upright in his chariot, facing the Syrians, and did not die till evening, though the blood from his wound flowed ever into the body of his chariot. Then, before sunset, a herald raised a cry all through the ranks, bidding every man return to his own region and city.

So the king died, and was carried back to Samaria, where they buried him; and there the dogs licked his blood, for they washed his chariot and his chariot reins in the pool at Samaria; and so the threat which the Lord had uttered was fulfilled.

What else Ahab did, all his history, and the record of the ivory palace he raised and the cities he built, is to be found in the Annals of the Kings of Israel. Ahab, then, was laid to rest with his fathers, and the throne passed to his son Ahaziah.

This Jehoshaphat, son of Asa, had become king of Judah in the fourth year of Ahab; he was thirty-five years old when he came to the throne, and his reign in Jerusalem lasted twenty-five years. His mother's name was Azubah, daughter of Shilhi. He followed the example of his father Asa, and never swerved aside from the Lord's will; though indeed he did not abolish the hill-shrines; men still offered sacrifice and incense on the mountaintops. With the king of Israel, he lived on terms of peace. What else Jehoshaphat did, the record of his high exploits and of the battles he fought, is to be found in the Annals of the Kings of Juda. He it was that rid the land of all the shrine prostitutes his father Asa had left.

Since there was no king in Edom at this time to bar his way, Jehoshaphat would build a fleet in the southern sea to sail out and fetch gold from Ophir, but sail they might not, for they were all wrecked, there at Ezion-geber. (Ahab's son Ahaziah had requested at this time that mariners from his own country might sail with Jehoshaphat's, but Jehoshaphat would not consent.) So Jehoshaphat was laid to rest with his fathers, with the City of his ancestor David for his resting place, and the throne passed to his son Jehoram.

Ahaziah, son of Ahab, was crowned king of Israel at Samaria in the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat, and his reign over Israel lasted two years. He defied the Lord's will, following the example of his own father and mother, and of Jeroboam, that taught Israel to sin. To Baal's service he gave himself and Baal's worship, and earned, as his father had earned, the displeasure of the Lord God of Israel.