

## **Did Elijah send a letter to Jehoram, King of Judah, after his ascension into heaven?**

### **Abstract**

In our English Bible translations, we read in 2Kings 2 that Elijah was taken up into heaven in a chariot of fire. 2Kings 3 as well as Josephus (Ant. Book 9, 3.1) relates that King Jehoshaphat joined in military action against the Moabites and received advice from Elisha, who was Elijah's successor. However, 2Chronicles 21 relates that Elijah sent a letter to Jehoram, who was king of Judah after Jehoshaphat. If, as it appears, the text of 2Kings preserves the chronological order of events, how could Elijah send a letter to Jehoram, if he had already been taken up into heaven during the reign of Jehoshaphat?

Some say Elijah's letter was written and delivered to King Jehoram of Judah from heaven since the prophet had already ascended in a whirlwind. Others think the letter might have been partially written prior to Elijah's ascension and only delivered later. They cannot say it was fully written since there was information in the letter from recent events that occurred after Elijah's ascension. Some explain that the letter from Elijah came earlier, before Elijah's ascension and before Jehoshaphat's death, while Jehoram reigned as co-regent with his father. Some also surmise that the 2Kings 3 account of Elisha's association with the Moab battle situation and Jehoshaphat may have been as Elijah's representative (prior to his ascension) and that whole account in 2Kings was arranged by the Chronicler on a topical, rather than a chronological, basis.

My solution to this question is based on the textual differences between the Lucianic text of the Septuagint (LXX) and other versions of 2Kings. These versions include not only the Masoretic Text (MT) and all English translations based on the MT, but also the so-called "Kaige" recension of the Septuagint (KR) which Greek text is presented in sizable portions of 1 & 2 Kings in all currently printed/published versions of the LXX. These large Kaige text portions comprise all of 2Samuel 10:1 through 1Kings 2:11 and the entirety of 1Kings 22 through 2Kings 25. The Lucianic text (also called the Antiochian text) is represented by the following manuscripts: *boc<sub>2</sub>e<sub>2</sub>*. As of this writing, the Lucianic Greek text of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles has not been made widely available for scholarly community apart from the apparatus of the (Larger) Cambridge Septuagint by Brooke, McLean, and Thackeray. The Greek Lucianic text was printed in three volumes by a Spanish language publisher entitled, "El texto antioqueno de la Biblia griega," (out of print – see References). Hereafter, the Lucianic text of the Septuagint will be designated as LXX-L, while the Kaige Recension will be abbreviated LXX-KR.

In comparison with the MT and LXX-KR in 1 & 2 Kings, LXX-L should be regarded as representing the "Old Greek" of the Septuagint. Therefore, it should generally be prioritized in matters of text criticism since it likely represents a translation from an older and more reliable Hebrew text in the Hebrew Kings. As will become evident, in this case regarding the letter from Elijah, textual differences between text families can and do impact the content and order of Biblical events in terms of underlying chronological assumptions.

We will conclude that, according to the chronology of the LXX-L, there is no issue. This is because Elijah had not yet ascended when the letter was sent to Jehoram-J. As we will see at the conclusion of this investigation, the most crucial considerations relate to the regnal chronology and the identification of the king of Judah who accompanied Jehoram of Israel. \*

