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Introduction

Josiah reads in the temple to the elders of Judah, the priests, the prophets, and the people, the book of the covenant which had been found, 2 Kings 23:1, 2 Kings 23:2. He makes a covenant, and the people stand to it, 2 Kings 23:3. He destroys the vessels of Baal and Asherah, and puts down the idolatrous priests; breaks down the houses of the sodomites, and the high places; defiles Topheth; takes away the horses of the sun; destroys the altars of Ahaz; breaks in pieces the images; and breaks down and burns Jeroboam's altar at Beth-el, 2 Kings 23:4-15. Fulfills the word of the prophet, who cried against the altar at Beth-el, 2 Kings 23:16-18. Destroys the high places in Samaria, slays the idolatrous priests, and celebrates a great passover, 2 Kings 23:19-23; and puts away all the dealers with familiar spirits, etc., 2 Kings 23:24. His eminent character; he is mortally wounded at Megiddo, and buried at Jerusalem, 2 Kings 23:25-30. Jehoahaz reigns in his stead, and does evil in the sight of the Lord, 2 Kings 23:31, 2 Kings 23:32. Is dethroned by Pharaoh-nechoh; and Eliakim, his brother, called also Jehoiakim, made king in his stead; the land is laid under tribute by the king of Egypt, and Jehoiakim reigns wickedly, 2 Kings 23:33-37.

Verse 2

The king went up into the house of the Lord - Here is another very singular circumstance. The high priest, scribes, priest, and prophets, are gathered together, with all the elders of the people, and the king himself reads the book of the covenant which had been lately found! It is strange that either the high priest, Jeremiah, Zephaniah, or some other of the prophets, who were certainly there present, did not read the sacred book! It is likely that the king considered himself a mediator between God and them, and therefore read and made the covenant.

Verse 3

Stood by a pillar - He stood, *לְעַמּוּד* (al haammud), *עַל* upon the stairs or pulpit. This is what is called the brazen scaffold or pulpit which Solomon made, and on which the kings were accustomed to stand when they addressed the people. See 2 Chronicles 6:13, and the parallel places.

Made a covenant - This was expressed,

1. In general. To walk after Jehovah; to have no gods besides him.
2. To take his law for the regulation of their conduct.
3. In particular. To bend their whole heart and soul to the observance of it, so that, they might not only have religion without, but, piety within.

To this all the people stood up, thus giving their consent, and binding themselves to obedience.

Verse 4

The priests of the second order - These were probably such as supplied the place of the high priest when he was prevented: from fulfilling the functions of his office. So the Chaldee understood the place - the sagan of the high priests. But the words may refer to those of the second course or order established by David: though it does not appear that those orders were now in use, yet the distinction was continued even to the time of our Lord. We find the course of Abia, which was the eighth, mentioned Luke 1:5 (note); where see the note.

All the vessels - These had been used for idolatrous purposes; the king is now to destroy them; for although no longer used in this way, they might, if permitted to remain, be an incentive to idolatry at a future time.

Verse 5

The idolatrous priests - *הַכִּמְרִימִים* (hakkemarim). Who these were is not well known. The Chaldee, Syriac, and Arabic, call them the priests simply, which the kings of Judah had ordained. Probably they were an order made by the idolatrous kings of Judah, and called (kemarim), from *כִּמְרִי* (camar), which signifies to be scorched, shriveled together, made dark, or black, because their business was constantly to attend sacrificial fires, and probably they were black garments; hence the Jews in derision call Christian ministers (kemarim), because of their black clothes and garments. Why we should imitate, in our sacerdotal dress, those priests of Baal, is strange to think and hard to tell.

Unto Baal, to the sun - Though Baal was certainly the sun, yet here they are distinguished; Baal being

worshipped under different forms and attributes, Baal-peor, Baal-zephon, Baal-zebul, etc.

The planets - מַזְלֹחַ (mazzaloth). The Vulgate translates this the twelve signs, i.e., the zodiac. This is as likely as any of the other conjectures which have been published relative to this word. See a similar word Job 37:9; Job 38:32.

Verse 6

He brought out the grove - He brought out the idol Asherah. See at the end of 2 Kings 21:26 (note).

Upon the graves of the children of the people - I believe this; means the burial-place of the common people.

Verse 7

The houses of the sodomites - We have already often met with these קְדֵשִׁים (kedeshim) or consecrated persons. The word implies all kinds of prostitutes, as well as abusers of themselves with mankind.

