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Ahab King of Isra'el
First Kings 16:29-34, 22:1-40 and Second Chronicles 18:1-34

Ahab king of Isra'el DIG: Why is this Ahab's biggest sin (see Deuteronomy 7:1-4)? Why not rebuild Jericho (see Joshua 6:17-19 and 26)? What did Hiel do to his sons? How could a true prophet of ADONAI first predict victory and then disaster?

REFLECT: Is your competitive edge high or low or medium? How do you channel it? Would Yeshua ask us to annihilate unbelievers today (see Matthew 5:44-45)? Why the change? How do you witness to people who say, "My mind is made up, don't confuse me with the facts!"

The difficulty was not that Ahab couldn't understand what God wanted, but that he didn't want to understand.



The attempt by **Jehoshaphat** and **Ahab** to recapture **Ramoth Gilead** from **the Syrians** is a very interesting story involving the weaving together of two different

accounts. Although overtly about the war, it primarily shows that **ADONAI** fulfills **His** prophetic word despite all human effort to the contrary. In this case, that word led to contrasting results, bringing **death** to **Ahab (Second Chronicles 18:33-34),** but a miraculous deliverance for **Jehoshaphat (Second Chronicles 18:31-32).**[400]

The background of the king: It was in the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah that Ahab the son of Omri began his rule over Isra'el; he ruled twenty-two years over Isra'el in Samaria (First Kings 16:29). Ahab was the last **king** to gain **the throne** during **Asa's** reign.

The significance of his reign: Ahab did what was evil from ADONAI's perspective, outdoing all his predecessors in wickedness. As bad as **his father Omri** was, **Ahab** was far worse**. But then, as if it had been a trifling thing for him to commit the sins of Jeroboam** (**to see link click Dd – Golden Calves at Dan and Bethel**)**, he took as his wife Jezebel the daughter of Etba'al** (meaning, *with Ba'al*) **king of the Sidonians and went and served Ba'al and worshiped him. Ahab** moved from the corruption of **ADONAI**, which was true worship, to the worship of another god altogether. What we have now was not a corruption of the true religion, the worship of the golden calf, to a brand new religion introduced altogether. A brand new religion with a brand new god, introduced here for the first time.[401] **He erected an altar for Ba'al in the house of Ba'al, which he had built in Samaria. Ahab also set up an Asherah pole (First Kings 16:30-33a).**

> **Micaiah Prophesies Against Ahab: Now Jehoshaphat had great wealth and honor,** which had blinded **him** to the reality that **Ahab** was a man cold heartedly opposed to the ways of **ADONAI**. **And the king of Judah allied himself with Ahab by marriage.** This **marriage** was between **Jehoshaphat's son Jehoram** and **Ahab's daughter Athaliah (Second Chronicles 18:1.** In the ancient Near East, **marriage** was typically viewed as more than the union of two individuals; it was a bond between two families. In the case of royal families, such marriages also formed political alliances between nations. Since, on this occasion, peace had come after fifty years of hostilities, to many it must have been welcome at any price. Though this practice was common, **Ha'Shem** had prohibited **His people** from intermarrying with idolaters because it would inevitably lead **them** into apostasy (see **Bx – Solomon's Wives**).[402]

For three years there was no war between Syria and Isra'el. But in the third year Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, went down from **Jerusalem to see Ahab, the king of Isra'el, in Samaria. Ahab slaughtered many sheep and cattle for him and the people with him and urged him to attack Ramoth Gilead. Ahab had said to his officials, "Don't you know that Ramoth Gilead belongs to us and yet we are doing nothing to retake it from the king of Syria?" So Ahab asked Jehoshaphat, "Will you go with me against Ramoth Gilead." Ahab** may have been motivated by **the Syrian king's** failure to observe the terms of **his** treaty with **Isra'el (First Kings 20:34)**, but whatever the reason, **Jehoshaphat** fully supported **the northern king**, saying: **I am as you are, my people are as your people, my horses as your horses; we will join you in the war (1 Kgs 22:1-4; 2 Chron 18:2-3)?** But despite **the king's** well-intentioned motives, **he** provides yet another example of the unacceptable unity between the Kingdom of Light and the Kingdom of Darkness.