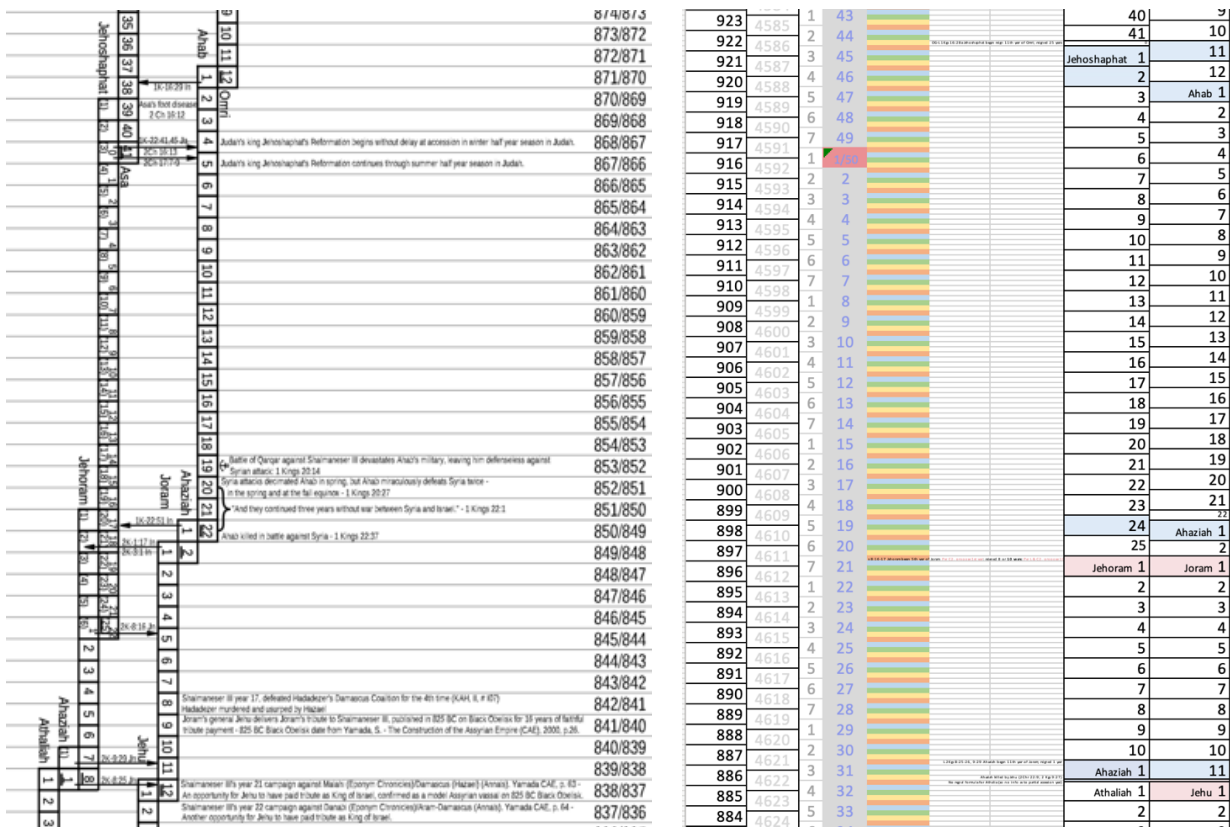
\*Note: Some kings had alternate names or names that were the same as other kings. In order to avoid confusion, this presentation will use alternate names when possible and/or designate which kingdom (Judah or Israel) a given king was associated with by using a "-J" or "-I" after the king's name.

## Chronology

Before going further, it may be helpful to provide some chronological context by comparing the MT vs the LXX-L regnal chronologies as they bear upon this portion of Israel's history. A full presentation of the timeline and justification for each Hebrew Kings timeline would go far beyond the scope of this proposal. Both illustrations below present *absolute* chronologies. They happen to be 49 years apart, but that aspect is not essential to the argument. They will at least provide a brief orientation regarding the basic similarities and differences in the *relative* chronology.

The illustration on the right is my own proposal based on the LXX-L.

The illustration on the left is from Vilis Ivars Lietuviētis, "Correcting Edwin Thiele's Crippled Chronology: Corrective Surgery of Edwin Thiele's Chronological Mistakes Confirms the Historicity of the Masoretic Text" Edition 1.0 (10 March 2021). I choose to utilize Lietuviētis rather than one of the more well-known representatives of the "Thiele" school (such as Leslie McFall or Roger Young) since he is an independent researcher who's more recent self-described "adaptations ... and improvements" mostly preserve (and from that perspective, correct) Thiele's basic chronological conclusions.



While some may argue differently, since the order of events in 2Kings 1-3 and 2Chronicles 21 is most likely chronological rather than topical, we will initially discuss the events as presented in the texts of both the MT and the LXX. When possible, I will also state my assessment of the likely absolute date (or at least date range) for each event.

### 1. The reign of Jehoram-I (Joram) after the Ahaziah-I's death ~Tishri, 897 BC 2Kings 1:17-18 in MT plus 19-22 in LXX

Conventional explanations assume the MT text and Edwin Thiele's chronology. The conventional view holds that Jehoram-J ruled with his father, Jehoshaphat, for the final 5 or 6 years of his father's reign.

However, according to the Lucianic chronology, Jehoram-J began to reign after his father died (with no co-regency). The idea of a coregency is never stated. Co-regencies are a key part of Thiele's (unfounded) methodology in resolving the chronological issues of the MT text.

All the texts agree that Jehoshaphat ruled 25 years in Judah.

Jehoram-J ruled after his father. The MT/LXX-KR says he ruled for 8 years, while the LXX-L varies with 8 or 10 years (three LXX-L witness side with 10 years).

After Jehoram-J, Ahaziah-J ruled 1 year before he was assassinated by Jehu.

