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NEW CENTURY BIBLE COMMENTARY

Based on the Revised Standard Version

1 and 2 KINGS

VOLUME I

1 Kings 1-16:34

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it as the fulfilment of an earlier prophecy spoken by **Ahijah the Shilonite**. This deuteronimistic appendix to the material derived from the annals is probably to be ascribed to a deuteronimistic redactor possessing an interest in prophecy (DtrP, according to Dietrich, *op. cit.*, pp. 58ff., 137).

30. Ahijah's prophecy had been occasioned by the unacceptable cultic measures of Jeroboam (see on 14:9 above), and so it is emphasized here that its fulfilment was brought about for the sins of **Jeroboam**. Although the extension attached to this basic reason connects awkwardly with v. 30a, its intention is clear, for it connects the divine word spoken to Ahijah with God's anger.

32. After the standard closing formula in v. 31, MT adds the statement that there was war between **Asa and Baasha**, which is omitted from the GK. It is obviously a restatement of v. 16.

(ii) **Baasha 15:33-16:7**

Although some of Baasha's activities have already been recorded in connection with Asa (vv. 16ff.) and Nadab (vv. 27ff.), the deuteronimistic historian adds a section to present a formal report of his reign. Within the deuteronimistic introductory (15:33-34) and closing (16:5-6) formulae, there appears a prophecy denouncing Baasha by the prophet Jehu the son of Hanani (16:1-4), with a postscript in v. 7. This material is obviously derived from that strand of the tradition that was interested in prophecy (a prophetic source, according to Gray, p. 358, or DtrP, according to Dietrich, *op. cit.*, p. 47).

33. the third year of Asa, and Baasha's first, is expected to be 912 BC, but for the reasons noted above under v. 25 the date of Baasha's accession is given as 910 BC (see Table, p. 28). Whereas Nadab reigned 'over Israel' (v. 25), Baasha is said to have reigned over all Israel at Tirzah, and thus the seat of government in the north takes its place as a parallel to Jerusalem in the south (cf. the place of Tirzah in v. 33 and 16:8, 15, 23, with the place of Jerusalem in 15:2, 10). This seems to confirm the suggestion that it was Baasha who made Tirzah the capital of the northern kingdom (see on v. 21, above).

16:1 **Jehu the son of Hanani**: A prophet of the same name, according to 2 Chr. 19:2, prophesied to Jehoshaphat about half a century later. He is also mentioned in 2 Chr. 20:34 as the author of 'the chronicles of Jehu the son of Hanani'. Gray (p. 358) suggests that a prophetic source from the north had been begun by Jehu; Sanda (1, p. 412) derives the material from a Judaeic prophetic history (with 1 Kg. 12:21-24; 13). The introduction of Jehu in this passage is a doubtful basis for such postulations. The material is an

insertion that is not connected to any particular time in Baasha's reign; it is foreign to its context and is obviously based on 1 Kg. 14:7-11 (Seebass, VT 25 [1975], pp. 175-90). It can be attributed to a redactor, who has attempted to give his own theological assessment a historical context (cf. Dietrich, *ibid.*).

2-3. The threat against Baasha is similar in form and content to other threats attributed to prophets (cf. 1 Kg. 14:7-11; 21:20b-24; 2 Kg. 9:7-10a). It falls into two parts, the first in v. 2 giving the reason for condemning Baasha (introduced by *since*; Heb. *yā'an*; cf. 14:7) and the other in v. 3 announcing the threat (and introduced by *behold*). The content of vv. 2-3 is unmistakably based on 14:7-11, for the contrast in v. 2 between God's exaltation of Baasha to be leader (*nāgīd*; cf. 14:7) and the king's unfaithfulness to God is basically the same as the contrast in 14:7-9. But, whereas Jeroboam's measures are specifically listed (14:9), Baasha's activities are more generally described as *walking in the way of Jeroboam* and making *my people Israel to sin*. Again Jeroboam's punishment is specifically described (14:10), but the verdict on Baasha is that he will be swept away and his house made like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat. Verse 4 too is a repetition of 14:11. The deuteronimistic redactor has here attributed words to the prophet Jehu about the punishment of Baasha that he himself composed on the basis of his version of Ahijah's condemnation of Jeroboam. It is questionable if any of the words in vv. 2-4 (such as v. 3ff., as suggested by Gray, p. 360) can be separated from the remainder and designated as the original oracle, as was the case in 14:7-11 (see above, pp. 269f.).