Misleading prophecies: But Jehoshaphat also said to the king of Isra'el, "First seek the counsel of ADONAI." At first, **Ahab** seemed quite willing to listen, though not apparently with any intention of complying with what **he** heard. Therefore, **he brought together the prophets, about four hundred men,** probably belonging to the group of **Ba'al** and **Asherah prophets** that formed a kind of government department in **Isra'el**. **Ahab asked them, "Shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall I not?" They all** promised victory. **"Go," they answered, "for God will give it into the king's hand." But Jehoshaphat** didn't trust **the prophets** of **Ba'al**, so **he asked, "Is there no longer a prophet of the LORD here whom we can inquire of?" Ahab answered, "There is still one prophet through whom we can inquire of the LORD, but I hate him because he never prophesies anything good about me, but always bad. He is Micaiah son of Imlah." Micaiah** appears nowhere else in Scripture but here. **"The king should not say such a thing," Jehoshaphat replied.** Yet, **Micaiah** was well known to **Ahab**. **So the king of Isra'el called one of his officials and** said: **Bring Micaiah at once (1 Kings 22:5-9; Second Chronicles 18:4-8).**

Dressed in their royal robes, Ahab and Jehoshaphat were sitting on their thrones at the threshing floor by the entrance of the gate of Samaria, with all the prophets prophesying before them. Now

Zedekiah, son of Kenaanah, one of **the prophets** of **Ba'al**, **had made iron horns, and he** declared: **This is what ADONAI** says: **With these you will gore the Syrians until they are destroyed. All the other prophets were prophesying the same thing. "Attack Ramoth Gilead and be victorious," they said, "for the LORD will give it into the king's hand" (First Kings 22:10-12; Second Chronicles 18:9-11).**

Meanwhile, **the messenger who had gone to summon Micaiah said to him, "Look, the other prophets without exception are predicting success for the king. Let your word agree with theirs, and speak favorably." But Micaiah** said: **As surely as ADONAI lives, I can tell him only what my God says to me (First Kings 18:13-14; Second Chronicles 18:12-13).**

Micaiah's prophecy: When he arrived, the king asked him, "Micaiah, shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall I not?" "Attack and be victorious," he answered, "for they will be given into your hand." Ahab then became suspicious of that one who had always opposed **him**, so **the king said to him, "How many times must I make you swear to tell me nothing but the truth in the name of ADONAI." Then Micaiah** answered: **I saw all Isra'el scattered on the hills like sheep without a shepherd. Then Abab said to Jehoshaphat, "Didn't I tell you that he never prophesies anything good about me, but only evil** (Hebrew: *ra'ah*)**?"** Unfortunately for **Ahab**, **Ha'Shem** felt the same way about **him**, and the corresponding **disaster** (Hebrew: *ra'ah*) **(First Kings 18:15-17a** and **18; Second Chronicles 18:14-16a** and **17)?** How could a true **prophet** of **ADONAI** first predict victory and then disaster? Simply put, **Micaiah** gave **his** first **prophecy** of success to **Ahab** in order to comply with the divine desire to see **the king** lured to **his death**; **his** second message of judgment was actually the expected outcome of the battle.[403]

Miciah finished **his prophecy** by declaring: **ADONAI** said: **These people have no master. Let each one go home in peace (1 Kgs 18:17b; 2 Chron 18:16b). Micaiah's** message was seen as a traditional picture of **Isra'el** as **God's** flock being **shepherded** by **her** leaders. In this case, however, **Isra'el** was **without her Master**. The tragedy of this kind was neither new nor an isolated event **(Num 27:16-17; Ezeki'el 34:5)**, but it was a situation for which **YHVH** was deeply concerned and ultimately led to the coming of **the Good Shepherd. When Yeshua landed and saw a large**

crowd, He had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So He began teaching them many things (Mark 6:34).

To reinforce **his** message, **Micaiah** went on to describe **Isra'el's** true **Master** in **His heavenly** court, with the purpose of underlining **God's** sovereign control over **His people**. In this case, there was also an ironic contrast with **the two kings sitting on their thrones, dressed in their royal robes.** The **heavenly** court scene provided a setting for explaining **God's** purpose for the false **prophets** of **Ba'al**. So **Micaiah** continued: **Therefore, hear the word of ADONAI: I saw YHVH sitting on his throne with all the heavenly armies** of angels **standing on his right and on his left. And ADONAI** asked: **Who will entice Ahab king of Isra'el into attacking Ramoth Gilead and going to his death there? One suggested this, and another that. Finally, a spirit came forward, stood before ADONAI and** said: **I will entice him. "By what means?" ADONAI asked. "I will go and be a deceiving spirit in the mouths of all his prophets," he said. "You will succeed in enticing him," said ADONAI. "Go and do it." So now ADONAI has put a deceiving spirit in the mouths of these prophets of yours. ADONAI has decreed disaster** (Hebrew: *ra'ah*) **for you (First Kings 18:19-23; Second Chronicles 18:18-22).**