Wove hangings for the grove - For Asherah; curtains or tent coverings for the places where the rites of the impure goddess were performed. See at the end of 2 Kings 21:26 (note).

Verse 8

The gate of Joshua - The place where he, as governor of the city, heard and decided causes. Near this we find there were public altars, where sometimes the true God, at other times false gods, were honored.

Verse 9

The priests of the high places came not up - As these priests had offered sacrifices on the high places, though it was to the true God, yet they were not thought proper to be employed immediately about the temple; but as they were acknowledged to belong to the priesthood, they had a right to their support; therefore a portion of the tithes, offerings, and unleavened bread, shew-bread, etc., was appointed to them for their support. Thus they were treated as priests who had some infirmity which rendered it improper for them to minister at the altar. See Leviticus 21:17, etc., and particularly Leviticus 21:22, Leviticus 21:23.

Verse 10

He defiled Topheth - St. Jerome says that Topheth was a fine and pleasant place, well watered with fountains, and adorned with gardens. The valley of the son of Hinnom, or Gehenna, was in one part; here it appears the sacred rites of Molech were performed, and to this all the filth of the city was carried, and perpetual fires were kept up in order to consume it. Hence it has been considered a type of hell; and in this sense it is used in the New Testament.

It is here said that Josiah defiled this place that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire. He destroyed the image of Molech, and so polluted the place where he stood, or his temple, that it was rendered in every way abominable. The rabbins say that Topheth had its name from תופ (toph), a drum, because instruments of this kind were used to drown the cries of the children that were put into the burning arms of Molech, to be scorched to death. This may be as true as the following definition: "Topheth, or the valley of the son of Hinnom, was a place near Jerusalem, where the filth and offal of the city were thrown, and where a constant fire was kept up to consume the wretched remains of executed criminals. It was a human shambles, a public chopping-block, where the arms and legs of men and women were quartered off by thousands." Query, On what authority do such descriptions rest?

Verse 11

The horses that the kings of Judah had given to the sun - Jarchi says that those who adored the sun had horses which they mounted every morning to go out to meet the sun at his rising. Throughout the East the horse, because of his swiftness and utility, was dedicated to the sun; and the Greeks and Romans feigned that the chariot of the sun was drawn by four horses - Pyroeis, Eous, Aethon, and Phlegon. See the note on 2 Kings 2:11.

Whether these were living or sculptured horses, we cannot tell; the latter is the more reasonable supposition.

Verse 12

On the top of the upper chamber - Altars built on the flat roof of the house. Such altars were erected to the sun, moon, stars, etc.

Verse 13

Mount of corruption - This, says Jarchi, following the Chaldee, was the mount of Olives, for this is the mount חַמִּישׁ (hammishchah), of unction; but because of the idolatrous purposes for which it was used, the

Scripture changed the appellation to the mount **חֲמַשְׁחִית** (hammashchith), of corruption.

Ashtoreth the abomination, etc. - See on 1 Kings 11:7 (note).

Verse 14

Filled their places with the bones of men - This was allowed to be the utmost defilement to which any thing could be exposed.

Verse 16

And as Josiah turned himself - This verse is much more complete in the Septuagint, and in the Hexaplar Syriac version at Paris. I shall give the whole, making a distinction where, in those versions, any thing is added: **“And as Josiah turned himself, he spied the sepulchres that were there in the mount, and sent and took the bones out of the sepulchres, and burnt them upon the altar, and polluted it: according to the word of the Lord which the man of God proclaimed [when Jeroboam stood by the altar at the feast. And turning about, he cast his eyes on the sepulcher of the man of God] who proclaimed these words.”** See 1 Kings 13:2 (note), where these things were predicted, and see the notes there.

Verse 17

What title is that - There was either a stone, an image, or an inscription here: the old prophet no doubt took care to have the place made sufficiently remarkable.

Verse 18

The prophet that came out of Samaria - See the note on 1 Kings 13:32.

Verse 19

That were in the cities of Samaria - Israel had now no king; and Josiah, of the blood royal of Judah, had certainly a direct right to the kingdom; he had, at this time, an especial commission from God, to reform every abuse through the whole land - all that ground that was given by the Lord as an inheritance to the twelve sons of Jacob. Therefore he had every right to carry his plans of reformation into the Samaritan states.