5-6. The closing formula of Baasha's reign is regular, with only two slight modifications. The first, the inclusion of a reference to *and his might*, occurs also in connection with Asa (15:23) and Omri (16:27). The second, which mentions the place of his burial, has hitherto been reserved for the kings of Judah (cf. 1 Kg. 14:21; 15:8, 24).

7. The first part of this verse returns to the theme of vv. 1-4 and gives a shorter version of it. Some regard it as an appendix (see full survey in Dietrich, *op. cit.*, p. 10), but it is more probable that the original, if misplaced, tradition about Jehu has been preserved in the simple statement of v. 7a that the word of the LORD came by the prophet Jehu the son of Hanani against Baasha and his house; an extended deuteronimistic version of the original appears in vv. 1-4. Another deuteronimistic elaboration appears in the two reasons given in v. 7b for Jehu's condemnation of Baasha. The first turns around the phrase in *being like the house of Jeroboam*, and repeats the standard phrases about doing evil in the sight of the LORD and provoking him to anger, but adds the enigmatic reference to the

work of his hands. The second reason, and also because he **destroyed it** (i.e. the house of Jeroboam), is more difficult to understand. Unsatisfactory attempts have been made to avoid the difficulty, such as connecting it more closely to its context by rendering 'in spite of the fact that he had struck it down' (Montgomery, pp. 282, 289; Gray, p. 361). It is more reasonable to accept that this is a later addition in which Baasha's activities are reassessed; what was at one time regarded as God's will (15:29b, 30) is now considered to be Baasha's own work, and so merits condemnation. Würthwein (p. 195) finds another example of reassessment, and a change from a favourable to an unfavourable attitude, in the treatment of Jehu in 2 Kg. 9:1ff. and Hos. 1:4.

(iii) *Elah 16:8-14*

The reign of Elah as reported here is in many ways parallel to the reign of Nadab. Both kings were removed through conspiracy, which is again reported in the standard annalistic form for reporting an uprising (cf. vv. 9-10 with 15:27-28). It is also possible to construe the two revolts as expressions of an objection to a hereditary monarchy, for the two deposed kings were Nadab, who succeeded his father Jeroboam, and Elah, who succeeded his father Baasha (see above, on 15:27). The two conspiracy reports have also acquired as an addition a statement that a prophecy had been fulfilled (cf. v. 12 with 15:29).

8. Elah's reign began in the twenty-sixth year of Asa, which is given in the Table (p. 28) as 887 BC. His reign was short-lived, for he was killed in the following year; but in Hebrew reckoning a reign of a few months spanned two years.

9. The form for presenting an uprising report outlined under 15:27 is followed here. Unlike the previous case, the conspirator's father is not named, and Zimri is described as **his servant and commander of half his chariots**. Zimri, whose name shares a common element with Zimri-ilm of Mari, is not connected with one of the Israelite tribes like Baasha. If it is pure coincidence that his revolt, like Baasha's, was aimed at a hereditary monarchy, it may be suggested that his bid for the throne was an attempt to represent the army's discontent because Elah was militarily ineffective and preferred to remain in Tirzah, whilst the troops were encamped at Gibbethon (cf. v. 15). Elah was slain during a drinking bout in the house of Arza, whose office is described as being over the household, which means that he was in charge of crown lands at Tirzah (so Noth, p. 347; Gray, p. 361; cf. 1 Kg. 4:6).

10. Three of the five elements in the uprising report follow each

other in close succession in this verse; Zimri struck him down, killed him and reigned in his stead.

