

Lesson 4

The Story of the Old Prophet



This story takes place when Rehoboam was reigning from Judah and Jeroboam from Israel.



Both of these kings were idolaters but Jeroboam was called

“Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.”

This criticism of Jeroboam is repeated nineteen times in the Bible because he was so wicked and Israel was so full of idolatry.

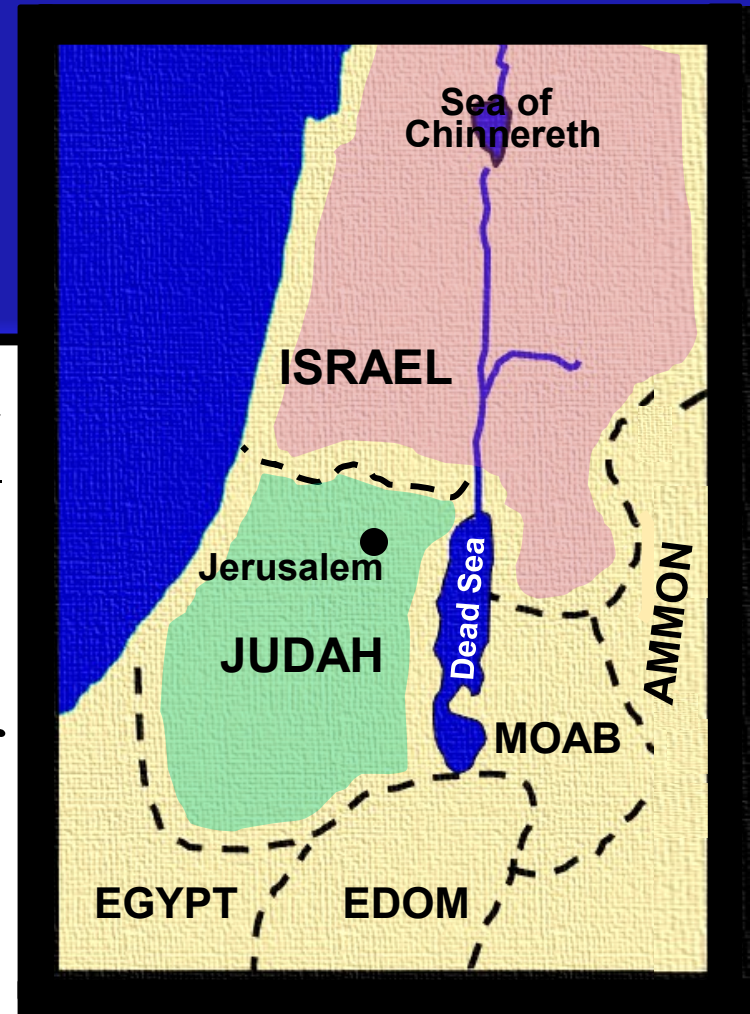




Jeroboam King of Israel

Yes, Jeroboam *was* a sinful king, but the 3 kings of the united kingdom—Saul, David, and Solomon had also committed horrible sins.

The difference is it is never said of Jeroboam that he had any remorse for his sins.





SAUL

King Saul at least knew what he was doing was wrong and would express regret though he would fall right back into sin (I Samuel 24).



DAVID

David was an adulterer, a murderer, and 70,000 Israelites died because of his sin in taking a census (II Samuel 11; 24), yet after his repentance he was considered faithful (Psalm 103:11-14).



SOLOMON

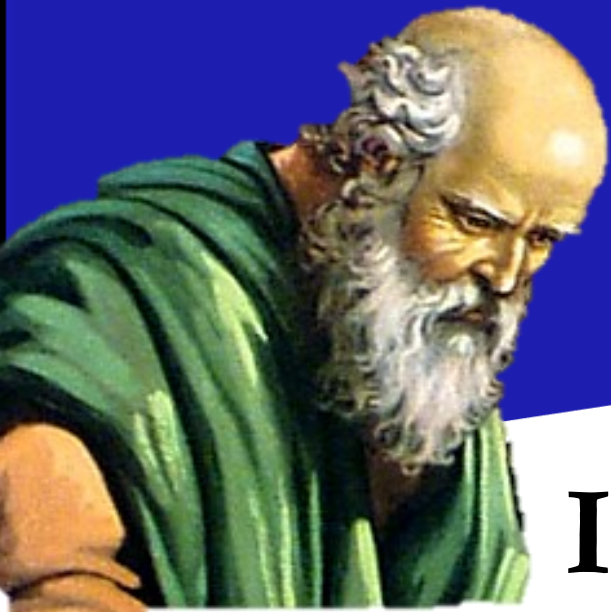
Solomon worshipped idols, but humbled himself at the end of his life by saying, “Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man” (Ecclesiastes 12:13).



Jeroboam

God made efforts to reclaim King Jeroboam by warning him with his prophets, but Jeroboam was so devoted to his idols that God's warnings did nothing to retrieve him.





I Kings 13 tells

The Story of the Old Prophet.

It shows that God wants all men to repent and he is willing to forgive if they will comply with his commands.



Man of God from Judah

God sent a man of God from Judah to the town of Bethel which was in the land of Israel to warn King Jeroboam about the consequences of his sin.



THE DIVIDED KINGDOM



Jeroboam

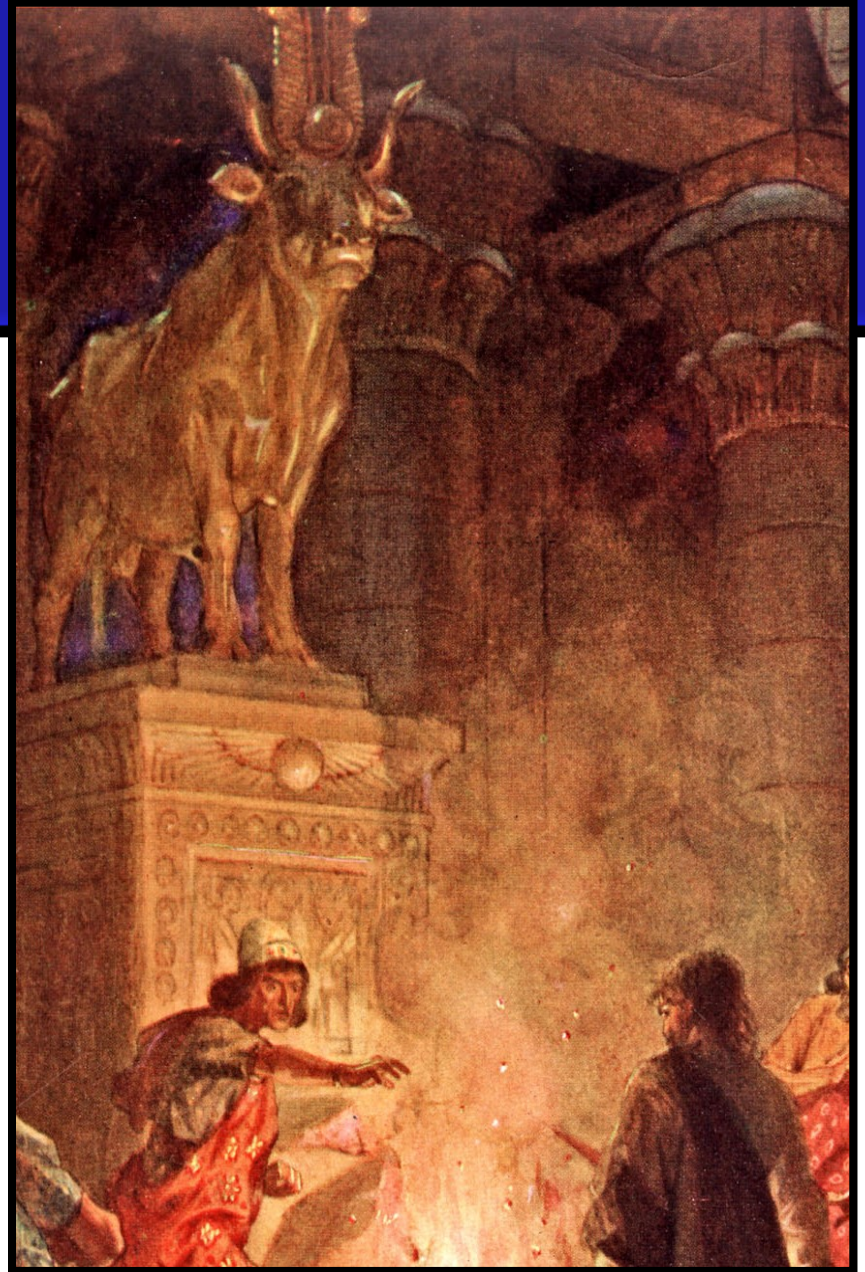
Remember from the previous lesson that Jeroboam made high places in **Dan** and **Bethel** for the people to worship false gods. His design was to keep them from going to the temple in Jerusalem.



The unnamed young prophet from Judah found King Jeroboam worshipping the idol in Bethel.

I Kings 13

“¹And, behold, there came a man of God out of Judah by the word of the LORD unto Bethel: and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense.”



The man of God didn't
speak to the king but
addressed the altar . . .

I Kings 13

“² . . . O altar, altar, thus saith the Lord; Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee.”





The prophecy—

A prince of the house of David, Josiah by name, would sacrifice the idolatrous priests themselves upon Jeroboam's altar and burn the bones of the dead men.

This prophecy given to Jeroboam was made about 300 YEARS before it was fulfilled yet JOSIAH'S NAME was given in the prophecy!

KINGS OF ISRAEL

Jeroboam	975-954
Nadab	954-953
Baasha	953-930
Elah	930-929
Zimri	929
Omri	929-918
Ahab	918-897
Ahaziah	897-896
Joram	896-884
Jehu	884-856
Jehoahaz	856-841
Joash	841-825
Jeroboam II	825-784
Zechariah	773
Shallum	772
Pekahiah	762-760
Pekah	760-740
Hoshea	730-721

KINGS OF JUDAH

Rehoboam	975-958
Abijah	958-955
Asa	955-914
Jehoshaphat	914-892
Jehoram	892-884
Ahaziah	885
Athaliah	885-878
Joash	878-839
Amaziah	839-810
Uzziah	810-758
Jotham	758-742
Ahaz	742-726
Hezekiah	726-698
Manasseh	698-643
Amon	643-641
Josiah	641-610
Jehoahaz	610
Jehoiakim	610-599
Jehoiachin	599
Zedekiah	599-588



If Jeroboam had known how far in the distant future the prophecy would be fulfilled, he might not have been as angry with the man of God.

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I Kings 13

“2 . . . O altar, altar, thus saith the Lord; Behold, a **child** shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men’s bones shall be burnt upon thee.”