*Dear Wise and Loving Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** for **Your** many great qualities. **You** have **steadfast love (Psalms 63:3). Your** Almighty power is unbeatable! **ADONAI, God of our fathers, are You not God in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in Your hand and no one can stand against You (Second Chronicles 20:6)** and **From His mouth comes a sharp sword – so that with it He may strike down the nations -and He shall rule them with an iron rod, and He treads the winepress of the furious wrath of Elohei-Tzva'ot (Revelation 19:15).** All wisdom is in **Your** hands **(Colossians 2:3)** and **You** know every detail and all that will happen in the future **(Dani'el 7 and 2:31-45).***

*It is important to not just ask **God** for advice, as **Jehoshaphat** did, but to act on it. **You** always give the best and wisest advice. A humble heart is important in following **You**, no matter what position we hold. **You** humbled the mighty **King Nebuchadnezzar** and **he** lived to praise **You** for it. May we also learn the lessons **You** give us and stay humble. **Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise,***

exalt and honor the King of heaven, because all His works are right and His ways just. He is able to humble those who walk in pride (Dani'el 4:21). *Thank* ***You*** *for* ***Your*** *great* ***love****. We will keep our hearts humble and follow you always. For the* ***One*** *who sits at Your right hand. Amen*

This strange incident can only be understood against the background of other passages like this in the TaNaKh, especially **Deuteronomy 13:11** and **Ezeki'el 14:1-11**. Both of these passages speak of people being enticed by false **prophets** while being involved with **idolatry**. **Ezeki'el 14:1-11** is especially appropriate, since it describes **Ha'Shem** enticing a **prophet** to **prophecy** as a judgment against **idolatry** and in order to purify **Isra'el**. It seems therefore that the words of **the** false **prophets** here are **God's** response to **Ahab's** trust in false gods and a condemnation of **his idolatry**. **Ahab** was known for **his idol worship (First Kings 16:30-33, 21:22** and **26)** and **his** commitment to **evil**. **ADONAI** had already declared **death (Second Chronicles 18:19)** and **disaster (Second Chronicles 18:22)** through **Elijah (First Kings 21:21),** which **the** false **prophets** were unwittingly putting into effect. In the B'rit Chadashah we see similar examples of this same principle in **Second Thessalonians 2:9-12** and **Revelation 13:13-14.**[404]

The rejection of Micaiah's prophecy: Then Zedekiah, son of Kena'anah, went up and slapped Micaiah in the face. His treatment of **Micaiah** is strikingly similar to that inflicted on **Yeshua** in front of **the high priest** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Li – Annas Questions Jesus**). **"Which way did the spirit from ADONAI go when he went from me to speak to you" Ahab asked. Micaiah** replied: **You will find out on the day you go to hide in an inner room. Ahab** had had enough of **Micaiah**, so **he** sent **him** to prison: **Take Micaiah and send him back to Amon,** the mayor **of the city of Samaria, and to Joash** a city official, **and say, "This is what the king** says: **Put this fellow in prison and give him nothing but bread and water until I return safely."** The difficulty was not that **Ahab** couldn't understand what **God** wanted, but that **he** didn't want to understand. **Micaiah** once again placed himself under Moshe's standards for a prophet (see the commentary on **Deuteronomy Dk – A Prophet Like Moses**): **If you ever return safely, ADONAI has not spoken through me.** Then **Micaiah** turned to the crowd **at the gate** and defiantly shouted: **Mark my words, all you people (First Kings 18:24-28; Second Chronicles**

18:23-27).

The summary of his reign: **Indeed, Ahab did more to anger ADONAI the God of Isra'el, than all the kings of Isra'el preceding him.** As an example, **it was during his time that Hi'el of Bethel rebuilt Jericho. He laid its foundation at the cost of his firstborn son Aviram and erected its gates at the cost of his youngest son Segub. This was in keeping with the word of ADONAI spoken through Joshua the son of Nun (First Kings 16:33b-34).** This was a fulfillment of **Joshua 6:26**. The reason to insert this little account about **the rebuilding** of **Jericho**, between the account of **Ahab** and the account of **Elijah** is to show the disposition of the people in that they were willing to actively go against **God's** decree. With the loss of **his** first **son he** should have known not to go any further. Yet **he** tested **God** to the point of losing **his** second **son**. This put the reign of **Abab** under a cloud and sentence of death.[405]

The death of the king: One last time **Ahab** prepares to engage **his** old enemy **Syria** in battle. **So the king of Isra'el and Jehoshaphat king of Judah went up to Ramoth Gilead** to wage war against **the Syrians.** By entering into **battle, Ahab** fulfilled the original **prophecy (Second Chronicles 18:20),** and brought judgment on **himself**. **Then Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, "I will enter the battle in disguise, but you wear your royal robes." So the king of Isra'el disguised himself and went into battle (First Kings 22:29-30: Second Chronicles 18:28-29). Many are the plans of a man's heart. But it is ADONAI's purpose that prevails (Proverbs 19:21),** is a fitting summary of the outcome of **the battle** as **Jehoshaphat's** deliverance and **Ahab's death** will attest.

