### 1 Kings

## Chapter 20

1Well after that, King BenHader of Syria gathered his whole army along with 32 [vassal] kings and all their horses and chariots, and they went to lay siege against Samaria… They all went to Samaria to wage war against it.  
  
2Then he sent messengers into the city of King Ahab of IsraEl, who told him:  
  
 ‘This is what BenHader says:  
  
 3‘Your silver and your gold are all mine. Also, your wives, children, and all the good things that you have are mine!’  
  
4And the king of IsraEl replied:  
  
 ‘Just as you have said, O my master, O king, I and all that is mine is yours.’  
  
5Then BenHader sent his messengers again, that said:  
  
 ‘I sent you the message telling you that you’re to give your silver, gold, wives, and children to me.  
  
 6‘So at this time tomorrow, I will send my servants to you, and then they’ll search your palace and the homes of your servants and take anything that their eyes desire… Whatever they put in their hands, they can take!’  
  
7So the king of IsraEl called all the elders of the land and said:  
  
 ‘I want you to know of all the evil that this man intends to do... For even though I’ve offered him all my silver, gold, wives, sons, and daughters, he’s now asking for [everything else].’  
  
8And at that, the elders and all the people said:  
  
 ‘Don’t listen to him… And don’t worry!’  
  
9So he replied to the messengers of BenHader:  
  
 ‘Tell your master that I’ll give him all that he asked for at first, but I won’t be able to do this [other] thing that he’s asking.’  
  
And his people carried that message back.  
  
10But BenHader said this:  
  
 ‘May the gods curse me and add to it if the dirt of the foxes of Samaria and all its people is good enough for the feet of my soldiers!’  
  
11Then the king of IsraEl replied:  
  
 ‘That’s enough!  
  
 ‘May the hunchback not boast as though he were able to stand erect!’  
  
12Well, at the time that this message reached [King BenHader], he and all the other kings were inside his tent drinking. So he told his servants to go and build a siege mound around the city, which they did.  
  
13Then {Look!} a prophet came to Ahab (the king of IsraEl) and told him:  
  
 ‘This is what Jehovah has said:  
  
 ‘You’ve now seen how large an army they have, but {Look!} today I’m giving them all into your hands… And then you will know that I am Jehovah!’  
  
14So Ahab asked him:  
  
 ‘Who will accomplish this?’  
  
And he was told:  
  
 ‘This is what Jehovah said:  
  
 ‘It will happen at the hands of the young princes of this region.’  
  
And Ahab asked:  
  
 ‘Then, who’ll join them in this war?’  
  
And he was told:  
  
 ‘You will!’  
  
15So Ahab counted the sons of the rulers of his realm and found out that there were 230 of them... Then he counted his troops and found that there were 7,000 of them… All mighty men.  
  
16So, he started his attack at noon.  
  
Meanwhile, BenHader and the other kings (all 32 of them) that were his allies, were in SokChoth, and they were all drunk.  
  
17Then in the first wave, [Ahab] sent the young princes to attack... And when King BenHader of Syria received word that men were coming from Samaria, 18he said:  
  
 ‘Whether they’re coming in peace or for war, let’s capture them alive!’  
  
19Well, the young princes then came out of the city (with the whole army following them), 20and each one cut down the soldier who faced him! Thereafter, they did it again… Each one cut down the soldier who came against him.  
  
So, the Syrians turned and ran, and the IsraElites started chasing after them! However, King BenHader of Syria grabbed a cavalryman’s horse and got away... 21But the king of IsraEl went and collected all their horses and chariots, which was a great calamity for Syria.  
  
  
22Then, [after the battle], the prophet went to the king of IsraEl again and said:  
  
 ‘Now, strengthen your forces and consider what you must do, for King BenHader of Syria will attack you once again this year!’  
  
23And after that, the servants of the king of Syria went to him and told him this:  
  
 ‘The God of IsraEl is a God of mountains, not a God of valleys, and that’s why they beat us. However, if you go to war with them in the straight plains, you can beat them!  
  