11. Although this verse basically repeats 15:29, there are some slight changes. To the simple repetition of **when he began to reign** from v. 29, is added a variant, **as soon as he had seated himself upon the throne**, and the reference to a single male receives an extension in the phrase of **his kinsmen or his friends**.

12. Again there is a repetition of 15:30, but with the difference that Baasha's house was destroyed to fulfil the word of the LORD, which he spoke against Baasha by Jehu the prophet, with a clear allusion to vv. 1-4.

13. As in 15:30, the king's downfall is attributed to his sin against God rather than to personal or political failure. Exactly as Nadab the son bore the punishment of the house of Jeroboam, so was Elah punished because his father Baasha and he himself had sinned and made Israel to sin. Like the house of Jeroboam, the house of Baasha too was guilty of provoking the LORD, but in this instance it is clearly specified that they did so with their idols. The word used for idols, *nebalim* which means 'vanities', occurs elsewhere in deuteronomistic works (Dt. 32:21; 2 Kg. 17:15) to emphasize the nothingness of alien gods (Hoffmann, *Reform*, p. 360).

14. The closing formula is identical with 15:31.

(iv) *Zimri 16:15-20*

Although Zimri's reign lasted no more than seven days, he is reckoned as one of the kings of Israel by the deuteronomistic historian. The introductory formula, with the usual synchronisation with the king of Judah, is found in v. 15a, and the closing formula in v. 20. The material within these formulae relates how Zimri lost the kingship to Omri.

15. the twenty-seventh year of Asa: This is given as 886 BC in the Table (pp. 28). Zimri's reign of merely seven days was so short that he probably did not move out of Tirzah after seizing the throne from Elah. The reading of 'seven years' in the Codex Vaticanus is certainly not correct. On Gibbethon, see 15:27, above.

16. It does not become clear from the narrative why Zimri's conspiracy was so unacceptable. The words attributed to the troops at Gibbethon, Zimri has conspired, and he has killed the king, are equally appropriate of Baasha's murder of Nadab at Gibbethon (see 15:27f., above); and that was accepted without any protest or rejection. The move at Gibbethon to depose Zimri must be a reflection of a division of allegiance among the troops, either between the chariotry and the infantry (as suggested by Noth, p. 349), or else between the professional army and the militia (cf. Soggin, *Königum*,

p. 99). **Omri**, who was favoured by the troops at Gibbethon, is described as **the commander of the army**, whereas Zimri was 'commander of half the chariots' (v. 9). Omri is not given a lineage, and his name seems to be derived from Arabic; cf. 'Omar (Noth, *Personennamen*, p. 63). Whether he was a foreigner, who had become involved in the affairs of Israel because of his presence there with mercenary troops, or a man of Canaanite extraction, but whose community at Jezreel had been long ago incorporated into Israel (Gray, pp. 364f.), the support given him by the troops did not give him unhindered access to the throne (see on vv. 21, 22 below). Although it is said that **all Israel** made him king, it is obvious that only certain representatives of Israel were involved, which explains why Omri had to besiege Tirzah (v. 17) and had to wait some years before being acclaimed king of Israel (vv. 21-22).

17. Omri's march from **Gibbethon** was completed quickly and the siege of Tirzah made instantly effective, for, according to v. 15, the whole matter was over in a matter of seven days.

18. **the city was taken**: Zimri realized either that the whole city apart from the royal residence was in Omri's hands, or else that the siege was so effective that defence of the city was useless. **the citadel of the king's house**: *NEB*, 'the keep of the royal palace'. The citadel (Heb. *'armôn*) probably denotes the living quarters which were located in a fairly secure and perhaps well-fortified part of the palace complex. **and burned the king's house**: As in the case of the other verbs in the context, the subject is Zimri.

19. This verse, despite its familiar content (cf. 15:30; 16:13), does not fit well into the context. The account of Zimri's short reign finishes with the statement in v. 18 that he died, but the statement that he walked in the way of Jeroboam **making Israel to sin** is hardly appropriate for such a short reign, and must be taken as a later addition. It is unnecessary, however, to make it a post-deuteronomistic addition (with Noth, pp. 349ff.), but more appropriately it might be regarded as an insertion from a later deuteronomistic redactor (DutN, according to Dietrich, *op. cit.*, p. 137).