2Kings 1:17-18 are the last two verses of the chapter in most English versions (which are based on the MT text).

However, the texts of the various versions differ at the end of 2Kings 1 (prior to the story of Elijah's ascension in 2Kings 2).

#### 2Kings 1:17-18 ESV

17 So, he died according to the word of the LORD that Elijah had spoken. Jehoram became king in his place in the second year of Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, because Ahaziah had no son.

18 Now the rest of the acts of Ahaziah that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?

However, the LXX-L varies with regard to 1:17 and then supplies four additional verses lacking in the MT. These verses supply the regnal summary information (likely as a set up for what follows).

Note: Jehoram-I is hereafter called Joram to distinguish him from king Jehoram-J especially since their rules overlapped to a great extent.

#### 2Kings 1:17-18 LXX-L

17 καὶ ἀπέθανεν Ὁχοζείας κατὰ τὸ ρῆμα Κυρίου ὃ ἐλάλησεν Ἡλίας, καὶ ἐβασίλευσεν Ἰωράμ ὁ ἀδελφὸς Ὁχοζείου αὐτοῦ, ὅτι οὐκ ἦν αὐτῷ υἱός.

and Ahaziah died according to the word of the Lord which Elijah spoke, and Joram, the brother of Ahaziah, reigned in his place, because he did not have his own son."

18 καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ τῶν λόγων Ὁχοζείου καὶ πάντα ὅσα ἐποίησεν, οὐκ ἰδοῦ ταῦτα γέγραπται ἐπὶ βιβλίου λόγων ἡμερῶν τῶν βασιλέων Ἰσραὴλ;

and the rest of the history of Ahaziah and all that he did, Behold, are these things not written on a book of history of the days of the kings Israel?

Although we already know from the MT text that both Ahaziah-I and Joram were the sons of Ahab (1Kings 22:48, 2Kings 1:19 and 3:1), the LXX-L text of 2Kings 1:17 specifies their relationship in another way by explaining that Joram was the *brother* of Ahaziah-I.

LXX-L of 2Kings 1:19-22 relates that Joram began his reign synchronized with Jehoram-J rather than Jehoshaphat (as in the MT/LXX-KR).

LXX-KR text (same as MT):

2Kings 1:19

“Jehoram, the son of Ahab, reigned over Israel in Samaria twelve years, beginning in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah.”

LXX-L text:

19 καὶ Ἰωράμ υἱὸς Ἀχαάβ βασιλεύει ἐπὶ Ἰσραὴλ ἐν  
Σαμαρεία ἔτη δέκα δύο  
ἐν ἔτει δευτέρῳ τοῦ Ἰωράμ υἱοῦ Ἰωσαφάτ  
βασιλέως Ἰούδα  
ἐβασίλευσεν Ἰωράμ υἱὸς Ἀχαάβ ἐν Σαμαρεία.

20 καὶ ἐποίησε τὸ πονηρὸν ἐνώπιον Κυρίου,  
πλὴν οὐχ ὡς οἱ ἀδελφοὶ αὐτοῦ  
οὐδέ ὡς ἡ μήτηρ αὐτοῦ.

21 καὶ ἀπέστησε τὰς στήλας τοῦ Βάαλ ἃς ἐποίησεν ὁ  
πατὴρ αὐτοῦ, καὶ συνέτριψεν αὐτάς,  
πλὴν ἐν ταῖς ἀμαρτίαις οἴκου Ἰεροβοάμ υἱοῦ Ναβάτ,  
ὅς ἐξήμαρτε τον Ἰσραὴλ, ἐκολλήθη·  
οὐκ ἀπέστη ἀπ’ αὐτῶν.

22 καὶ ἐθυμώθη ὀργὴ Κύριος ἐπ’ αὐτῶν  
καὶ ἐπὶ τον οἶκον Ἀχαάβ.

And Joram, son of Ahab reigned over Israel in  
Samaria twelve years ( $c_2$  = eleven years).  
In the second year ( $c_2$  = first year) of Jehoram,  
son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah,  
Joram, son of Ahab, reigned as king in Samaria.

and he did evil before the Lord,  
but not as his brothers  
nor as his mother.

And he removed the pillars of Baal that his father  
made and broke them into pieces;  
nevertheless, he clung to the sins of the house of  
Jeroboam, son of Nebat, which caused Israel to sin.  
He did not depart from them.

And the Lord's anger was kindled against him  
and against the house of Ahab.

