

The historical Book of Kings dedicates considerable time to the reign of King Ahab, son of Omri. The Kingdom of Israel had reached its lowest during Ahab's reign. We read he did evil in the sight of the Lord, and more to provoke Him than all the kings of Israel who went before him.

Ahab introduced Baal worship to the Israelites. He erected an altar for this pagan deity in Samaria and made sacred Asherah poles for worship. He also disregarded the Word of God's Prophet concerning King Ben-Hadad of Aram, reminiscent of Saul's failure to heed the Word of Samuel after the battle with the Amalekites.

And on top of all of this, Ahab did nothing to save the life and inheritance of Naboth, a fellow Israelite, from false accusations and execution. Quite the opposite, he went and took possession of his property.

The writer of Kings goes on to say that when the Lord saw what Ahab had done to Naboth, He sent the Prophet Elijah to pronounce judgement on him for all his abominable deeds. Upon hearing the sentence, however, he repented and humbled himself in sackcloth. The Lord graciously responded to him by postponing the destruction of his kingdom.

The history of King Manasseh from Israel's Southern Kingdom is quite similar to that of Ahab. We are told that of all the kings of Judah, there was no one more evil than he.

Manasseh misled the inhabitants of Jerusalem to the extent that they became as wicked as the nations whom the Lord had driven out before them.

He rebuilt the idolatrous high places his father Hezekiah had removed and erected altars to the Baals. He worshipped the host of heaven and desecrated the Holy Temple with pagan images. He practiced witchcraft, sorcery and child sacrifice, that included his own son. Manasseh also despised the warnings of God's Prophets and, according to tradition, he had the Prophet Isaiah killed.

For all of this, the Lord brought against him the Army of Assyria. They took Manasseh captive in chains to Babylon, but, while there in distress, he humbled himself and entreated the favour of God in prayer. The Scripture says the Lord not only responded to his act of contrition, He restored him again to Jerusalem and to his kingdom!

However, the response that followed God's mercy in the lives of these two kings was very different. Manasseh set out to undo all the evil he had done. He took away the foreign gods and the idols from the House of the Lord. He also restored the holy altar and offered sacrifices on it prescribed in the Law of Moses and commanded the people of Judah to serve the Lord alone.