

2 Kings 8: Restoration and Corruption

Virtual Vestry notes for 18 April 2026

My favourite part of this chapter is the beginning – the Shunamite woman’s land restored. The rest is kings reigning and dying and doing dreadful things.

Verses 1-6: The Shunamite woman’s land restored.

In 2 Kings 4, we read the story of how Elisha resurrects the Shunamite woman’s son after he has what seems to be a brain aneurism. The Shunamite woman and her husband had been generous toward Elisha and, after Elisha had prayed they had a son.

Here we see that Elisha told the woman to take her household away to avoid the famine that God had decreed. The Shunamite woman packed up her family and takes them to the land of the Philistines for seven years. On her return she appeals to the king for her house and land back. By coincidence, Gehazi, Elisha’s (former?) servant is telling the king everything that Elisha has done, including the resurrection of the boy, when the woman turns up to ask for her land. The king is so impressed as he appoints an official to have her house and land restored.

- Why does Elisha help the Shunamite woman avoid the famine in Israel by warning her to leave?

On leaving Israel, the Shunamite woman forfeits claim on her ancestral land. She had a choice to either keep her land or follow Elisha’s advice and help her family survive the famine.

- Discuss

The king then talks to Gehazi, wanting to know about Elisha. There is some discussion among scholars about whether this story is out of chronological order, given that Elisha cursed Gehazi with leprosy. It is unlikely that the king would have a leprosy man in his court. Unless the king wanted to satisfy his curiosity about Elisha and talked to Gehazi at a distance. However, the text does not mention that Gehazi was a former servant of Elisha or leprosy at this point.

- Why do you think the king wants to know about Elisha?

As Gehazi is talking about the Shunamite woman’s story, she turns up to make her appeal to the king. The king orders that all that is hers be restored to her, including any proceeds from the fields from the day she left.

- Why does Jehoram do this?
- Compare Jehoram’s actions to his father, Ahab, who tried to land-grab Naboth’s land.
- Why is this story important, especially in this culture?

I read a commentary stating that this story emphasises the benefits of obedience and receiving God’s blessing.

- Discuss

The story also emphasises God as one who restores.

- Discuss

Verses 7-15: Hazael murders Ben-Hadad.

Elisha travels to Damascus where King Ben-Hadad is ill. When Ben-Hadad hears Elisha is there, he wants to know if he will survive. He sends Hazael to meet Elisha and ask if he will live. Elisha tells Hazael that Ben-Hadad will survive the illness but he will still die. Elisha stares Hazael down and then weeps, telling Hazael again he will be the next king. Elisha weeps because of the evil Hazael will do to Israel. Hazael returns to Ben Hadad, saying that he will survive the illness but then murders Ben-Hadad, becoming king in his place.

As a prophet, there seems to be times when Elisha must do things or give messages that obviously distress him. In verse 11 Elisha stares Hazael down then weeps because of what he knows Hazael will do. God seems to be stepping away from protecting Israel.

- Discuss

I wondered whether Elisha telling Hazael he would be the next king prompted Hazael to murder Ben-Hadad. Or was this Hazael showing what sort of person he was. (Remember that in [1 Kings 19:15](#), Elijah anointed Hazael King of Aram.) Elisha Instead of waiting for God to move and make him king as Elisha (and Elijah) had said would happen, Hazael takes matters in his own hands.

- Do you think that prophecy may sometimes have a dark side, prompting people to act in ways they might not have otherwise?

Verses 16-23: A new King in Judah

This section relates how the next king of Judah, Jehoram, follows the house of Ahab, being married to a daughter of Ahab. In spite of his father Jehoshaphat being one of the best kings of Judah, it says that Jehoram was one of the worst. He did evil in the eyes of the Lord but God was not will to remove Judah because of the promise he made to David that the Messiah would be a descendant of his house.

In [2 Chronicles 21:4-6](#), it says that Jehoram murdered his brothers and many other leaders to secure the throne, at the prompting of his wife Athaliah, daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. It also notes that Jehoram was struck down by a terrible and painful intestinal disease and died. [2 Chronicles 21:20](#) notes that Jehoram (also called Joram) was buried in Jerusalem but was not honoured by being buried with his ancestors.

This section also outlines how Edom rebelled against Judah and remained in rebellion. [Genesis 27: 40](#) prophecies there that, while the older brother (Esau/Edom) would serve the younger (Israel/Judah), eventually Edom would break the yoke. Judah seems to be significantly weakened during the reign of Jehoram.

This story seems to highlight the issue of human evil beside God's mercy. The reason being that God gave a promise to David.

- Discuss.

Verses 24-29: Ahaziah becomes king of Judah...

...And does evil in the eyes of the Lord because he is also of the house of Ahab. There is a repeating theme here with the ongoing ripples of the evil of the house of Ahab going down the generations, with both men and women.

- Discuss.

The last section talks about Ahaziah and Joram king of Israel going against Hazael of Aram in war and the Arameans wounding Joram, who returns to Jezreel. Ahaziah goes to visit Joram because he is injured and the chapter ends on a cliffhanger, setting us up for the next chapter.

The stories of the kings in this chapter seem to outline the way Judah is now becoming corrupted by their alliance with the house of Ahab. It seems both good and evil have a way of paying forward. I have been reading here and there that what we believe is based more on who we identify as than what the evidence says. The books of Kings seems to show plenty of evidence for Yaweh, the God of Israel and Judah, yet, we see that the kings of Judah are now aligning with pagan worship because of family alliance.

- Do we see the same today, people believe something because of who they identify with rather than what the evidence says?