Verse 20

Slew all the priests - The lives of these, as corrupters of the people, were forfeited to the law.

Verse 22

Surely there was not holden such a passover - Not one on purer principles, more heartily joined in by the people present, more literally consecrated, or more religiously observed. The words do not apply to the number present, but to the manner and spirit. See the particulars and mode of celebrating this passover in 2 Chronicles 35:1-18 (note).

Verse 24

The workers with familiar spirits - See on 2 Kings 21:5 (note).

And the images - The teraphim. See the note on Genesis 31:19.

Verse 25

Like unto him was there no king - Perhaps not one from the time of David; and, morally considered, including David himself, none ever sat on the Jewish throne, so truly exemplary in his own conduct, and so thoroughly zealous in the work of God. David was a greater but not a better man than Josiah.

Verse 26

The Lord turned not - It was of no use to try this fickle and radically depraved people any longer. They were respited merely during the life of Josiah.

Verse 29

In his days Pharaoh-nechoh - See the note on the death of Josiah, 2 Kings 22:20 (note).

Nechoh is supposed to have been the son of Psammitichus, king of Egypt; and the Assyrian king, whom he was now going to attack, was the famous Nabopolassar. What the cause of this quarrel was, is not known. Some say it was on account of Carchemish, a city on the Euphrates, belonging to the Egyptians, which Nabopolassar had seized. See Isaiah 10:9.

Verse 30

Dead from Megiddo - The word $\times\check{z}\times^a$ (meth) should here be considered as a participle, dying, for it is certain he was not dead: he was mortally wounded at Megiddo, was carried in a dying state to Jerusalem, and there he died and was buried. See 2 Chronicles 35:24.

Herodotus, lib. i., c. 17, 18, 25, and lib. ii. 159, appears to refer to the same war which is here mentioned. He says that Nechoh, in the sixth year of his reign, went to attack the king of Assyria at Magdolum, gained a complete victory, and took Cadytis. Usher and others believe that Magdolum and Megiddo were the same place. The exact place of the battle seems to have been Hadadrimmon, in the valley of Megiddo, for there Zechariah tells us 2 Kings 12:11, was the great mourning for Josiah. Compare this with 2 Chronicles 35:24, 2 Chronicles 35:25.

Verse 31

Jehoahaz was twenty and three years old - This was not the eldest son of Josiah, which is evident from this, that he was twenty-three years old when he began to reign; that he reigned but three months; that, being dethroned, his brother Eliakim was put in his place, who was then twenty-five years of age. Eliakim, therefore, was the eldest brother; but Jehoahaz was probably raised to the throne by the people, as being of a more active and martial spirit.

Verse 33

Nechoh put him in bands - But what was the cause of his putting him in bands? It is conjectured, and not without reason, that Jehoahaz, otherwise called Shallum, raised an army, met Nechoh in his return from Carchemish, fought, was beaten, taken prisoner, put in chains; and taken into Egypt, where he died; 2 Kings 23:34, and Jeremiah 22:11, Jeremiah 22:12. Riblah or Diblath, the place of this battle, was probably a town in Syria, in the land or district of Hamath.

Verse 34

Turned his name to Jehoiakim - These names are precisely the same in signification: Eliakim is God shall arise; Jehoiakim, Jehovah shall arise; or, the resurrection of God; the resurrection of Jehovah. That is, God's rising again to show his power, justice, etc. The change of the name was to show Nechoh's supremacy, and that Jehoiakim was only his vassal or viceroy. Proofs of this mode of changing the name, when a person of greater power put another in office under himself, may be seen in the case of Mattaniah, changed into Zedekiah; Daniel, Mishael, Hananiah, and Azariah, into Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego; and Joseph into Zaphnath-paaneah. See Daniel 1:6, Daniel 1:7; Genesis 41:45.

Verse 35

Jehoiakim gave the silver and the gold - Nechoh had placed him there as viceroy, simply to raise and collect his taxes.

Every one according to his taxation - That is, each was assessed in proportion to his property: that was the principle avowed: but there is reason to fear that this bad king was not governed by it.

Verse 37

He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord - He was a most unprincipled and oppressive tyrant. Jeremiah gives us his character at large, Jeremiah 22:13-19, to which the reader will do well to refer. Jeremiah was at that time in the land, and was an eyewitness of the abominations of this cruel king.