KINGS OF ISRAEL

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Elah	
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Ahab	
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Joram	
Jehu	
Jehoahaz	
Joash	
Jeroboam II	782-746
Zechariah	746-745
Shallum	745-742
Menahem	746-738
Pekahiah	738-737
Pekah	737-733
Hoshea	733-722

KINGS OF JUDAH

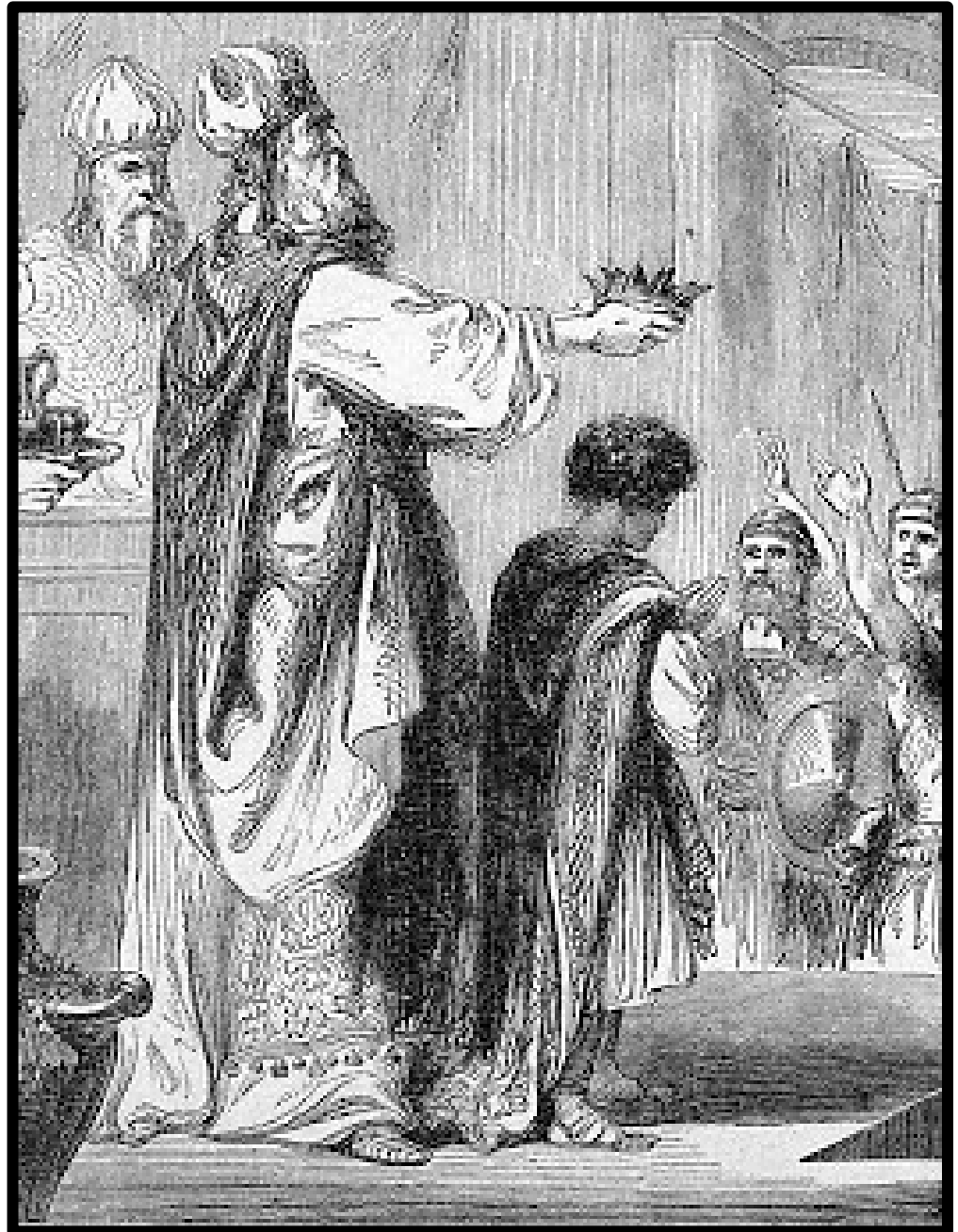
Rehoboam	975-958
Abijah	958-955
Asa	955-914
Jehoram	850-842
Jehoshaphat	843-814
Jehoram	814-800
Jehoiakim	800-780
Jehoiachin	780-742
Zedekiah	742-705
Jehoiakim	705-698
Manasseh	698-643
Amon	643-641
Josiah	641-610
Jehoahaz	610
Jehoiakim	610-599
Jehoiachin	599
Zedekiah	599-588

The prophecy calls Josiah a child, and so he was, for he was only eight years old when he became king.

JOSIAH

II Chronicles 34

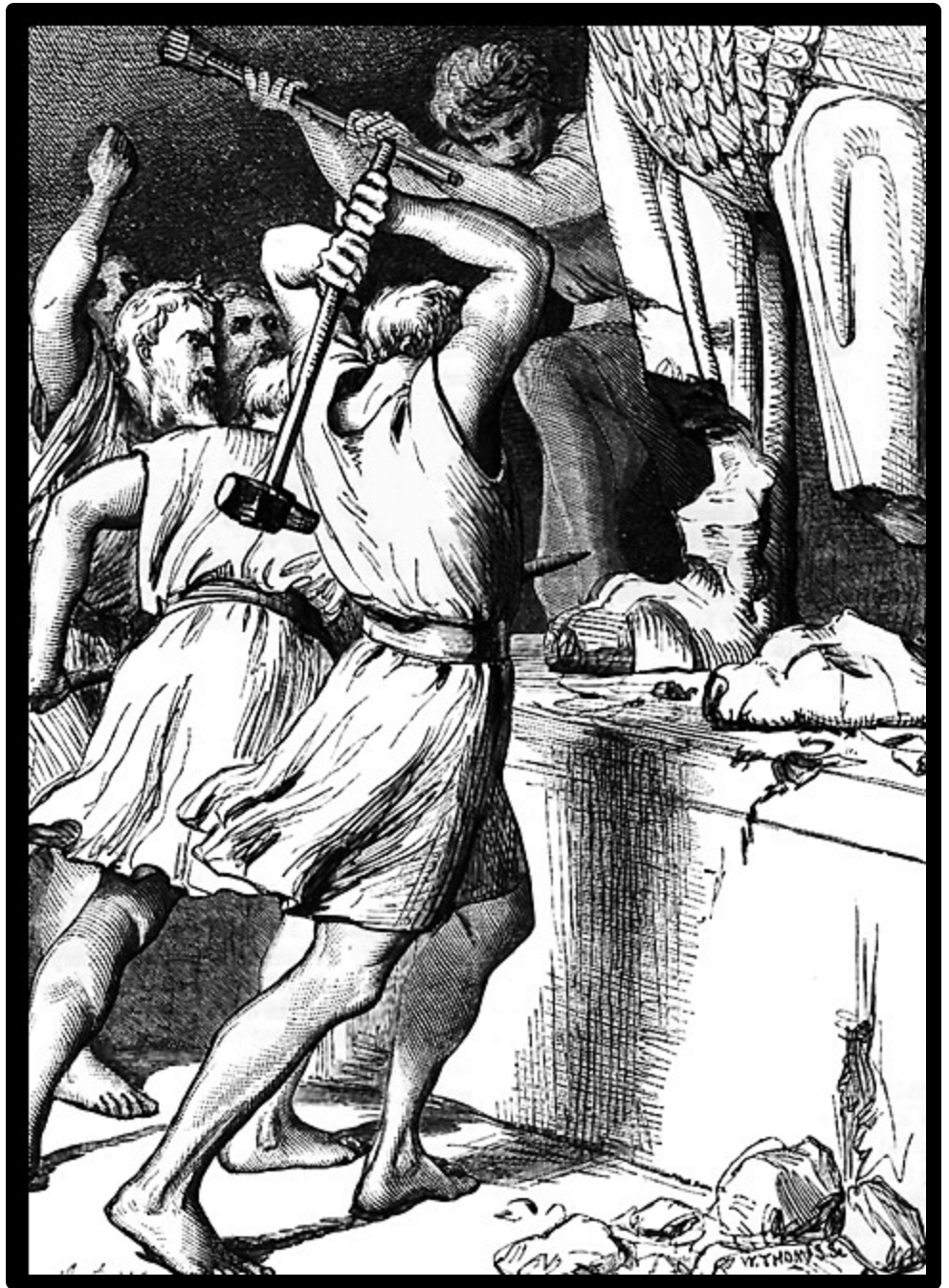
“¹Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem one and thirty years. ²And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the ways of David his father, and declined neither to the right hand, nor to the left.”



JOSIAH

II Chronicles 34

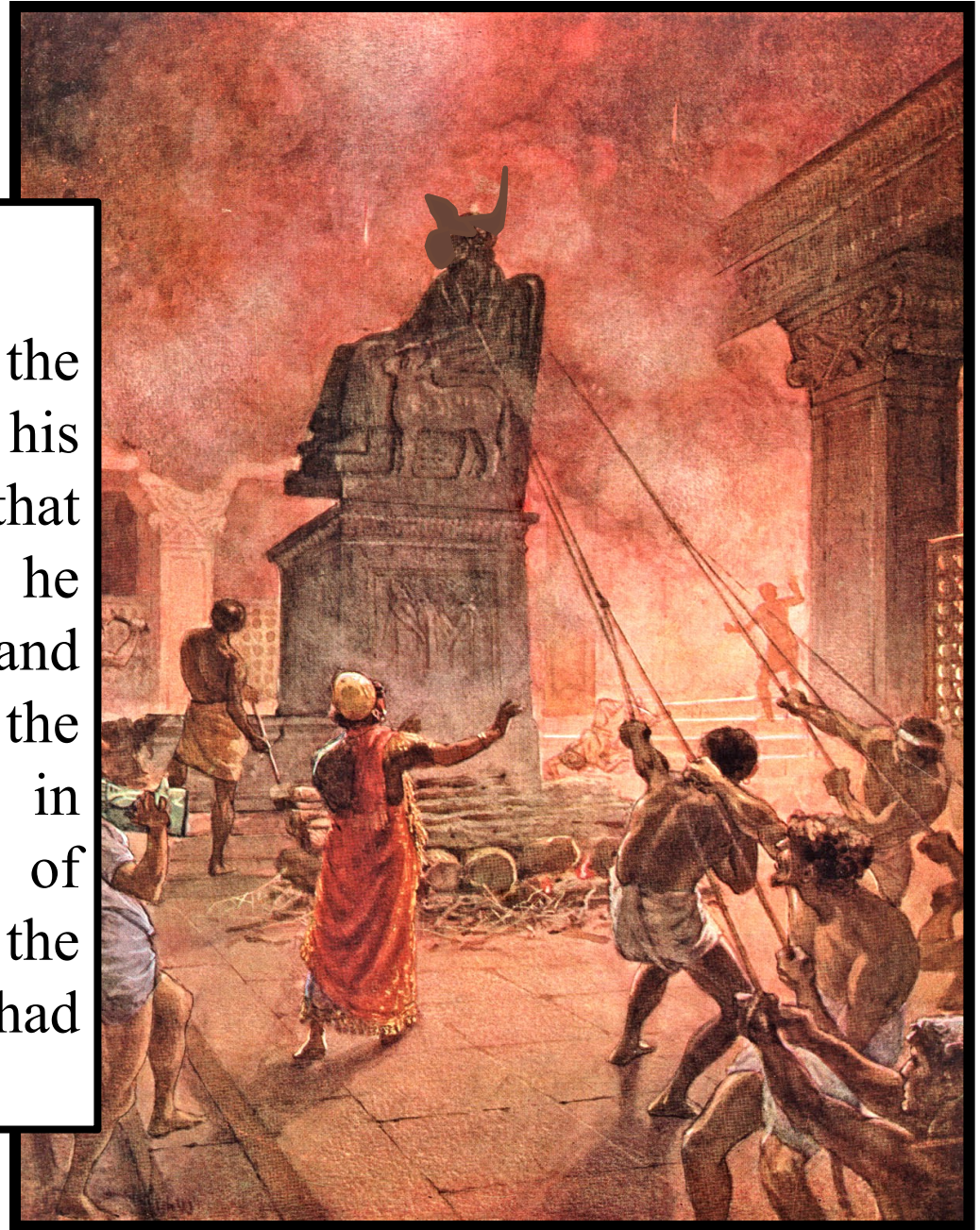
“³For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father: and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images.”