In these additional LXX verses, 1:19 provides alternative regnal years and synchronization for Joram than what is witnessed in the MT at 2Kings 1:17 and 3:1. The MT and LXX-KR and most of LXX-L agree regarding the twelve-year reign of Joram of Israel. However, the LXX-L  $c_2$  differs regarding both number of regnal years and the synchronization. The MT leaves itself open to question in this regard since the MT text is seemingly inconsistent with itself regarding this synchronization. 2Kings 1:17 in the MT states Joram became king in the *second year of Jehoram-J*, while the MT of 2Kings 3:1 states this synchronization occurred in the *18<sup>th</sup> year of Jehoshaphat*. The Thiele school surmises a coregency to resolve this inconsistency.

As mentioned above, the LXX-L manuscript  $c_2$  supplies an 11-year rule for Joram that began in Jehoram-J's 1<sup>st</sup> year. The  $c_2$  synchronization of Joram-I with Jehoram-J's 1<sup>st</sup> year along with 11-year reign, actually fits within the constraints of the timeline. So, the reading of  $c_2$  should be preferred despite the differences in both regnal years and synchronization – which are very likely due to differences in accounting methodology. That is, while most LXX redactors utilized what is called the “non-accession year” method of reckoning,  $c_2$  seems to have abandoned that methodology and instead, systematically simplified the synchronisms (more often the synchronisms / less often the number of regnal years). This leads to a neat but somewhat artificial method of dating where the last year of king A is followed immediately by the 1<sup>st</sup> year of king B without any intervening partial year that might otherwise be counted as an accession year. Although the  $c_2$  text may be criticized on that account, these differences of  $c_2$  from the other Lucianic texts are often instructive because they reflect the thoughtful work of an early editor who seems to have grappled with chronological issues (just as we do today - only with probably better sources). While the majority reading of the LXX-L may be technically correct, the simplification of  $c_2$ , though slightly blurred, is actually clear enough for accounting purposes. We should understand that Jehoram-J's accession likely followed immediately after Jehoshaphat died. Then, when the partial year of his rule was completed (i.e., whatever few months remained until the new civil year), Jehoraam-J began a new, full regnal year in the month of Tishri. This full year would have been counted as his second year by the other LXX-L texts, while  $c_2$  counted

it as Jehoram-J's first. In the whole chronological timeline, it was probably at this same time (at Tishri), that Joram-I also began his reign. For more information and an in-depth study of the regnal synchronization accounting methodology in the LXX text, see further, James Donald Shenkel's "Chronology and Recensional Development in the Greek Text of Kings" Harvard University Press, Harvard Semitic Monographs; 1, Reprint 2014, 1968. Shenkel notably illustrates the differences in methodology on p. 78, utilizing the example of Jehu. In that case, because Joram and Ahaziah were slain simultaneously by Jehu, it follows that Jehu and Athaliah effectively began their rule at the same time. Shenkel exploits the knowledge of this abrupt end to the early divided kingdom to show how different synchronism methodology accounts for how the reigns of Jehu and Athaliah are portrayed in the text.

## 2. The Ascension of Elijah

### 2Kings 2:1-18

Based on the "set-up" at the end of 2Kings 1, Elijah must have been translated sometime after Jehoram-I began to reign. Readers may wish to jump to the conclusion of this investigation for an estimated date range for Elijah's ascension.

2Kings 2:11b καὶ ἀνελήμφθη Ἡλίου ἐν συσσεισμῷ ὡς εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν.

"and Elijah was taken up in a whirlwind as into heaven."

The LXX uses the simple aorist passive of the Greek word ἀναλαμβάνω (to lift up and carry/take away) to describe what happened to Elijah. May be worth noting the use of a subordinate conjunction ὡς (meaning as or like). Elijah was taken up in a whirlwind "as into the heaven."

This is probably a carefully selected language of appearance. Although this looked like he went into heaven when they lost sight of him, some also searched far and wide and could not find him. Yet the text makes it clear that Elisha and the prophets always knew the true fate of Elijah (that he would not be found).