 24‘So, this is what you should do:  
  
 ‘Send all the kings home and appoint governors to replace them... 25Then you must replace the men who were killed, get more horses, build more chariots, and go back and fight them in the plains, and you’ll overpower them.’  
  
Well, the king listened to them and went along with their proposal.  
  
  
26So, towards the end of the year, BenHader again gathered an army in Syria and marched them towards Apheka to war against IsraEl, 27and the sons of IsraEl gathered for war and went out to meet them.  
  
Then, like two flocks of goats, IsraEl stood opposite them on the right, while Syria literally filled the land on the left.  
  
28Then the man of God went to the king of IsraEl once more and told him:  
  
 ‘This is what Jehovah has said:  
  
 ‘Because Syria says that Jehovah the God of IsraEl is a God of the mountains, not a God of the valleys, I’m going to give his huge army into your hands…  
  
 ‘And then you will know that I am Jehovah!’  
  
29Well, both armies just sat there camped against each other for 7 days...  
  
  
Then on the 7th day, the war started, and IsraEl cut down the Syrians… 100,000 foot soldiers in one day! 30All the rest retreated to the city of Apheka.  
  
But then its walls crumbled, killing 27,000 of the remaining men, and BenHader ran away and hid in a bedroom in the inner part of a house.  
  
31There he said to his servants:  
  
 ‘I know that the kings of IsraEl are merciful... So, dress yourselves in sackcloth and wrap your heads with ropes; then go to the king of IsraEl and see if he will allow us to live.’  
  
32So they wrapped sackcloth around their loins and wrapped ropes around their heads, and they went to the king of IsraEl and said:  
  
 ‘Your servant BenHader says:  
  
 ‘Please allow me to live!’  
  
And [IsraEl’s king Ahab] asked:  
  
 ‘Is my brother still alive?’  
  
33Then the men quickly got together and discussed what to say, and they replied:  
  
 ‘Yes, BenHader your brother [is still alive].’  
  
And he said:  
  
 ‘Well then, go get him.’  
  
So BenHader was brought [to the king of IsraEl] on a chariot.  
  
34And he said [to Ahab]:  
  
 ‘I’ll return all the cities that my father took from your father, and you may name the streets that my father built in Damascus after yourself, the same as my father did in Samaria.’  
  
And [the king of IsraEl said]:  
  
 ‘If you’ll sign a peace treaty with me, I’ll send you home.’  
  
So they signed a treaty, and he was allowed to return home.  
  
  
35Well after that, a man who was one of the sons of the prophets said to his neighbor (by [the inspiration] of Jehovah):  
  
 ‘Strike me!’  
  
But his neighbor wouldn’t knock him down.  
  
36So he said to him:  
  
 ‘Because you didn’t listen to the voice of Jehovah... {Look!} after you leave me, a lion will strike you down!’  
  
And after he left him, a lion did in fact kill him.  
  
  
37So then, [the prophet] went and found another man and said:  
  
 ‘Strike me!’  
  
And this time the man struck him and wounded him.  
  
38Then the prophet went to see the king of IsraEl, and on the way, he wrapped a cloth around his eyes.  
  
39And when he got to the king, he shouted this at him:  
  
 ‘Your servant was in the army and we were in a battle; then {Look!} someone brought a prisoner to me and told me to guard him, and he told me that if he got away, I’d either have to pay with my life or I’d have to pay him 60 pounds (27kg) of silver.  
  
 40‘But when I turned around, the prisoner had disappeared!’  
  
And the king of IsraEl said to him:  
  
 ‘{Look!} You were responsible, so you’ll have to pay!’  
  
41And that’s when the man removed the cloth from over his eyes, and the king recognized him as one of the prophets.  
  
42Then the prophet said to him:  
  
 ‘This is what Jehovah has declared:  
  
 ‘Because you allowed a man who escaped from you to live, your life will be required for his life, and your people’s lives must be paid for his people’s lives!’  
  
43Well at that, the king of IsraEl left dumbfounded and shaking, and he went back home to Samaria.