JOSIAH

II Chronicles 34

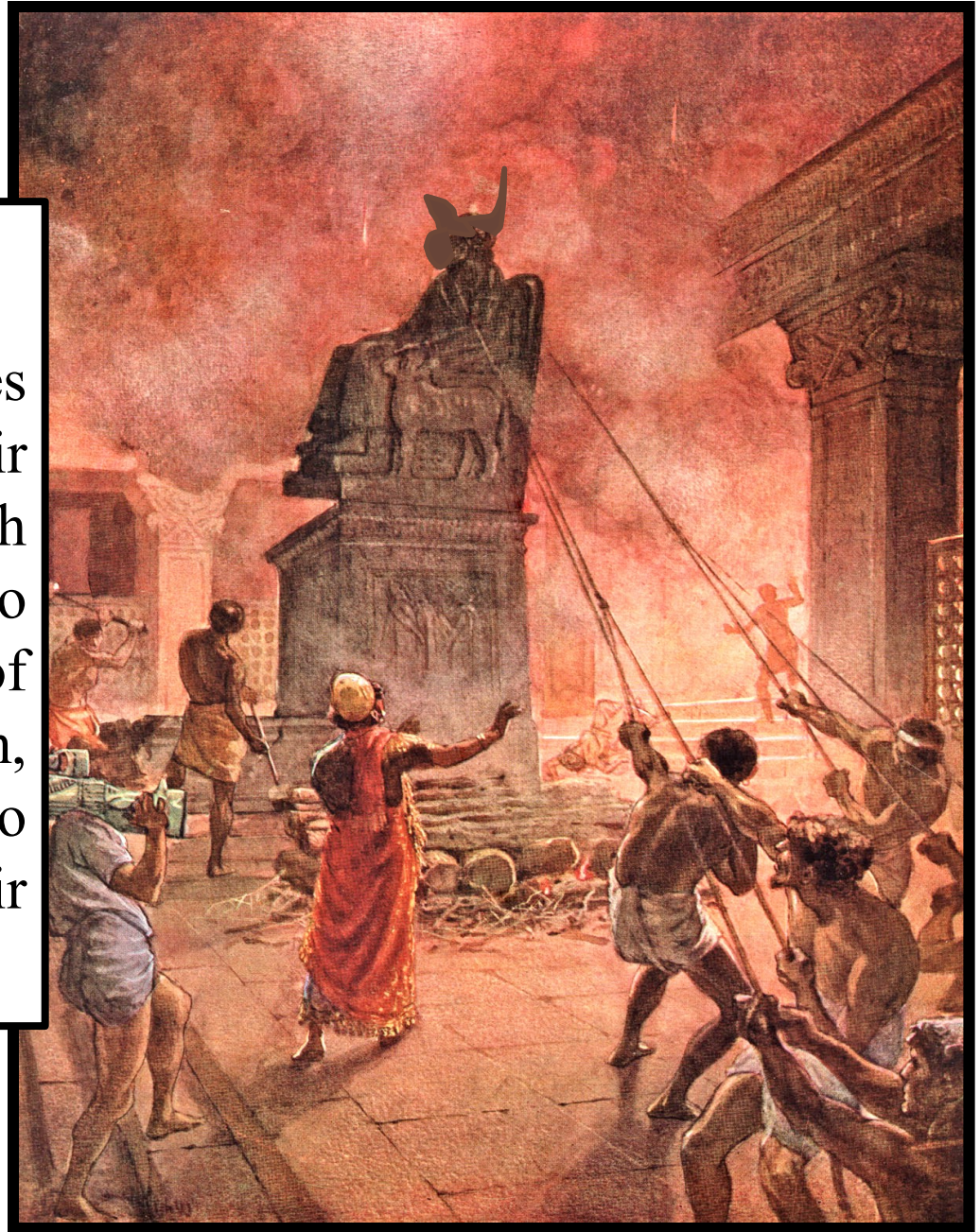
“⁴And they brake down the altars of Baalim in his presence; and the images, that were on high above them, he cut down; and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images, he brake in pieces, and made dust of them, and strowed it upon the graves of them that had sacrificed unto them.”



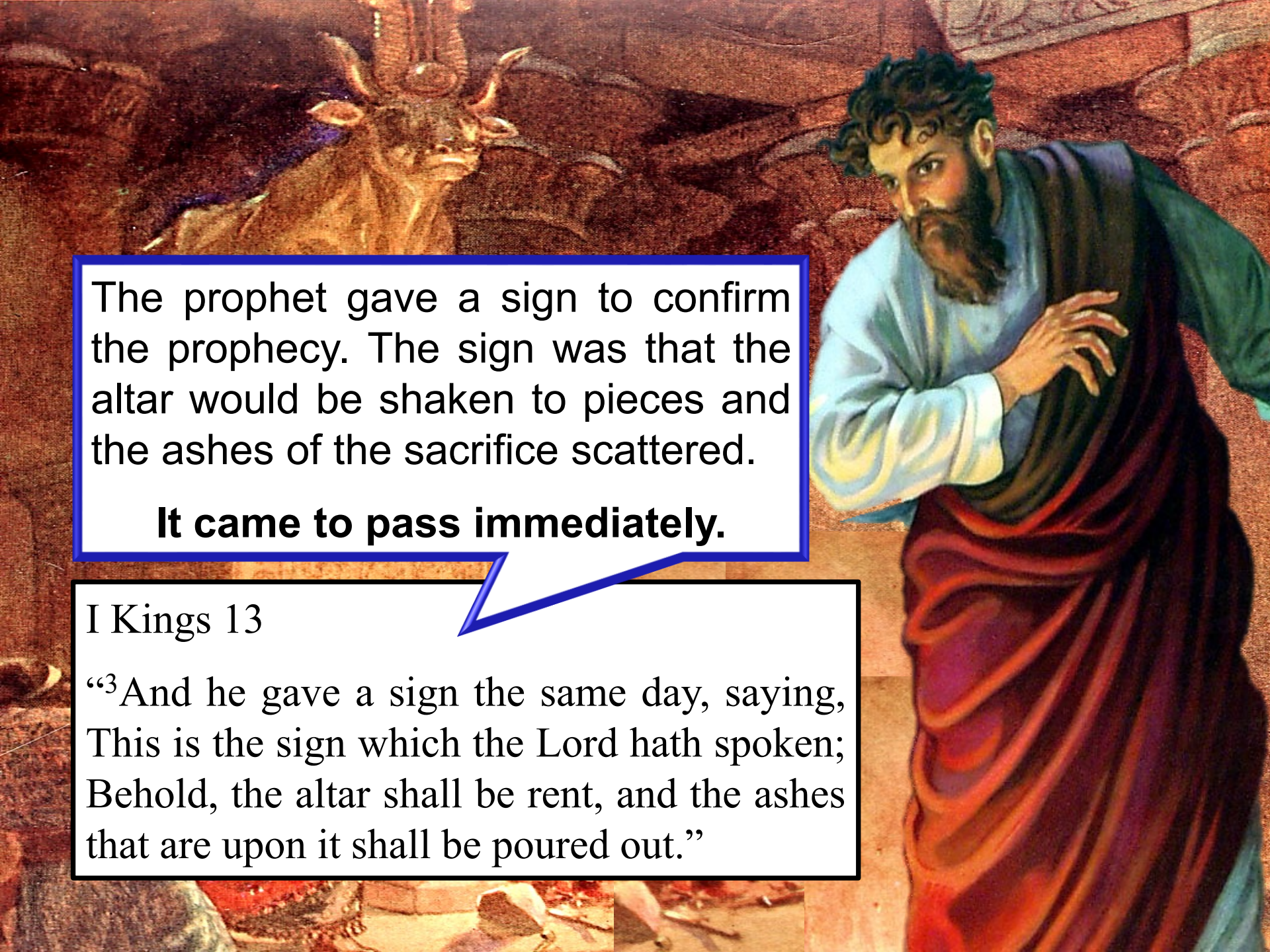
JOSIAH

II Chronicles 34

“⁵And he burnt the bones of the priests upon their altars, and cleansed Judah and Jerusalem. ⁶And so did he in the cities of Manasseh, and Ephraim, and Simeon, even unto Naphtali, with their mattocks round about.”



Back to I Kings 13 . . .



The prophet gave a sign to confirm the prophecy. The sign was that the altar would be shaken to pieces and the ashes of the sacrifice scattered.

It came to pass immediately.

I Kings 13

“³And he gave a sign the same day, saying, This is the sign which the Lord hath spoken; Behold, the altar shall be rent, and the ashes that are upon it shall be poured out.”

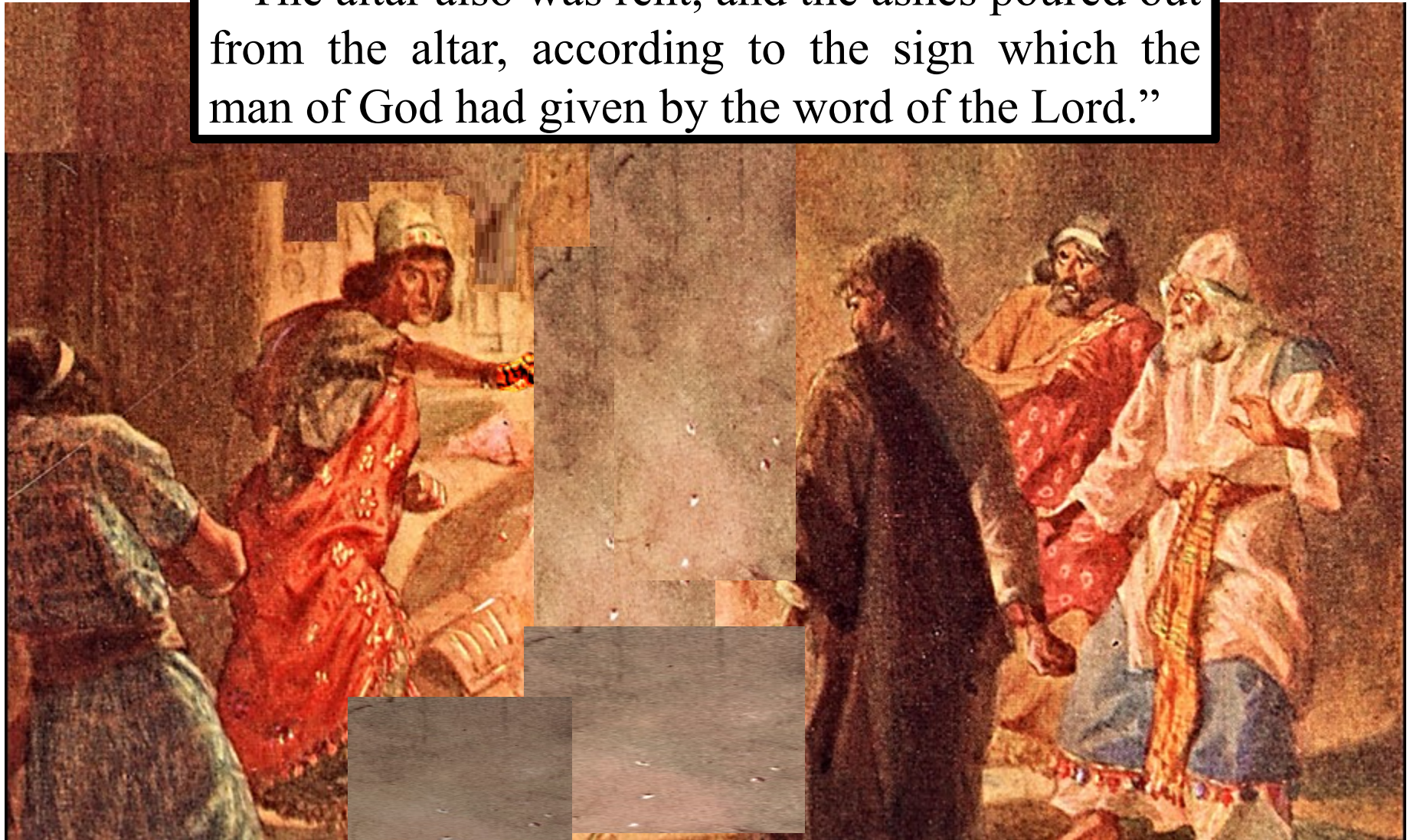
I Kings 13

“⁴And it came to pass, when king Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God, which had cried against the altar in Bethel, that he put forth his hand from the altar, saying, Lay hold on him. And his hand, which he put forth against him, dried up, so that he could not pull it in again to him.”



I Kings 13

“⁵The altar also was rent, and the ashes poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the Lord.”



I Kings 13

“⁶And the king answered and said unto the man of God, Intreat now the face of the Lord thy God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored me again. And the man of God besought the Lord, and the king’s hand was restored him again, and became as it was before.”