20. The short deuteronomistic closing formula (cf. 15:31; 16:14) shows a slight variation in the replacement of 'all that he did' by **and the conspiracy which he made**. The implication is that the deuteronomistic historian found a fuller account of the conspiracy in the source behind this section.

(v) *Tibni and Omri* 16:21-22

The short note in vv. 21-22 summarizes the position after the death of Zimri. Omri, despite being acclaimed king by the troops and being also able to depose Zimri in a matter of days, was not accept-

able to all the people of Israel and had to wait four or five years before he could fully claim the throne. Whilst Omri had the support of the professional troops and mercenaries, Tibni was chosen by the popular assembly; the clash is thus interpreted by Soggin (*BitOr* 29 [1975], p. 53) as a clash between legitimacy, tradition and democracy (represented by Tibni) and the principle of institutional forms of government (represented by Omri, who succeeded in establishing a dynasty).

Tibni is not reckoned as king in the deuteronomistic scheme; he is not formally presented with the usual formula, and the very short notice of his contention for the throne is introduced by the joining 'then', suggesting that material derived from an archival source is being introduced. Soggin, however, claims that the sparse reference to Tibni is not due to the derivation of this material from annals, but rather to the deliberate design of an editor who was determined to expunge Tibni from the list of Israelite kings. It is suggested (Soggin, *op. cit.*, p. 51) that during the gap between Omri's siege of the royal residence in Asa's twenty-seventh year and his accession in Asa's thirty-first year, Tibni reigned as monarch; his reign was one of some significance because he was the last king elected by popular assembly. However, there is no conclusive evidence that Tibni held the throne, and on the facts available to us, it seems more reasonable to think of this period as one in which two rival contenders for the throne gained the support of different groups among the Israelite community.

21. **the people of Israel**: In this instance the phrase refers to the whole people, rather than to the representative body called 'all Israel' in v. 16. Omri's rival is called **Tibni the son of Ginath**, whose name may bear some similarity to the Akkad. Tabni-ēa and the Phoenician Tabnith; another possibility is that it is a nickname, 'the man of straw' in contrast to Omri, 'the man of the sheaf' (cf. Gray, p. 365). Nothing is known of Tibni or of his father; but the naming of his father is, according to Soggin (*op. cit.*, p. 53), an indication that he represented legitimacy. It is also noted that the phrase **to make him king** is applied to Tibni, not to Omri, and that a distinction is intended between Tibni, the monarch, and Omri, the contender. But the view taken here is that both contended for a vacant throne, each gaining the support of half the people. Although the likelihood is that Omri was supported by the troops and Tibni by the popular assembly, there are other possibilities; Omri may have been the nominee of Canaanite elements, Tibni of the Israelite population, or else the two of them represented different tribal groups (cf. Yeivin, *WHJP*, pp. 137, 333).

22. It is not certain whether this verse takes the success of Omri

as preceding the death of Tibni, which was presumably a natural death (Noth, pp. 350ff.), or takes Omri's success and Tibni's death in conjunction, and understands the latter as an act of violence (so Josephus, *An.* viii.12.5). The additional reference of LXX to his brother Joram (which is defended as original by Burney, p. 203; cf. Soggin, *op. cit.*, p. 50) may again be interpreted as an implication that a period of time had elapsed and both brothers had died, or more likely that both were killed by Omri in his bid for the throne. It is more reasonable to accept the implication that both were suppressed by Omri than to take **died** here as natural death or as implying simply that he was divested of royal authority (as by Miller, *VT* 18 [1968], pp. 392-4).

(vi) *Omri 16:23-28*

In contrast to the dismissal of Tibni, without even the usual formal presentation, Omri receives the standard treatment from the deuteronomists. The introductory formula (v. 23), the deuteronomistic judgment on his reign (vv. 25-26) and the closing formula (vv. 27-28) are all present in this case. No details are given about his reign except that he bought Samaria and fortified it (v. 24), and by implication made it his capital instead of Tirzah (v. 23).