Note the centrality of Elijah's ascension in the outline of the Elijah-Elisha cycle

Credit: The outline below has been modified from J R Lundbom, "Elijah's Chariot Ride." Journal of Jewish Studies 24 (1973): 39-50, 1973.

a. 2Kgs 1:1-8	Samaria
b. 2Kgs 1:9-18	Unnamed Mtn
c. 2Kgs 2:1	Gilgal
d. 2Kgs 2:2-3	Bethel
e. 2Kgs 2:4-5	Jericho
f. 2Kgs 2:6-7	Jordan River
x 2Kgs 2:8-12	Transjordan - Elijah's Ascension
f' 2Kgs 2:13-14	Jordan River
e' 2Kgs 2:15-20	Jericho
2Kgs 2:21-22	Unnamed Spring
d' 2Kgs 2:23-24	Bethel (2:23-24)
c'	(no Gilgal, yet seven locations retained considering Unnamed Spring before Bethel)
b' 2Kgs 2:25a	Mt Carmel (2:25)
a' 2Kgs 2:25b	Samaria (2:25)

### 3. The King of Judah aligned with Jehoram-I, king of Israel, to assist him fighting Moab 2 Kings 3

According to the LXX-L, Jehoshaphat had already died in the months before the reign of Joram. Instead, the LXX-L text states that the king of Judah who teamed up with Joram was Ahaziah-J. Thus, according to the LXX-L chronology, this battle takes place sometime ~10 years later, during the reign of Ahaziah-J (late 887/886 BC according to my LXX-L chronology). Ahaziah-J reigned in Joram-I's 11<sup>th</sup> year – and only for 1 year before he was assassinated (along with Joram) by Jehu.

#### 2Kings 3:7 LXX-KR

καὶ ἐπορεύθη καὶ ἐξαπέστειλεν πρὸς Ἰωσαφατ βασιλέα Ἰουδα λέγων...  
...καὶ εἶπεν Ἀναβήσομαι  
“And he went and sent to Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, saying...”  
...And he said, “I will go.”

#### 2Kings 3:9 LXX-KR

καὶ ἐπορεύθη ὁ βασιλεὺς Ἰσραὴλ καὶ ὁ βασιλεὺς Ἰουδα καὶ ὁ βασιλεὺς Ἐδωμ  
“And the king of Israel went with the king of Judah and the king of Edom...”

#### 2Kings 3:11 LXX-KR

καὶ εἶπεν Ἰωσαφατ Οὐκ ἔστιν ὧδε προφήτης τοῦ κυρίου καὶ ἐπιζητήσωμεν τὸν κύριον παρ αὐτοῦ; καὶ ἀπεκρίθη εἰς τῶν παίδων βασιλέως Ἰσραὴλ καὶ εἶπεν Ὡδε Ἐλισαῖε υἱὸς Σαφατ, ὃς ἐπέχεεν ὕδωρ ἐπὶ χεῖρας Ἡλίου.  
“And Jehoshaphat said, “Is there no prophet of the Lord here? And let us inquire of the Lord through him.” And one of the servants of the king of Israel answered and said, “Elisha son of Shaphat, who poured water on the hands of Elijah, is here.”

#### 2Kings 3:7 LXX-L

καὶ ἀπέστειλεν Ἰωράμ πρὸς Ὀχοζείαν βασιλέα Ἰούδα λέγων...  
...καὶ εἶπεν Ὀχοζείας Πορεύσομαι.  
“And Joram sent to Ahaziah, king of Judah, saying...  
... and Ahaziah said, I am going.”

#### 2Kings 3:9 LXX-L

καὶ ἀνέβη Ἰωράμ βασιλεὺς Ἰσραὴλ καὶ Ὀχοζείας βασιλεὺς Ἰούδα καὶ ὁ βασιλεὺς Ἐδωμ  
“and Joram king of Israel went up, and Ahaziah, king of Judah, and king of Edom.”

#### 2Kings 3:11 LXX-L

καὶ εἶπε πρὸς αὐτόν ὁ βασιλεὺς Ἰούδα Εἰ ἔστιν ἐνταῦθα προφήτης τοῦ Κυρίου; Καὶ ἐπερωτήσωμεν τὸν Κύριον δι’ αὐτοῦ. καὶ ἀπεκρίθη εἰς τῶν παίδων τοῦ βασιλέως Ἰσραὴλ καὶ εἶπεν Ἔστιν ἐνταῦθα Ἐλισσαῖε υἱὸς Σαφατ, ὃς ἐπέχεεν ὕδωρ ἐπὶ χεῖρας Ἡλίου.  
the King of Judah said to him “and  
Is there a prophet of the Lord here?  
And let us ask the Lord through him.  
and the servant of the king of Israel answered and he said, “Elisha, the son of Shaphat, who poured water on Elijah’s hands, is here.”

In the LXX-L text, the king of Judah goes unnamed. Yet, we understand from the previous verse that Ahaziah-J is the king asked for a prophet of the Lord. Since Elisha is now the prophet available, and Elijah is spoken of in the past tense, we also understand that, by this point, Elijah has already ascended. So, this event, sometime in late 887 BC or 886 BC prior to Tishri, should function as the terminus ad quem for Elijah’s ascension.