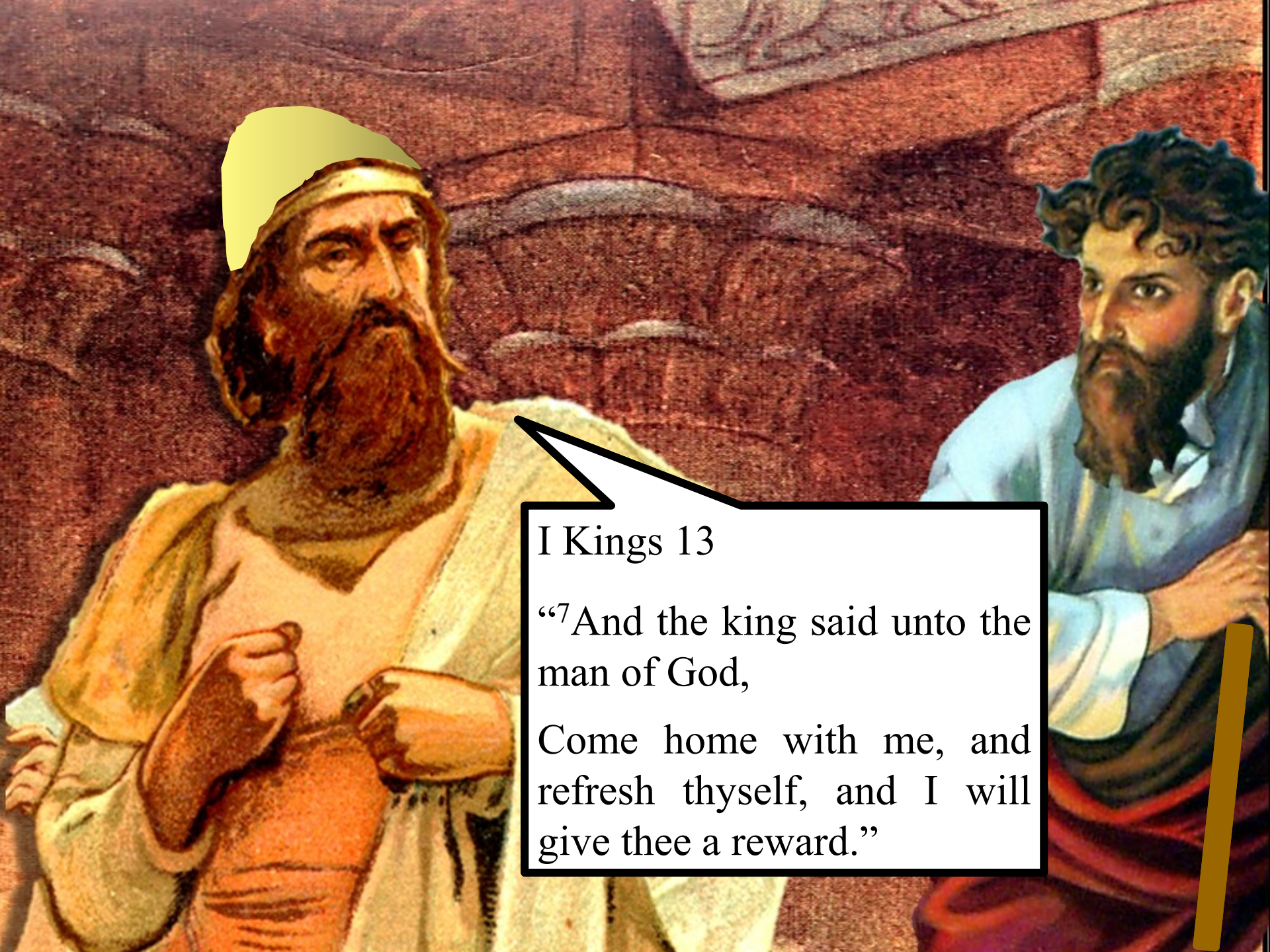


The text says Jeroboam asked the prophet to “pray” and to “intreat” the “Lord *thy* God” that he might be healed.

Notice he still did not consider God to be *his* God. Even in his request to be healed he refused to repent or submit to God.

But the prophet asked God to heal Jeroboam anyway, and his hand was restored.





I Kings 13

“⁷And the king said unto the man of God,

Come home with me, and refresh thyself, and I will give thee a reward.”

I Kings 13

“⁸And the man of God said unto the king,

If thou wilt give me half thine house, I will not go in with thee, neither will I eat bread nor drink water in this place: ⁹For so was it charged me by the word of the Lord, saying, Eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that thou camest.

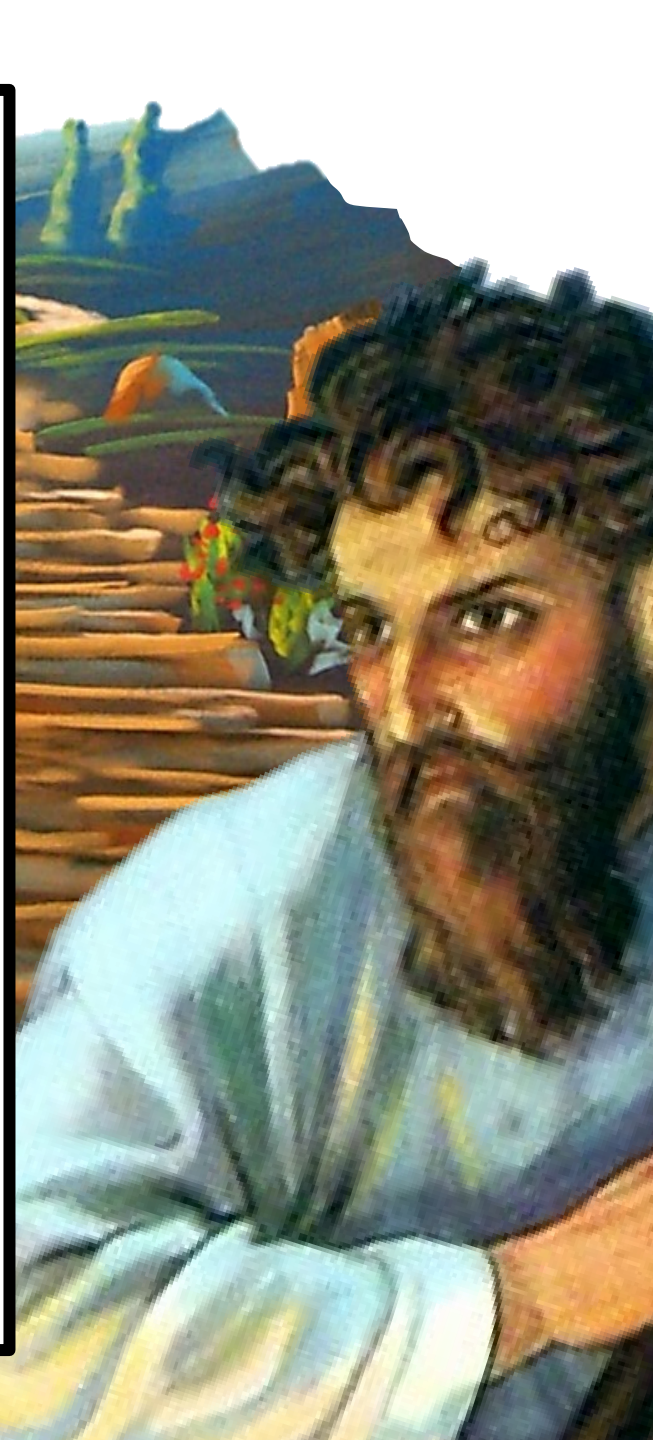
¹⁰So he went another way, and returned not by the way that he came to Bethel.”



Here it is revealed that God had given the prophet specific instructions not to eat on his errand and not to return to Judah by the same route.

Israel was no place for a faithful prophet. God's instructions were designed to protect the prophet from temptation and deceit.

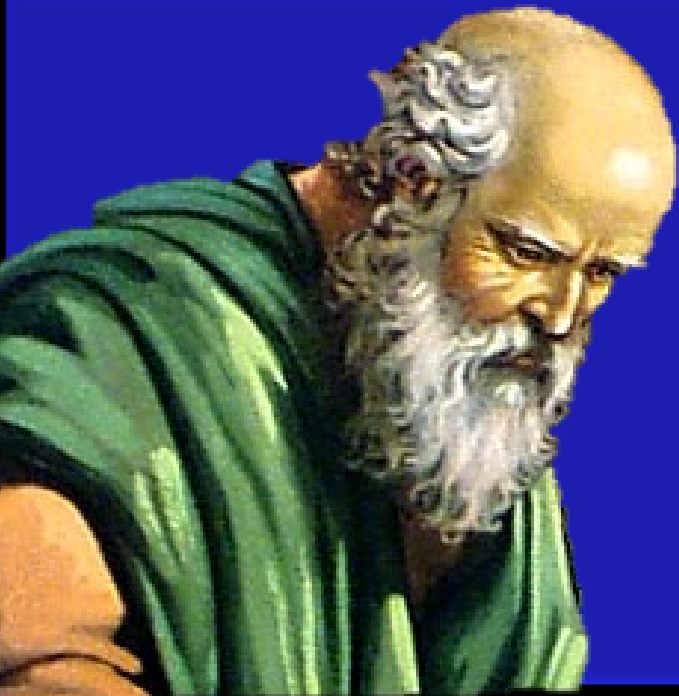
To his credit the prophet refused King Jeroboam's offer of a meal and a reward. Notice his exaggeration, "If thou wilt give me half thine house" in his refusal of Jeroboam's offer. It seems to demonstrate both his devotion to his task and his disdain for Jeroboam.



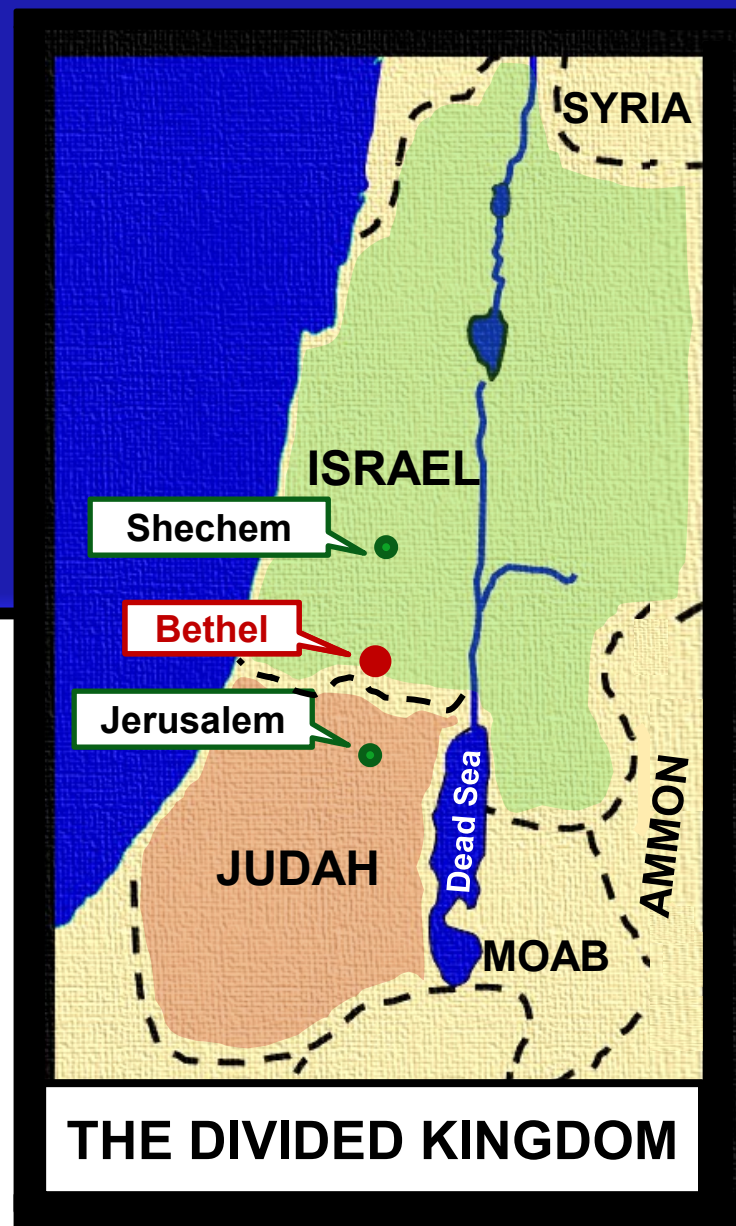


I Kings 13

“¹¹Now there dwelt **an old prophet** in Bethel; and his sons came and told him all the works that the man of God had done that day in Bethel: the words which he had spoken unto the king, them they told also to their father.”



Bethel was a city obsessed with idolatry and immorality, yet one of its inhabitants was this **OLD PROPHET**. The text does not address why he lived in such a wicked place. Yet, here he is, this “old prophet,” living with his sons in Bethel.



