

[1 Kings 13](#): VV notes for 30 May 2026

There are two parts to this chapter: Part 1 is about the next two kings of Israel and Part 2 is about the death of Elijah.

Part 1

We see the continuing fulfillment of a prophecy that the sons of Jehu would sit on the throne to the fourth generation. Jehoahaz, son of Jehu, reigns in Samaria for seventeen years and his son, Jehoash, also called Joash, reigns for 16 years. Just to clear up one confusing aspect – Jehoash of Israel and Joash of Israel are the same person and not to be confused with Joash of Judah.

We also hear the continuing refrain that the kings of Israel did evil in the eyes of the Lord. In particular, they did not remove the golden calf worship in Samaria. So, God gives Israel over to be weakened by the attacks of the kings of Syria, Hazael and his son Ben-Hadad. If we remember, Elisha was the one who told Hazael he would be king of Aram/Syria and wept when he saw the harm Hazael would do to the innocent people of Israel.

In verses 4 and 5 it says that Jehoahaz entreated the Lord and the Lord had mercy, sending a saviour/deliverer to Israel so the Israelites could escape. Most commenters point to either Joash or his heir Jeroboam as the deliverer(s) as Joash took back the towns Syria took and Jeroboam reinstated the borders of Israel (ch 14). Although God answered Jehoahaz prayers, the real issue did not change and they continued in their false worship.

This part of the story brings out the problem of only coming to God when you want something or when you're in trouble and when you get what you want you go on your merry way, unchanged. You could call this transactional prayer.

- Why do you think God answers our prayers sometimes, even if it doesn't bring about a change of heart?

During the reign of Jehoahaz, Israel was weakened by the attacks of Hazael to the point where they only had 50 horsemen, 10 chariots and 10,000 soldiers. While God allowed the Israelites to escape from their oppression, in the longer term, there were still consequences.

Not as much is said in part 1 about the reign of his son Joash, except that he also did evil in the sight of the Lord because he continued in the sins of Jeroboam, and there was civil war between Israel and Judah and Joash of Israel defeated Amaziah of Judah. [2 Chronicles 25](#) expands on the war between Israel and Judah.

- Giving Israel a deliverer seems to represent God changing his mind – first he sets up Hazael (as prophesied by Elisha) and Ben-Hadad to oppress Israel because of their idolatry but then because of Jehoahaz prayer, sends a deliverer. God seems to be both a punisher and merciful. Discuss.
- In spite of the horrors of war and the deaths of many, the text continues to focus on idolatry as the source of Israel's sin and downfall. Discuss.

Part 2

The death of Elisha and his final prophecy

A few things about Elisha: he was the son of a wealthy landowner, a disciple of Elijah, and considered a prophet of Israel and a wonder worker, including raising people from the dead. Elisha is venerated as a prophet in Judaism, Christianity, Islam and the Baha'i faith.

Elisha was active during the reigns of the kings of Israel; Joram, Jehu, Jehoahaz and Jehoash. Yet none of them forsake the golden calves set up by Jereboam. Elisha was a man of miracles, performing twice as many as Elijah. Including his miraculous crossing of the Jordan after Elijah went to heaven, to the birth and raising from the dead of the son of the woman of Shunem, raising an axe head from the water, turning poisonous food into good food, purifying water and healing Naaman of leprosy. He also made a number of prophesies in relation to the kings of Israel, Judah and Aram (including anointing Hazael king of Aram).

Elisha's final prophesy was made during his last illness, in which he predicts Jehoash will defeat the armies of Aram. Except that he will only defeat Aram three times and not entirely destroy them.

As Elisha lay dying in his home, Jehoash came to mourn for him, he utters the same words that Elisha said to Elijah as he went up to heaven. "My father, my father! The chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof!

Then Jehoash assist Elisha to fire an arrow from his window, predicting Israel's victory over Syria, who were oppressing them. It would not be a full victory though. Elisha tells Jehoash to take some arrows and strike the ground. Jehoash strikes the ground three times but Elisha is not happy because Jehoash should have struck the ground more times as each strike symbolised a victory over Syria.

Questions

Elisha dies from an illness as opposed to Elijah, who was taken up to heaven. Illness was often seen as a punishment but, it could be argued, not in Elisha's case.

- Discuss.

Following on from this, Hebrews 11 outlines many biblical heroes and talks about how they did great things yet it also talks about how others were treated cruelly and suffered many awful ways. And this was to obtain a better resurrection.

- Discuss.

Israel had not repented of their idolatry but Elisha's time was at an end. He could work with Israel no more.

- Would you consider Elisha a successful prophet, given that Israel did not finally repent of their sin?

Jehoash rushes to Elisha's side when he hears Elisha is ill, fearing what will become of Israel after Elisha dies.

- Jehoash main worry seems to be that Elisha wont be there to get him out of trouble anymore. Do we do this to God?

When Joash helps Elisha fire the arrow, Elisha says this is the arrow of Victory over Syria. Yet only striking the ground with the arrows three times undermines this victory.

- Why do you think Jehoash did not persist in striking the arrows on the ground?

A question that comes up in commentary is that it was possible that Jehoash was the deliverer promised to his father, that would help Israel defeat Syria. Yet, Jehoash does not seem fully committed, demonstrated by his only striking the ground three times and also by not getting rid of the golden calf worship in Samaria.

- Discuss

Postscript

Nothing is said of how old Elisha was when he died or his illness or the moment of his death or where his tomb is. Yet we do have a strange postscript to Elisha's passing. A man who had died was put in Elisha's tomb by those in a hurry to escape raiders. When his body touched Elisha's remains, he came back to life. Given the wonderworking stories of Elisha's earlier years, this seems to fit.

- What is your favourite miracle performed by Elisha and why?