The prophet Elijah is only mentioned once in 1 & 2 Chronicles – and that is with regard to the letter he sent to Jehoram-J. The events in 2Chronicles 21 are the same among the various texts. So, we will proceed to place these events within the greater chronological context. The sequence of events are (seemingly in chronological order) as follows:

### **1. 2Chronicles 21:1-7**

#### 2Chr. 21:4

*And Jehoram “rose up over his kingdom” and “became strong” and “killed all his brothers.”* Jehoshaphat died, leaving Jehoram-J to inherit the throne. At some point, when his own position was securely established, Jehoram murdered all his brothers to eliminate potential competitors for the throne.

Securing his position would seem to require the passing of some amount of time to allow Jehoram-J to establish himself. Thiele advocates placing this time period during the years of his supposed co-regency. As has already been mentioned, there is no need of or evidence for such a coregency (other than to preserve Thiele’s MT-based chronology). In the Lucianic regnal chronology, the most likely time period that Jehoram-J became strong is the unspecified portion of the partial year remaining after Jehoshaphat’s death, but before Tishri (the beginning of the Judean civil and regnal year). This period of time would exist under any regnal chronology, whether MT or LXX based. Yet, if we assume Jehoshaphat’s death didn’t occur neatly at the very end of the civil year, then it was likely during this partial-year time period, whether close to a full year or maybe within a few months as the regnal new year was approaching, that Jehoram-J killed his brothers. In any case we should understand that 2Chronicles is beginning the sequence of events at the beginning of Jehoram-J’s reign (Tishri, 897 BC).

### **2. 2Chronicles 21:8-10**

Foreign policy issues, involving a revolt of Edom away from Judah, required and military action on the part of Jehoram-J to manage that rebellion. The account in Chronicles mentions Edom setting up a king over themselves prior to the revolt. This transition from tribal league to kingdom is consistent with what is related during the different and later occasion (887 BC or 886 BC prior to Tishri) in 2Kings 3. Recall, in the LXX chronology, 2Kings 3 occurs after the reign of Jehoram-J, when we see a subjected King of Edom accompany Joram of Israel and (Amaziah in this view) the king of Judah into battle against Moab. So, we might infer that the subjection of the King of Edom seen in 2Kings 3 came about as a result of the earlier actions described in 2Chronicles 21.

### **3. 2Chronicles 21:11**

Jehoram-J built idolatrous high places in Judah (vs 11). At some point after he took the throne (and likely after the Edom revolt) Jehoram-J made official edicts to have these high places built. So, this extends the time range of this event somewhat further into Jehoram-J’s reign.

### **4. 2Chronicles 21:12-14**

Jehoram-J received a letter from Elijah that details his judgment (2 Chronicles 21:12–15). The letter from Elijah is copied below using the English translation of the LXX from the NETS version (with names standardized). The letter is basically the same in other English Bibles.

2Chr. 21:12-14

12 “And a written note reached him from the prophet Elias, saying, “This is what the Lord, God of David your father, says: Because you have not walked in the way of your father Jehoshaphat and in the ways of Asa, king of Judah,

13 but have walked in the ways of the kings of Israel and have prostituted Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, as the house of Ahab prostituted, and your brothers, your father’s sons, who were nobler than you, you killed,

14 behold, the Lord will strike you with a severe blow among your people and among your sons and among your wives and all your belongings.

15 And you will be in grave infirmity with a sickness of the belly until your belly comes out with the infirmity from days to days.”

In order to briefly summarize, the letter condemns Jehoram-J regarding:

- a) v12-13a his general conduct as king (saying he “walked in the way of the kings of Israel”)
- b) v13b specifically, his causing Judah to participate in idolatry just as Israel (“like the harlotry of the house of Ahab”)
- c) v13c his assassination of his brothers, the male heirs of Jehoshaphat, who otherwise stood in line to be king

The range of time for the letter is some time after what is condemned in the letter (and we are assuming for argument’s sake, prior to the translation of Elijah). The general tenor of the letter reflects an overall assessment at least up to the time of the letter. Elijah may be looking back at Jehoram-J’s reign in reverse chronological order. After his general summary statement, that would explain the reference to him causing the people of Judah to participate in idolatry during the course of his reign, then (moving further backwards) Elijah addressed Jehoram-J’s killing of his brothers when he ascended the throne. Elijah concluded the letter with his pronouncement of God’s judgment: King Jehoram-J and his whole household would die from a particularly terrifying intestinal disease.