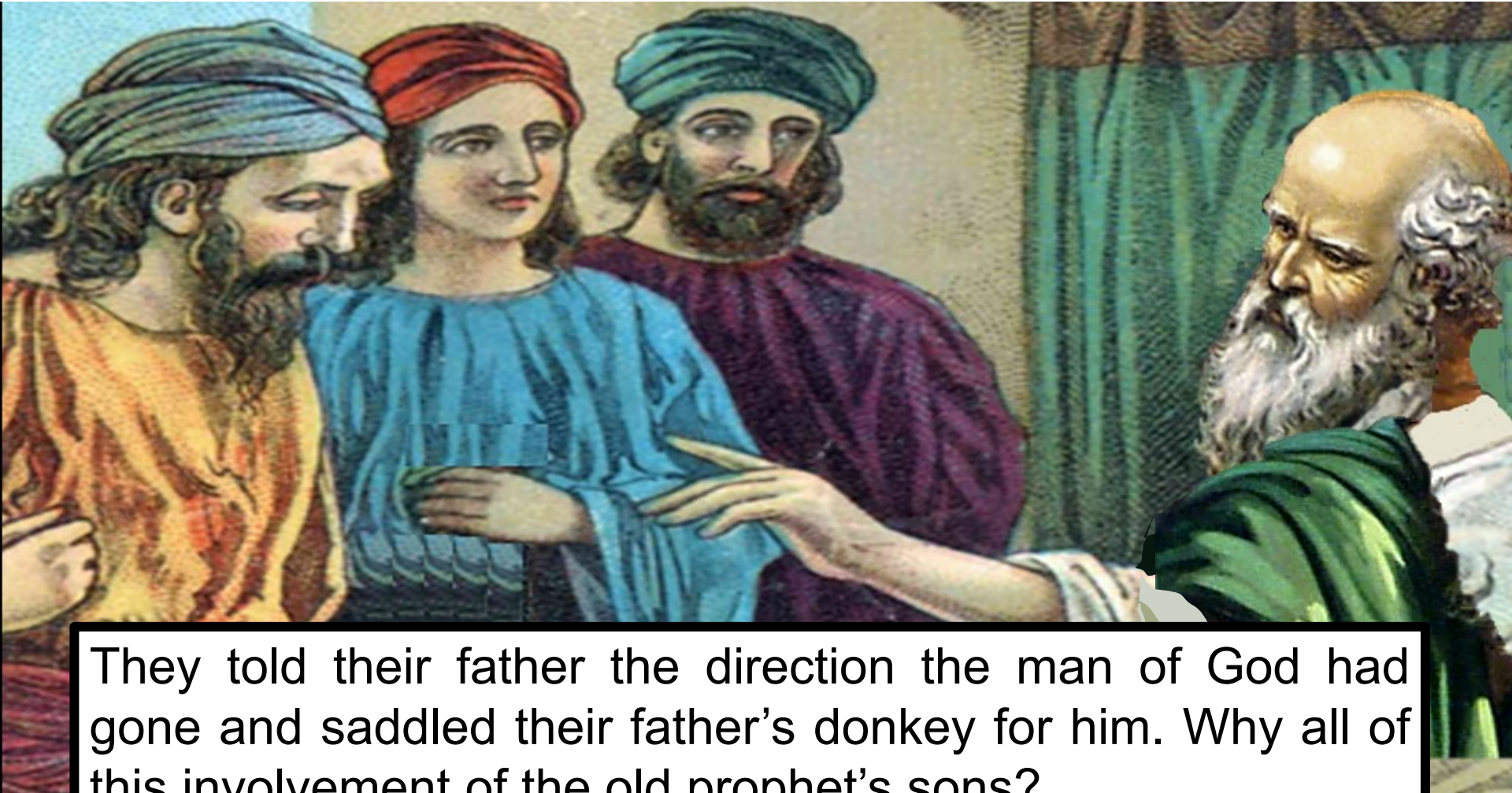


God had not called upon the **OLD PROPHET** to deliver the prophecy to King Jeroboam; a striking and revealing detail. His sons came and told him about the prophecy that had been so dramatically delivered to King Jeroboam that day.



I Kings 13

“¹²And their father said unto them, What way went he? For his sons had seen what way the man of God went, which came from Judah. ¹³And he said unto his sons, Saddle me the ass. So they saddled him the ass: and he rode thereon.”



They told their father the direction the man of God had gone and saddled their father's donkey for him. Why all of this involvement of the old prophet's sons?

They may have felt their father's reputation as a prophet could be improved by associating with this powerful prophet from Judah.



OLD PROPHET



MAN OF GOD

The old prophet rode his donkey . . .

I Kings 13

“¹⁴And went after the man of God, and found him sitting under an oak: and he said unto him, Art thou the man of God that camest from Judah? And he said, I am.”



The oak tree where the man of God stopped could not have been very far, for the old prophet met up with him the same day he had confronted King Jeroboam.

It is not out-of-place to pose the question, *“Why did the man of God stop under the oak tree before distancing himself from the wicked city of Bethel?”*

Admittedly there is no evidence he was neglecting his duty, but it *is* curious that he stopped so soon when he had at least ten miles to travel back to Judah.



I Kings 13

“¹⁵Then he said unto him, Come home with me, and eat bread.

¹⁶And he said, I may not return with thee, nor go in with thee: neither will I eat bread nor drink water with thee **in this place:**

¹⁷For it was said to me by the word of the Lord, Thou shalt eat no bread nor drink water there, nor turn again to go by the way that thou camest.”

Here again, he is tempted to do the very thing God had instructed him NOT TO DO. He replied that God had forbidden him to eat or drink “**in this place.**”

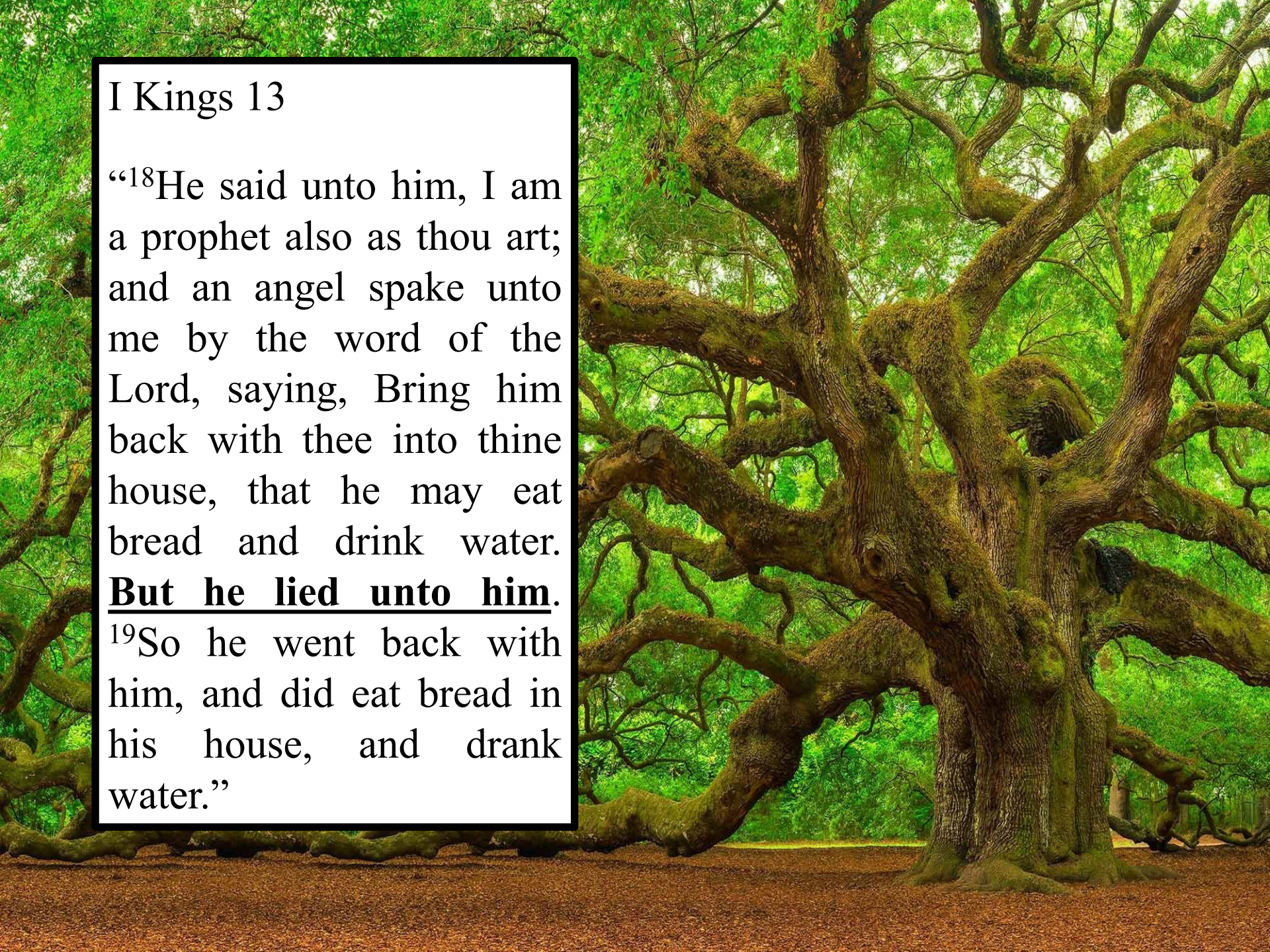
The words, “**in this place**” imply that he was *very near* Bethel, possibly still inside the city.

I Kings 13

“¹⁸He said unto him, I am a prophet also as thou art; and an angel spake unto me by the word of the Lord, saying, Bring him back with thee into thine house, that he may eat bread and drink water.

But he lied unto him.

¹⁹So he went back with him, and did eat bread in his house, and drank water.”





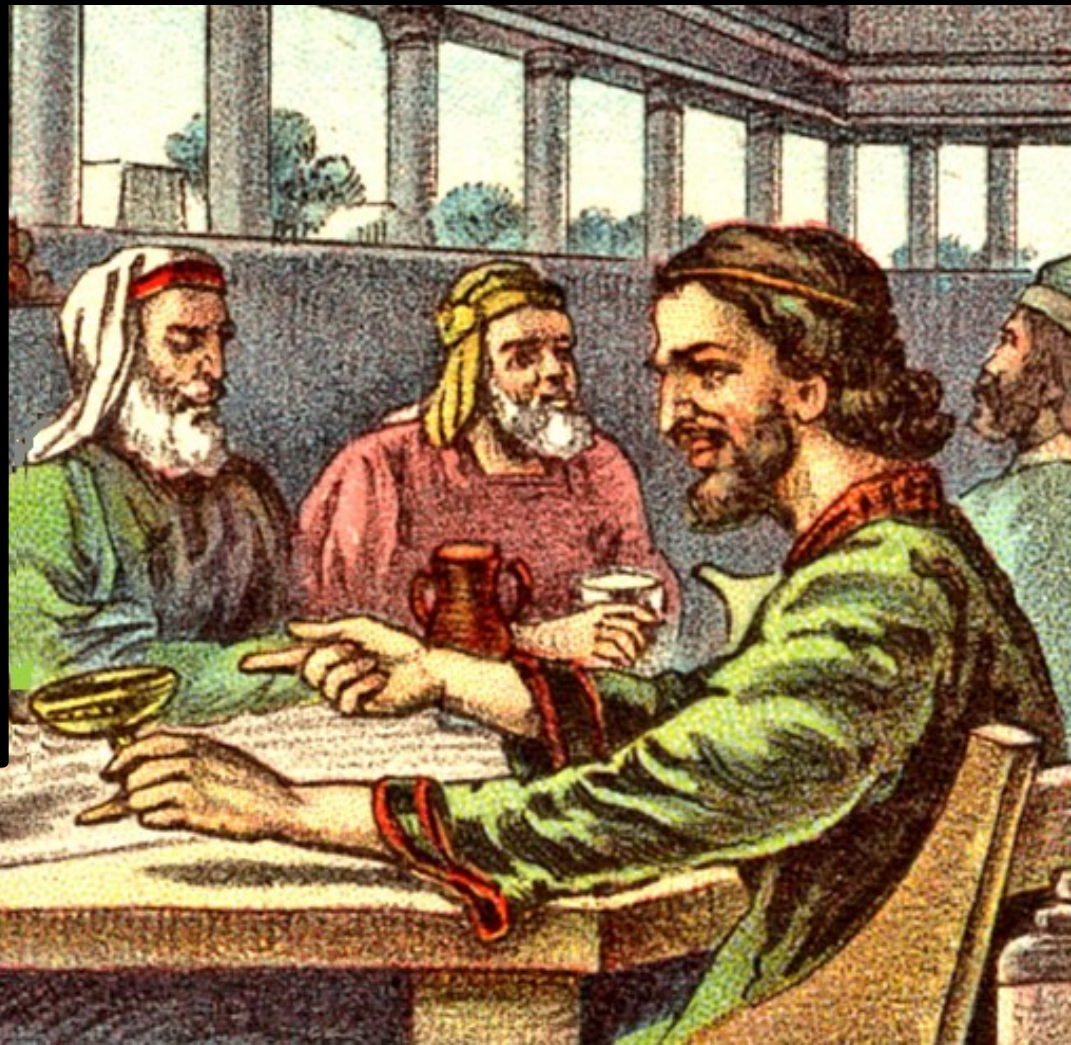
The Old Prophet of Bethel was wicked and could be called a *False Prophet* rather than an *Old Prophet*.