Although the deuteronomist's information about Samaria in v. 24 has been obtained from the annals, he is open to criticism on two points: (i) The significance of establishing Samaria as the capital of the northern dynasty, and making it equal in status to Jerusalem, the capital of the Davidic dynasty, has been ignored (see below, on v. 24). (ii) Because of the severe deuteronomistic verdict on Omri, other important aspects of his reign have been totally disregarded. Extra-biblical evidence points to the political significance of the house of Omri. According to the inscription of Mesha, king of Moab (c. 840 BC), Omri was a powerful king, who oppressed Moab and took possession of the more northerly Medeba, both in Transjordan (*ANET*, pp. 320ff.; *DOTT*, pp. 195ff.). The Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III (859-824 BC) (*ANET*, p. 28; *DOTT*, p. 48) and the Annals of Tiglath-pileser III (743-732 BC) suggest that northern Israel was known as 'the house of Omri' (Donner, *IJH*, pp. 399ff.; Herrmann, *History*, pp. 206ff.; and especially Timm, *Die Dynastie*, pp. 157-245).

23. **In the thirty-first year of Asa:** Both Ela (v. 8) and Zimri (v. 15) had died in 'the twenty-seventh year of Asa', which is given in the Table above as 886 BC, but Omri did not receive general acknowledgement as king over Israel until the **thirty-first year**, i.e. 882 BC. From 886 to 882 BC, the two rival contenders for the throne were co-regents. On the particular difficulties presented by the

chronological details of the reign of Omri, see above, pp. 22f. His reign of **twelve years** is given in the Table above (p. 28) as 886-875 BC. **six years he reigned in Tirzah:** The account of the purchase of Samaria in v. 24 and the statement that he was buried in Samaria (v. 28), imply that it replaced Tirzah as the capital of the northern kingdom.

24. The purchase of Samaria (modern *Sebastiyeh*) by Omri and its fortification was an important event in the political development of the northern kingdom. Although the impression given in this verse is that **the hill of Samaria** was virgin ground, excavations of the site indicate that it had been previously occupied and that, when Omri bought it, a village stood on the site. The excavations have also shown the importance of the buildings constructed on the site, first by Omri and more extensively by his son Ahab (Ackroyd, *AOTS*, pp. 343-54).

The implications of the move to Samaria can only be fully understood in the context of Omri's successful attempt to found a dynasty in the north. Whereas previous attempts by Jeroboam and Baasha had failed, Omri established a dynasty that lasted for about 130 years. He bought Samaria as a personal possession, exactly as David had acquired Jerusalem, and therefore was free to bequeath it to his children and thus found a dynasty (cf. Alt, *Kleine Schriften III*, pp. 258-302). It has also been noted that Samaria, being in a Canaanite region, and possibly belonging to a Canaanite community called 'Shemer' (Gray, pp. 366ff.; Ackroyd, *op. cit.*, p. 344), had no Israelite connections, and so became a centre for elements that were alien to the Israelite population.

The choice of Samaria was well advised. It was not far from the coastal plain, and, because it had access to it through various valleys, Samaria could take advantage of the coastal plain and its main route between north and south. To the north it had access to Megiddo and Jezreel, which was another important centre for the northern kingdom (cf. 1 Kg. 21:2; 2 Kg. 9); to the east stood Shechem and Tirzah and the line of communication along the Jordan valley southward towards Jerusalem.

As Noth (p. 353) rightly observes, the tradition about the purchase of Samaria has been worked over and received some accretions from popular aetiology. It is unlikely that Omri would choose to call his new capital after the name of its previous owner. Moreover, the Heb. *šōmryōn* has a similar ending to other names of mountains (such as Zion, Zalmon, Hermon, Lebanon), and as noted above it was not a new site as is suggested by this account. The reference to Shemer provides a popular aetiology for the name Samaria, and it may be (as suggested by Noth) that the basic text

in v. 24b read 'he called the name of the city which he built after the name of the hill of Samaria'.