Immediately after the letter from Elijah, the text of 2Chronicles 21 supplies the account of what happened in fulfillment in 2Chron. 21:16-20. Here is a translation of LXX-L (left column, which is close to the LXX text) compared with the MT (ESV in right column):

2Chron 21:16

and the Lord stirred up the foreigners  
and the Arabs  
and the neighbors of the Ethiopians  
against Jehoram.

2Chron 21:17

and they went up against Judah and subdued it  
and they captured all that was in the king's house,  
and his sons and his daughters,  
and there was no son left to him  
but Jehoahaz, the youngest of his sons.

2Chron 21:18

and after all these things the Lord struck him in his  
belly with a sickness for which there is no cure.

2Chron 21:19

and it happened from days to days,  
and when the time of his days came to two days,  
his bowels came out after his belly in his sickness,  
and he died of a wicked illness.  
And his people did not make a funeral  
and weep according to the weeping of his fathers.

2Chron 21:20

Jehoram was thirty-two years old in this kingdom,  
and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem,  
and he died without praise,  
and was buried in the city of David  
and not in the tombs of kings.

2Chr. 21:16

And the LORD stirred up against Jehoram the anger  
of the Philistines  
and of the Arabians who are near the Ethiopians.

2Chr. 21:17

And they came up against Judah and invaded it  
and carried away all the possessions they found that  
belonged to the king's house,  
and also his sons and his wives,  
so that no son was left to him  
except Jehoahaz, his youngest son.

2Chr. 21:18

And after all this the LORD struck him in his bowels  
with an incurable disease.

2Chr. 21:19

In the course of time, at the end of two years,  
his bowels came out because of the disease,  
and he died in great agony.  
His people made no fire in his honor,  
like the fires made for his fathers.

2Chr. 21:20

He was thirty-two years old when he began to reign,  
and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem.  
And he departed with no one's regret.  
They buried him in the city of David,  
but not in the tombs of the kings.

Two incidents are recounted that occurred near the end of Jehoram-J's life and reign. The first incident fulfilled the word of Elijah from 2Chron. 21:14, "behold, the Lord will strike you with a severe blow among your people and among your sons and among your wives and all your belongings." Thus, foreign raiders came up from the south against Judah. They apparently penetrated as far as the king's house and, among other booty, seized all the king's household and possessions (except for Amaziah, who is called Jehoahaz in Chronicles).

The text of 2Chron. 21:18 is clear that the second incident followed upon the heels of the first – "after all these things" the Lord struck Jehoram personally with an incurable illness.

The MT text portrays this illness as a lingering specifically for "two years." However, the LXX portrays the illness in more ambiguous terms v19 "from days into days" (which is also the phrase used by Elijah in his letter, v15). This phrase is used in the LXX as the equivalent to "over the course of time" (e.g., Judges 11:40 or the story of Samuel in 1Sam. 1:3, 25, 2:19). Thus, the meaning is similar but more general than the specific MT tradition of two years. The MT text clearly focuses on how his bowels came out at the end of this two-year illness. The LXX and LXX-L seem to do the same thing, except (again) in terms of "days" (specifically mentioning what is likely a reference to his last "two days" - such that the reader can safely assume he died as a result of that final ordeal).

There is a minor difference between the LXX and LXX-L in 2Chron. 21:19b.

The LXX text of Rahlfs reads:

καὶ ὡς ἦλθεν καιρὸς τῶν ἡμερῶν ἡμέρας δύο, ἐξῆλθεν ἡ κοιλία αὐτοῦ μετὰ τῆς νόσου  
“And when a time came during two days of the days, his belly came out with the illness”

The LXX-L text is longer with a slight change in vocabulary:

καὶ ὡς ἦλθεν ὁ καιρὸς τῶν ἡμερῶν αὐτοῦ εἰς ἡμέρας δύο,  
ἐξῆλθε τὰ έντερα αὐτοῦ μετὰ τῆς κοιλίας αὐτοῦ έν τῆ άρρωστία αὐτοῦ,  
“and when the time of his days came to two days,  
his bowels came out after his belly in his sickness.”

This latter difference is noted for interest only. In any case, both the MT and LXX portray a lingering illness (perhaps two years if the MT tradition is correct). It is notable that all the 2Chronicles texts (MT and LXX, including LXX-L) end with 21:20 repeating what amounts to an unnecessary and duplicate summary of Jehoram-J's regnal years (cf. 2Chron 21:5). All these witnesses report that his reign was eight years. The reigns of both Joram and Jehoram-J are recognized as problematic by more than one scholar and for several reasons. To address these issues would extend far beyond the scope of this investigation. I can only request the reader at least temporarily withhold judgment regarding my advocacy of a ten-year reign for Jehoram-J (following the majority of the LXX-L witnesses: oc<sub>2</sub>e<sub>2</sub>).