He may have been trained in one of Samuel's *schools of the prophets* near Bethel, but he had obviously become profane, and the spirit of prophecy had departed from him.

If he had been a good prophet he would have reproved King Jeroboam's idolatry there in his own town of Bethel, but he had not, therefore God had to call on the Man Of God from Judah to go to Bethel.

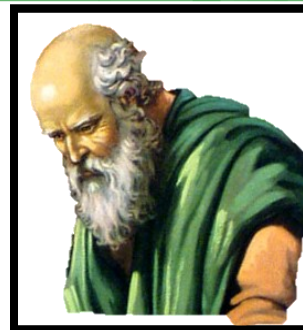
I Kings 13

“²⁰And it came to pass, as they sat at the table, that the word of the Lord came unto the prophet that brought him back:
²¹And he cried unto the man of God that came from Judah, saying . . .”



I Kings 13

“²⁰And it came to pass, as they sat at the table, that the word of the Lord came unto the prophet that brought him back:
²¹And he cried unto the man of God that came from Judah, saying . . .”

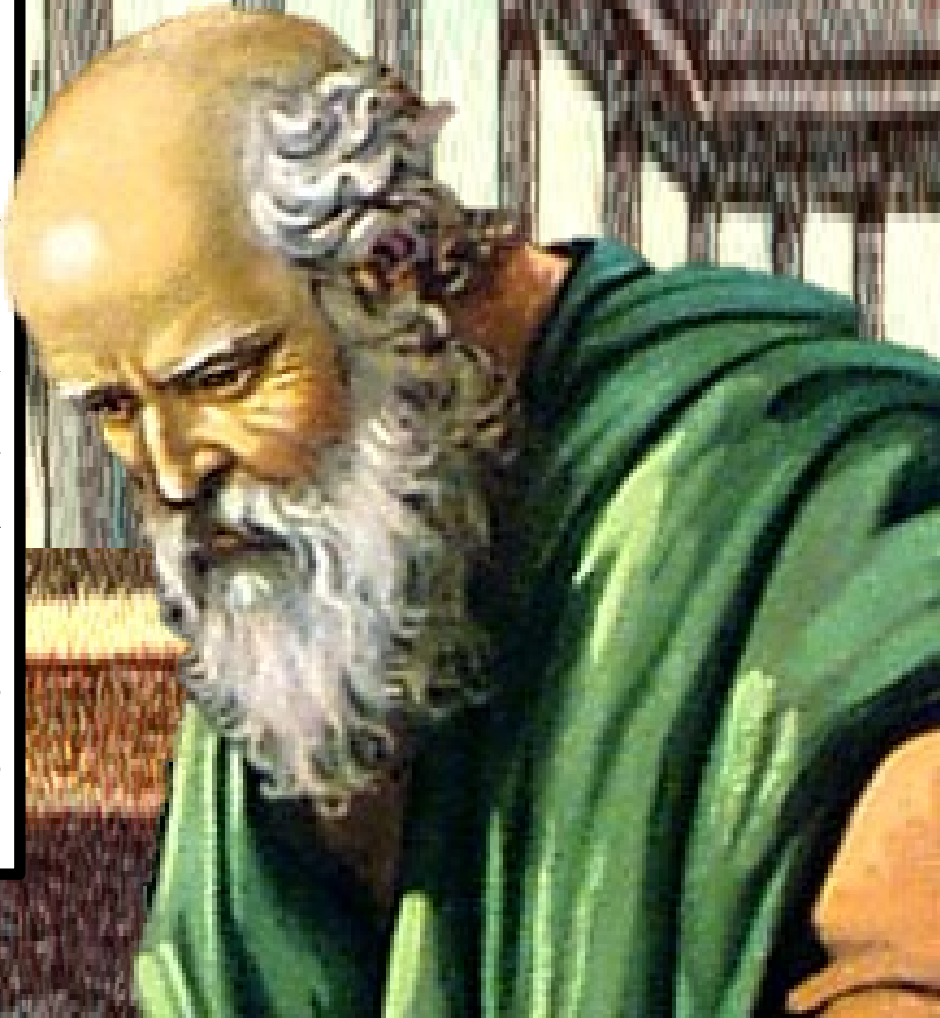


A QUICK NOTE:

It is significant that God chose
The Old Prophet
to deliver judgment against
The Man Of God
because he was the one that
had deceived him.

I Kings 13

“²¹[And he said] Thus saith the Lord, Forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed the mouth of the Lord, and hast not kept the commandment which the Lord thy God commanded thee, ²²But camest back, and hast eaten bread and drunk water in the place, of the which the Lord did say to thee, Eat no bread, and drink no water; thy carcass shall not come unto the sepulchre of thy fathers.”



Like the witch of Endor in 1 Samuel 28:12, the old prophet was no doubt more struck by God using him to deliver his message than in the message itself though it revealed his lie and exposed him as fool.

And, what of the man of God? His failing was to believe a lie. As a prophet of God, he had a responsibility to discern good from evil.



SATAN IS THE FATHER OF LIES

John 8

“⁴³ Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word.

⁴⁴ Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.”





OLD PROPHET



MAN OF GOD

One moment the two men were eating and exchanging mutual admiration and the next the old prophet was condemned as a liar and the man of God saw his error.



OLD PROPHET



MAN OF GOD

The text does not say anything about the reaction of these men to God's prophecy of retribution. And what was the retribution? The man of God would not receive a decent burial; nothing that caused too much alarm. In fact, it did not even interrupt their meal.



OLD PROPHET



MAN OF GOD

It seems they still did not realize the seriousness of their trespass. The man of God did not rent his clothing or cry out for they were not told his life would be cut so short. They were not told there was a lion waiting for him to pass by.

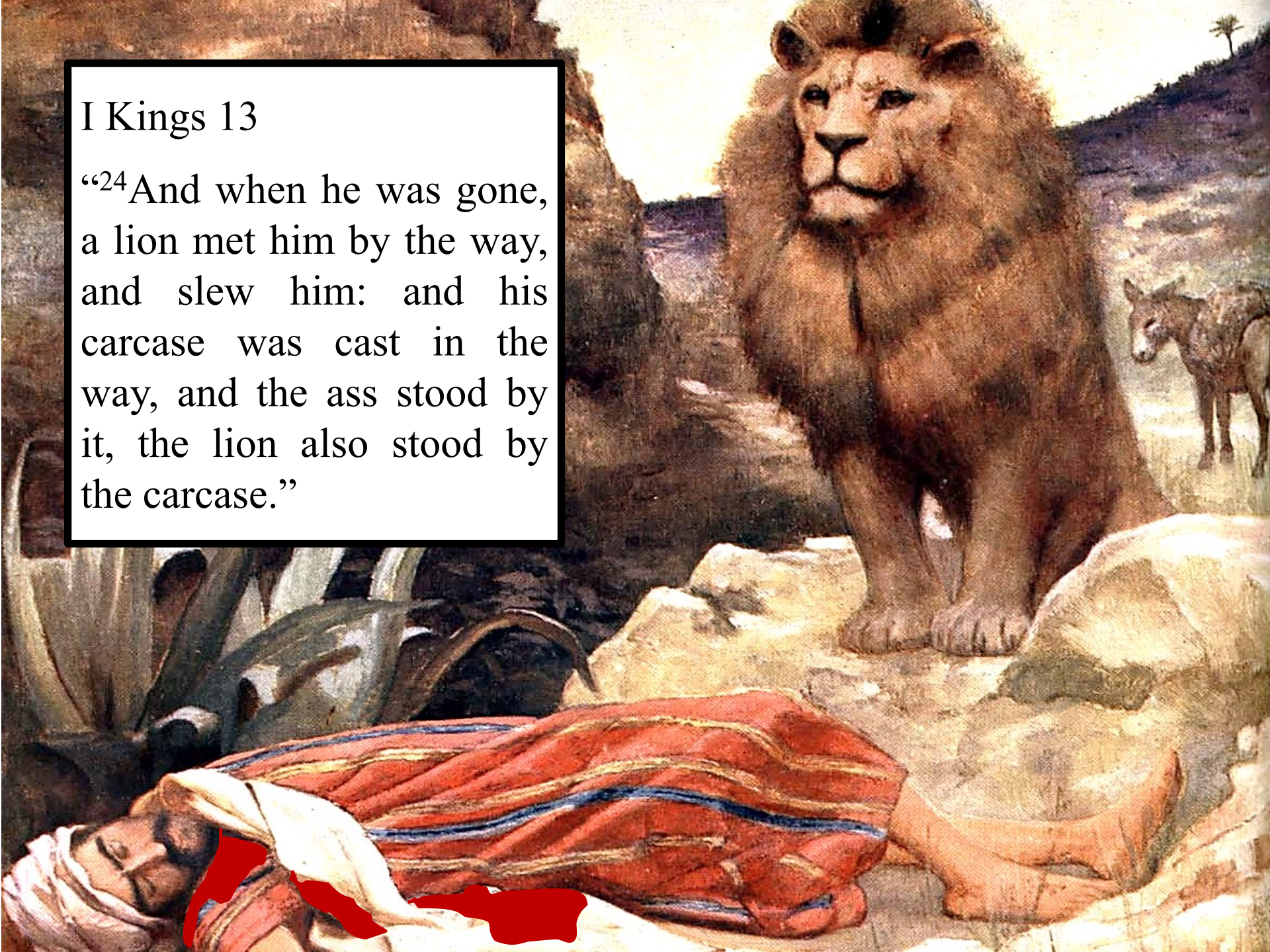
I Kings 13

“²³And it came to pass, after he had eaten bread, and after he had drunk, that he saddled for him the ass, to wit, for the prophet whom he had brought back.”



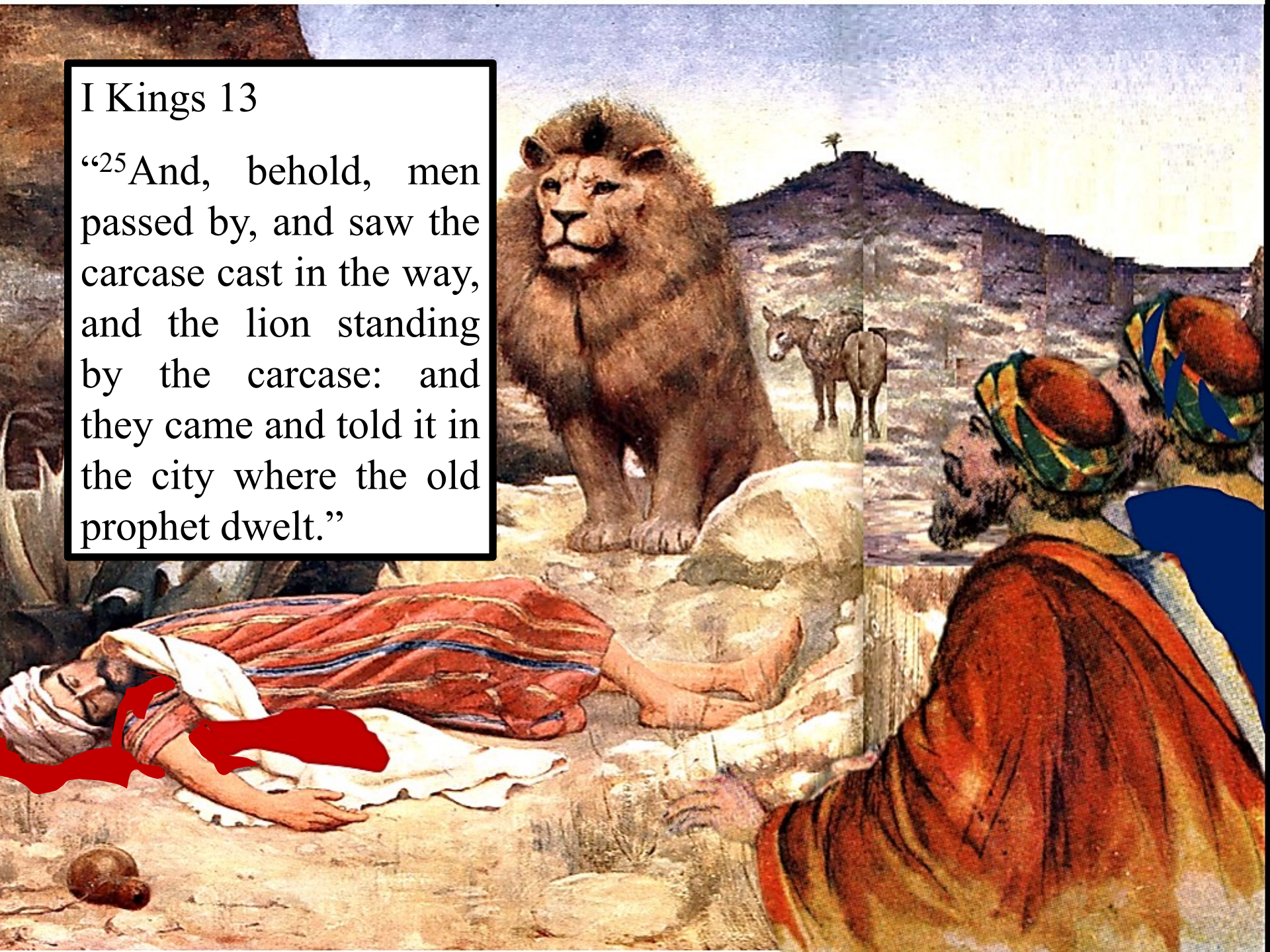
I Kings 13

“²⁴And when he was gone,
a lion met him by the way,
and slew him: and his
carcase was cast in the
way, and the ass stood by
it, the lion also stood by
the carcase.”