25-26. Omri, in the judgment of the deuteronomists, **did more evil than all who were before him**; cf. also vv. 3, 33 of Ahab. No specific evil is mentioned, but he is said to have **walked in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat**; cf. also 1 Kg. 15:33; 16:19.

27-28. The account of Omri's reign is concluded with the usual deuteronomistic reference to source, which has an account of **the might that he showed**; cf. also v. 5 and 1 Kg. 15:23. For the first time it is recorded that a king of the northern kingdom **was buried in Samaria**; cf. the parallel references to Jerusalem in connection with the southern kings (1 Kg. 15:8, 24). Ahab's name may mean 'the brother of the father', implying that he resembled the father (Noth, *Persönennamen*, p. 222). For other possible meanings, see Gray, p. 367.

(vii) *Ahab 16:29-34*

Only the opening formula for Ahab's reign appears in this section (v. 29); it is followed by the deuteronomistic judgment of his reign (v. 30). The closing formula is postponed until after the narrative about Elijah and an account of the Syrian wars; it thus appears in 1 Kg. 22:39ff. The present summary account of Ahab's reign has selected for attention his marriage with Jezebel (v. 31a) and the consequent cultic measures introduced by Ahab (vv. 31b-33); the selection obviously presupposes the Elijah narratives that follow. An unconnected note on the building of Jericho appears in v. 34.

29. the thirty-eighth year of Asa: Ahab succeeded his father in 875 BC and reigned for twenty-two years, i.e. until 854 BC.

30. The deuteronomistic judgment on Ahab, that **he did evil . . . more than all that were before him**, corresponds to the judgment on Omri in v. 25 (see further, Hoffmann, *Reform*, pp. 78-82).

31. In Ahab's case, unlike that of Omri, concrete examples of the king's evil ways are cited. They are all connected with what surpasses even **the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat**, namely, **that he took for wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians**. The name Jezebel, which may have come originally from a cultic cry meaning 'Where is the Prince (i.e. Baal)?', probably contains a sarcastic pun in Heb., because *zebel* means 'dung' (Montgomery, p. 291; Gray, p. 368). Her father's name, **Ethbaal**, is to be identified with Ithobaal, named in the annals of the Phoenician kings attributed to Menander (cf. Josephus, *Ant.* VIII.13.2; *Ap.* i.18). He took the throne by force and reigned as king of the Tyrians and Sidonians for 32 years (c. 887-856 BC; Liver, *IEJ* 3 [1953], pp. 113-20). The title **king of the Sidonians** may have been used

generically for all the Phoenicians. Menander describes Ithobaal as 'priest of Astarte' (see also on 1 Kg. 11:5), which may explain Jezebel's zeal for the Tyrian cult and Ahab's provisions for her, repeating in Samaria what had already occurred in Jerusalem under Solomon (cf. 1 Kg. 11:1ff.). Ahab's marriage had political implications, which are ignored by the deuteronomistic historian in his eagerness to outline its religious implications and to condemn Ahab on that basis. Ahab's marriage to Jezebel was undoubtedly part of the political alliance between Israel and Phoenicia, which were both at this time threatened by Syria. Damascus had already seized territory in Galilee (cf. 1 Kg. 15:20), and it was advantageous for Israelite and Phoenician commercial interests for them to join against the Syrians. Israel may also have reaped a small benefit from the alliance in that it regained the region of Mount Carmel from the Tyrians (cf. Donner, *IFH*, p. 403). **and went and served Baal and worshipped him:** This sentence records in true deuteronomistic style that Ahab participated in Baal worship (cf. Jos. 23:7).