Now the king of Syria had ordered his thirty-two chariot commanders, "Do not fight with anyone, small or great, except the king of Isra'el." When the chariot commanders saw Jehoshaphat, they mistakenly **thought, "Surely this is the king of Isra'el." So they turned to attack him, but when Jehoshaphat cried out, ADONAI helped him. Jehoshaphat's cry** of desperation is understood to be a **prayer** (see **Bn – Solomon's Prayer of Intercession**): **When your people go out to war against their enemies, wherever you send them, and when they pray to You toward this City that You have chosen and the Temple You have built for Your Name, then hear their prayer and their plea from heaven and uphold their case (2 Chron 6:34-35). And God drew them away** (Hebrew: *suth*, *meaning to lure or entice*) **from him. When the chariot commanders** realized **that Jehoshaphat was not**

the king of Isra'el, they stopped pursuing him (1 Kgs 22:31-33; 2 Chron 18:30-32).[406]

But there was to be no escape for **Ahab**. Just when it seemed that **he** might escape, **an archer shot an arrow at random and hit Ahab between the sections of his armor,** mortally wounding **Isra'el's king**. **Ahab** slowly **bled** to **death** as **the battle** continued. The implication is plain; **the random arrow** striking a precise target was an act of **God** which fulfilled the prophecy of **Micaiah**. **The king told his chariot driver, "Wheel around and get me out of the fighting. I've been wounded." All day long the battle raged, and the king was propped up in his chariot facing the Syrians until evening. The blood from his wound ran onto the floor of the chariot, and then at sunset he died. As the sun was setting, a cry spread through the army: "Every man to his town. Every man to his land" (First Kings 22:34-36; Second Chronicles 18:33-34).** So while **Ahab** was lured *into* judgment, **Jehoshaphat** was led *out of it* through **prayer**.

So the king was brought to Samaria, and they buried him there. They washed the chariot at a pool in Samaria (where the prostitutes bathed), and the dogs licked up his blood, as the word of ADONAI had declared (First Kings 21:19). Of course, that had not been a random **death** in the course of **battle**, but a divine judgment. **Elijah** had predicted what would happen, but **the king** had ignored **Micaiah's** warning and **Ahab** paid the price. **He** could not hide from the consequences of **his** own decision.[407] **As for the other events of Ahab's reign, including all he did, the palace he built and adorned with ivory, and the cities he fortified, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel? Ahab rested with his ancestors. And Ahaziah his son succeeded him as king (First Kings 22:37-40).**

This is what happens to someone who rejects **God's Word** and follows his own plans instead, in contradiction to **God's** will. Notice the sovereignty (and the irony) of **God's** justice! In **Syria**, they called it a lucky shot, but in **Isra'el**, the people knew better. **Ahab** was able to fool **the Syrians**, but **he** was not able to fool **God**. The bow drawn at random was released according to divine providence. Once **Ha'Shem** had determined that **Ahab** would **die**, **he** might as well have ridden into battle with a huge target pained on **his** chest. The **arrow** of divine judgment always finds its mark!

Ahab's "unlucky" **death** (as it must have seemed to **the king himself**) vindicate

the Word of God. **The LORD** had spoken truthfully through **his prophet** when **he** promised that it would **Ahab's** life for **Ben-Hadad's (First Kings 20:42)**. **ADONAI** had spoken truthfully through **the prophet Elijah** when **he** promised that **the dogs** would **lick up Ahab's blood (First Kings 21:19). YHVH** had spoken truthfully through **the prophet Micaiah** when **he** promised that **Ahab** would not return home safely from battle **(First Kings 22:28)**. And just as **Micaiah** had promised, **the sheep** of **Isra'el** were left **without a shepherd (First Kings 22:17).**

The lesson is easily drawn: do not reject **the Word of God**; do not resist **His** will. The Scripture says that we need to **confess our sins (First John 1:8-9)**, and believe in **Yeshua Messiah** as our **Lord** and **Savior (First Corinthians 15:3-8).** If we know this, then we should not continue to **sin** against our better judgment. For example, having a sexual relationship outside of marriage, carrying a grudge, or speaking falsely are **sins** against the holiness of **God**. If we know the will of **God** about such things and then do as we please, we are as foolish as **Ahab**! And we must not let **Ahab's** epitaph become our own! Ultimately, **Ahab** was a man who heard from **God** yet did not act on the revelation **he** received. By the grace of **ADONAI**, may it not be said of us that we heard from **God** but did not believe **Him** or live for **Him**.[408]