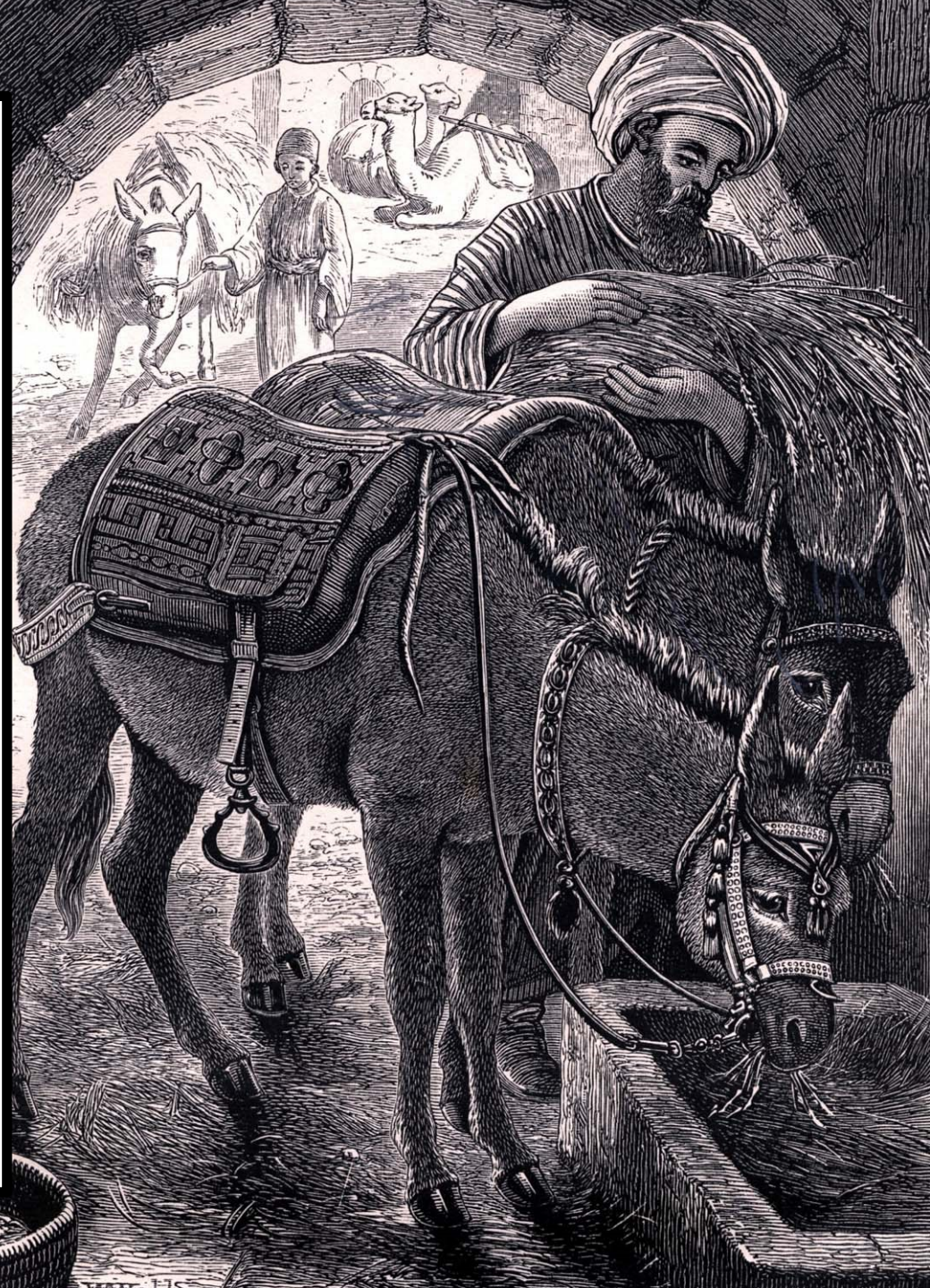
I Kings 13

“²⁵And, behold, men passed by, and saw the carcass cast in the way, and the lion standing by the carcass: and they came and told it in the city where the old prophet dwelt.”



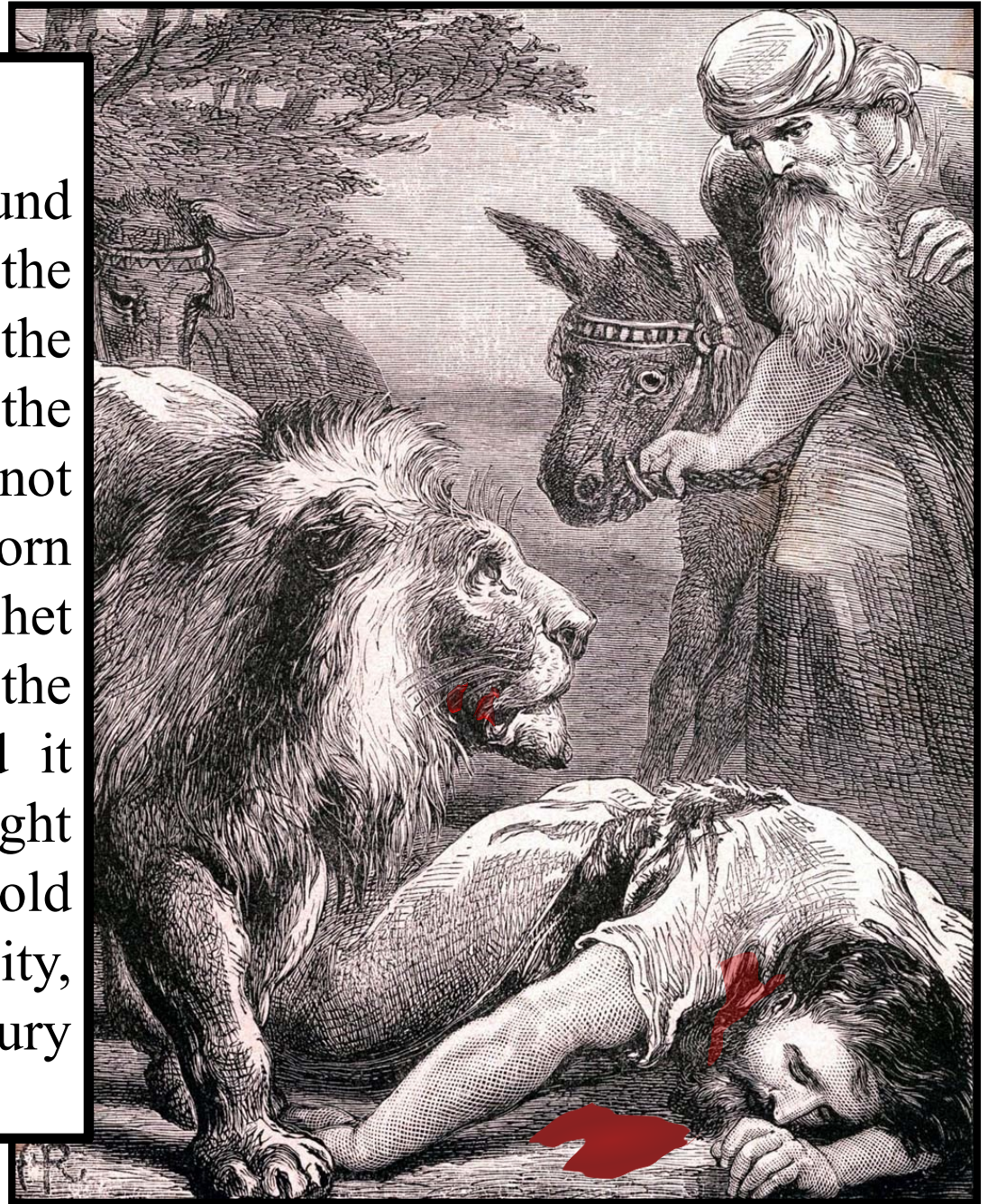
I Kings 13

“²⁶And when the prophet that brought him back from the way heard thereof, he said, It is the man of God, who was disobedient unto the word of the Lord: therefore the Lord hath delivered him unto the lion, which hath torn him, and slain him, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake unto him. ²⁷And he spake to his sons, saying, Saddle me the ass. And they saddled him.”



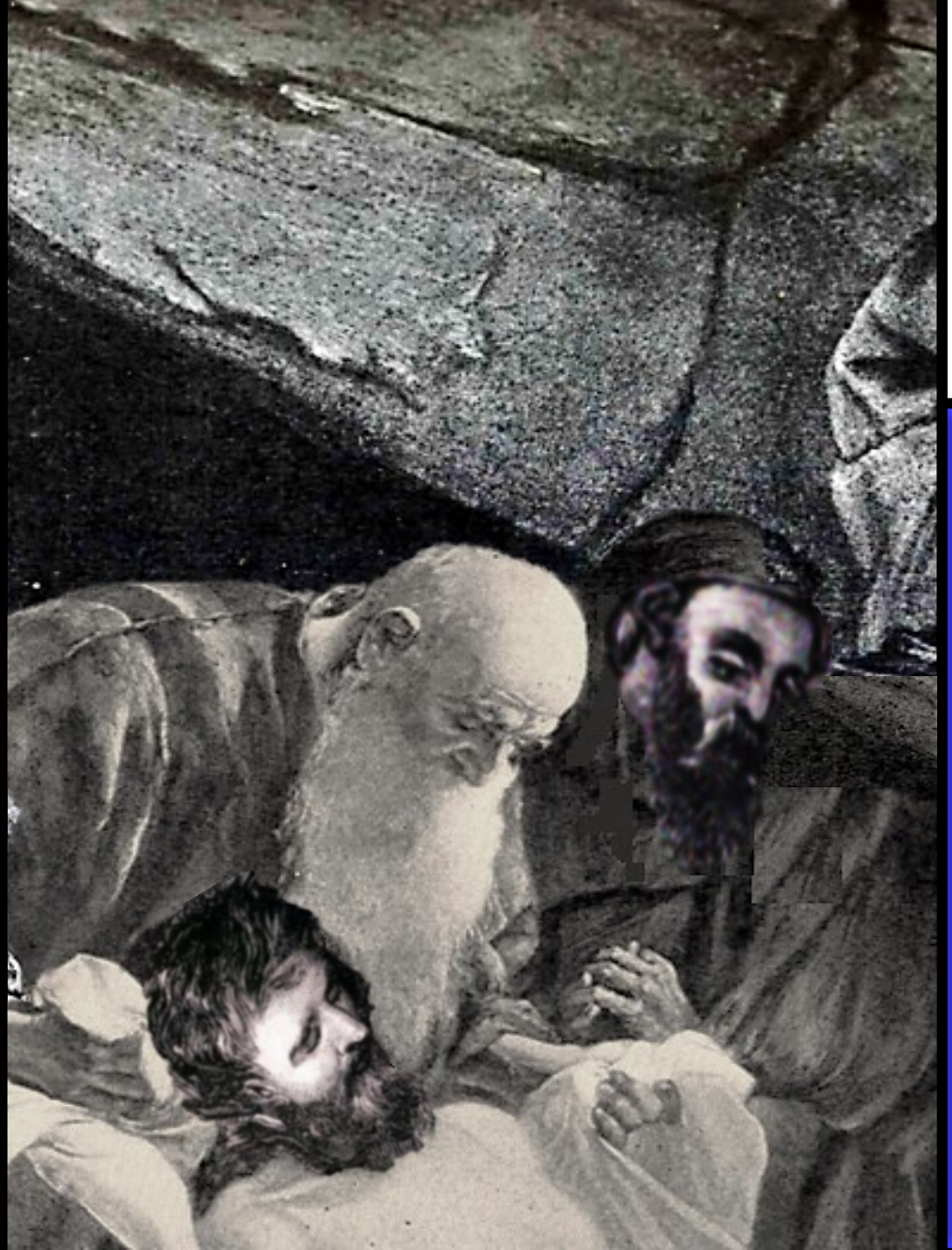
I Kings 13

“²⁸And he went and found his carcass cast in the way, and the ass and the lion standing by the carcass: the lion had not eaten the carcass, nor torn the ass. ²⁹And the prophet took up the carcass of the man of God, and laid it upon the ass, and brought it back: and the old prophet came to the city, to mourn and to bury him.”