### **Conclusion**

If Jehoram-J's illness lingered for two years per MT tradition, then we might estimate the beginning of Jehoram-J's illness to have occurred sometime in the latter half of 889 BC prior to Tishri (since he died two years later, in 887 BC). The months preceding his illness would then coincide with 1) the letter from Elijah (2Chron 21:12-15) followed by 2) the initial fulfillment when foreign raiders came against Judah and seized Jehoram-J's household and possessions (except for Ahaziah).

We might venture further to estimate that Elijah's letter was received possibly around Tishri 890 BC (nine months prior to the king's illness). This date would have marked the 31st unkept Sabbath year after the judgeship of Samuel. Even though Elijah's letter did not mention anything about the unkept Sabbath cycles, we know from the 70-year captivity that God was keeping a tally. When the month of Tishri (signaling the seven-year Sabbath year) came and went without observance, that occasion may have been an aggravating circumstance - the straw that broke the camel's back.

Since we already placed the terminus ad quem for Elijah's ascension prior to Elisha being the prophet on call at some TBD point during the reign of Ahaziah-J. We can narrow the window of when Elijah ascended to sometime between the time of Elijah's letter (~ Tishri 890 BC) and the undetermined point during Ahaziah's one-year reign (~last 3rd of 887 BC / first 2/3rds 886 BC).

**Addenda:** Reading from the Synaxarion (relevant text in **bold**)

### *The Glorious Prophet Elias (Elijah)*

Elias of great fame was from Thisbe or Thesbe, a town of Galaad (Gilead), beyond the Jordan. He was of priestly lineage, a man of a solitary and ascetical character, clothed in a mantle of sheep skin, and girded about his loins with a leather belt. His name is interpreted as "Yah is my God." His zeal for the glory of God was compared to fire, and his speech for teaching and rebuke was likened unto a burning lamp. From this too he received the name Zealot. Therefore, set aflame with such zeal, he sternly reprov'd the impiety and lawlessness of Ahab and his wife Jezebel. He shut up heaven by means of prayer, and it did not rain for three years and six months. Ravens brought him food for his need when, at God's command, he was hiding by the torrent of Horrath. He multiplied the little flour and oil of the poor widow of Sarephtha of Sidon, who had given him

hospitality in her home, and when her son died, he raised him up. He brought down fire from Heaven upon Mount Carmel, and it burned up the sacrifice offered to God before all the people of Israel, that they might know the truth. At the torrent of Kisson, he slew 450 false prophets and priests who worshipped idols and led the people astray. He received food wondrously at the hand of an Angel, and being strengthened by this food he walked for forty days and forty nights. He beheld God on Mount Horeb, as far as this is possible for human nature. He foretold the destruction of the house of Ahab, and the death of his son Ohozias; and as for the two captains of fifty that were sent by the king, he burned them for their punishment, bringing fire down from Heaven. He divided the flow of the Jordan, and he and his disciple Elisseus passed through as it were on dry land; **and finally, while speaking with him, Elias was suddenly snatched away by a fiery chariot in the year 895 B.C., and he ascended as though into heaven, whither God most certainly translated him alive, as He did Enoch (Gen. 5:24; IV Kings 2: 11).**

**But from thence also, after seven years, by means of an epistle he reproached Joram, the son of Josaphat, as it is written: "And there came a message in writing to him from Elias the Prophet, saying, thus saith the Lord God of David thy father, because thou hast not walked in the way," and so forth (II Chron. 21:12).**

**According to the opinion of the majority of the interpreters, this came to pass either through his disciple Elisseus, or through another Prophet when Elias appeared to them, even as he appeared on Mount Tabor to the disciples of Christ (see Aug. 6).**

#### *Apolytikion of Prophet Elias in the Fourth Tone*

The incarnate Angel, the Cornerstone of the Prophets, the second Forerunner of the Coming of Christ, the glorious Elias (Elijah), who from above, sent down to Elisha the grace to dispel sickness and cleanse lepers, abounds therefore in healing for those who honor him.

#### *Kontakion of Prophet Elias in the Second Tone*

O Prophet and foreseer of the great works of God, O greatly renowned Elias (Elijah), who by your word held back the clouds of rain, intercede for us to the only Loving One.

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