32. He erected an altar for Baal: It is possible that the altar was built for the use of Jezebel, members of her court who had accompanied her from Phoenicia and any foreign visitors to Samaria. The Yahweh-theophoric names given by Ahab to his children (Ahaziah, 1 Kg. 22:51; Jehoram, 2 Kg. 3:1, and Athaliah, 2 Kg. 8:26, 11:2) can be construed as evidence that he was a Yahweh worshipper. Nevertheless, there are indications that the Baal cult established in Samaria was intended for the use of the whole population, Ahab included. Whilst there is no actual record that he built a shrine for Yahweh in Samaria, it is categorically stated that the altar for Baal was **in the house of Baal, which he built in Samaria**. Due to their Canaanite ancestry, the Omrides wished to provide a shrine for the Canaanite population of the northern kingdom, and it is in this context that the move to establish a Baal cult in Samaria is to be understood. It is also known that there was a Yahweh cult in Jezreel, their second capital (1 Kg. 21; 2 Kg. 9-10); although this may suggest a dualistic policy of establishing a Baal cult in Samaria for the Canaanites and a Yahweh cult in Jezreel for the Israelites, it is difficult to believe that the capital of the northern kingdom had not become a centre of Yahweh worship (see further, Timm, *op. cit.*, pp. 142-57). However, the strength of the opposition to the Baal cult of Samaria confirms that it was intended to serve as a state cult in the new metropolis (cf. Donner, *IFH*, pp. 403f.). **Baal**, which in Heb. has a definite article, means 'the lord, the owner'. Because of Ahab's marriage to Jezebel, it is probable that the Baal worshipped in Samaria was the Tyrian high-god Melqart.

33. Ahab made an Asherah: see on 1 Kg. 14:15 above. **Ahab**

did more to provoke the LORD: For this deuteronomistic comment see also on v. 30.

34. In his days: This is clearly an editorial link to connect an occurrence recorded in archival sources with the present account of the reign of Ahab. **Hiel of Bethel built Jericho:** Hiel, called Ahiel in the Gk., is unknown, and his action in rebuilding Jericho was probably derived from local popular tradition. Despite the destruction of Jericho's fortifications by Joshua (Jos. 6), the city remained a settlement (Jos. 18:21; Jg. 3:13; 2 Sam. 10:5; see also Kenyon, *Jericho*, pp. 263ff.), and therefore **built** in this verse can refer to no more than rebuilding or fortifying (although there is very little archaeological evidence of this; cf. Kenyon, *AOTS*, p. 274; Franken, *OS* 14 [1965], pp. 189-200). It has been suggested that any rebuilding was undertaken with Ahab's authority (Sanda I, pp. 410ff.) and was probably connected with his activities against Mesha of Moab (cf. above, p. 296, on Omri; also 1 Kg. 22:39). The **foundation** was laid at the cost of Abiram his first-born and the **gates at the cost of his youngest son Segub**. The meaning of this reference is far from clear. One suggestion is that this verse implies foundation sacrifice, a practice that is attested by archaeological evidence (Cook, *Religion*, pp. 82ff.; Trumbull, *Threshold*, pp. 46ff.), especially lately by the discovery of two new-born infants buried at the gate of *Tell Far'at* (cf. de Vaux, *RB* 58 [1951], pp. 401-3). Doubt has been cast on the validity of this suggestion by the probability that infant bodies found buried in houses do not bear witness to sacrifice and merely indicate that it was customary to bury infants in their own homes. Another possible explanation that has been offered here is that the sons of the builder had died during the building project, and that this in popular belief became connected with the idea that the site was under a curse. A more extreme version is that the builder's entire family was wiped out because the spring of the city had been contaminated; this later gave Elisha occasion to purify it (so Blake, *PEQ* 99 [1967], pp. 86-97), **which he spoke by Joshua the son of Nun**: The death of Hiel's sons is attributed to the curse of Joshua on anyone rebuilding Jericho (Jos. 6:26). It may well be that in popular local tradition a curse was associated with the fortifications of Jericho; it is evident, however, that the form of the curse given in Jos. 6:26 has been formulated on the basis of this curse in Kings, which was apparently known to the author (Montgomery, p. 288; cf. Dietrich, *op. cit.*, pp. 111ff.).