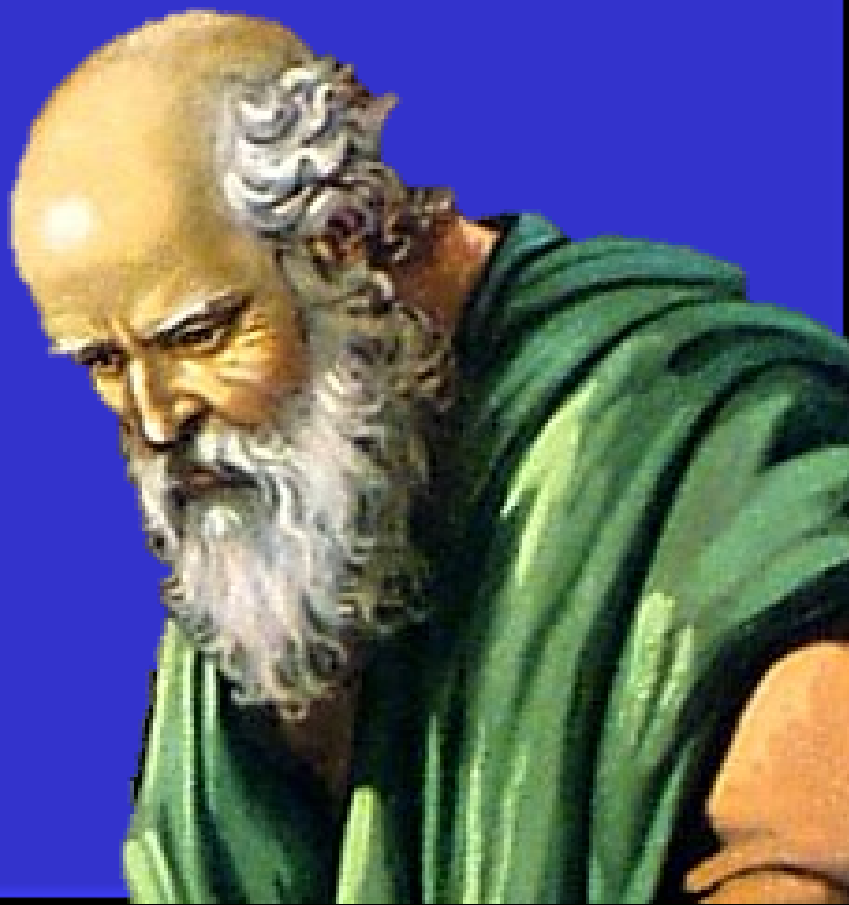
I Kings 13

“³⁰And he laid his
carcase in his own
grave; and they
mourned over him,
saying, Alas, my
brother!”



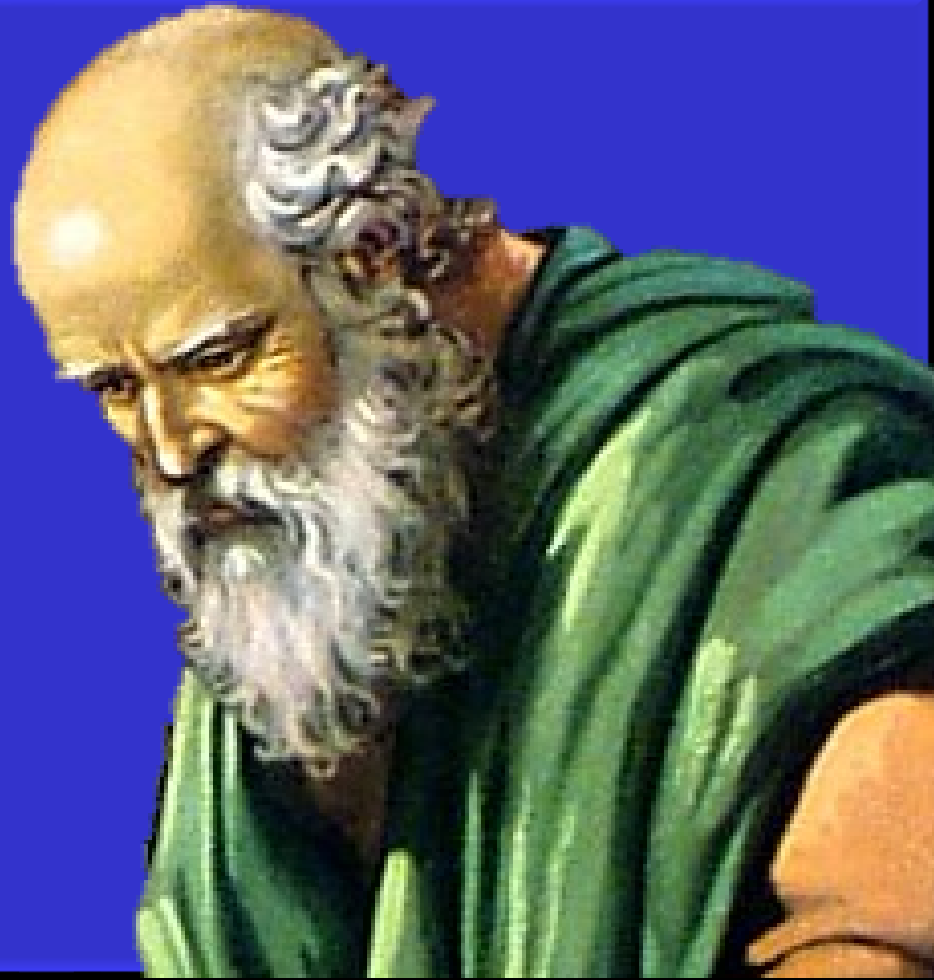
The prophecy was fulfilled the day it was given for his body was not taken back to Judah but was buried in the old prophet's sepulcher.

The old prophet mourned and rightly so for he was the cause of this tragedy. Just because we are not told his punishment does not mean he did not receive any. It may have been enough that he was exposed as a liar and lost his claim to be a prophet. For many shame is worse than death.



I Kings 13

“³¹And it came to pass, after he had buried him, that he spake to his sons, saying, When I am dead, then bury me in the sepulchre wherein the man of God is buried; lay my bones beside his bones:
³²For the saying which he cried by the word of the Lord against the altar in Bethel, and against all the houses of the high places which are in the cities of Samaria, shall surely come to pass.”



King Jeroboam surely heard that God's prophet who had warned him about his idolatry had been killed by a lion.

The news would have no doubt strengthened his resolve to embrace idols. He may have even claimed that his false god sent the lion.

The old prophet's lie snatched any hope of ever getting Jeroboam to consider the prophet from Judah's message.



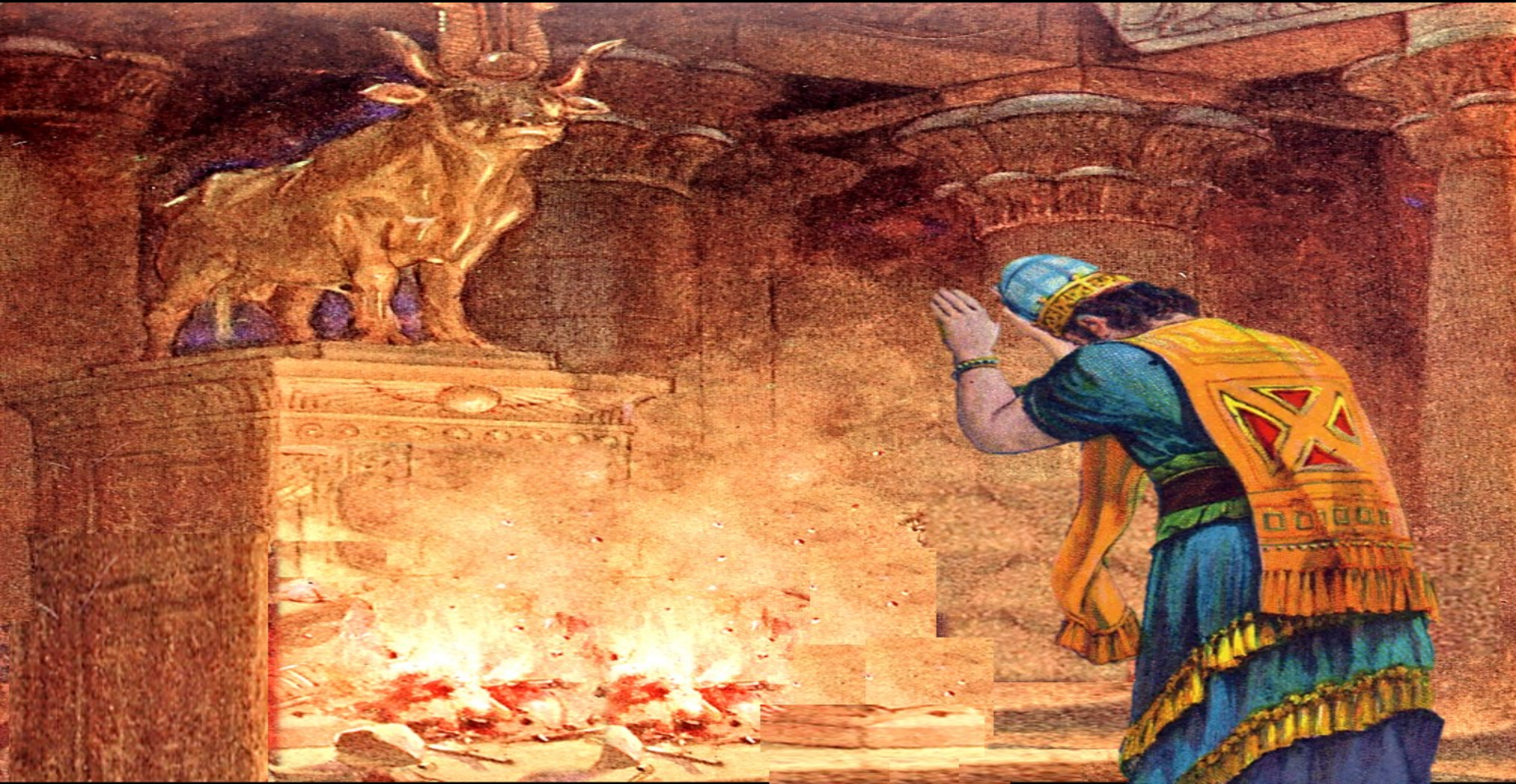
I Kings 13

“³³After this thing Jeroboam returned not from his evil way, but made again of the lowest of the people priests of the high places: whosoever would, he consecrated him, and he became one of the priests of the high places.”



I Kings 13

“³⁴And this thing became sin unto the house of Jeroboam, even to cut it off, and to destroy it from off the face of the earth.”



A painting depicting King Jeroboam in a temple. He is shown from the back, wearing a blue tunic and a yellow and red patterned vest. He is looking at a golden calf idol on an altar. The scene is set in a temple with stone columns and arches.

Can you imagine . . .

After seeing the Prophet's Sign

(the idol's altar shaken and the ashes scattered)

And after the miracle of his hand

(it shrank and was miraculously restored)

King Jeroboam was not dissuaded but went back to that very altar and continued to worship the false god.



**SO THE KINGDOM CONTINUED
DIVIDED AND IN SIN.**

Various methods were used
to reclaim Jeroboam the King of Israel,
BUT

neither threats nor signs,
neither judgments nor mercies,
brought about his repentance.

So strangely was he wedded to his calves.

THE END