

so, Joachaz, at the head of his army, went to Mount Carmel to visit the prophet, whom he found to be very sick, but not dying. King Joachaz, thinking Eliseus was about to die, wept in his presence saying: "My father, my father, true guide and chariot of God's hosts." Eliseus said: "Open the window that looks to the east. Bring me a bow and arrows." The king having done so, the prophet said to him: "Take the bow in your hands." After the king had taken and held it in his hands, Eliseus laid his hands on those of the king, saying to him: "Shoot an arrow through the window you have opened." The king shot one. And Eliseus foretold: "Arrow of God's favour and arrow of victory over Syria, for you will strike at her army in Apheca until vanquishing it." Then Eliseus, to instil in the king greater confidence in divine help, said to Joachaz: "Take three arrows and strike the ground three times." And having taken them, the king placed them one after another in his bow and shot them. By this gesture, Eliseus gave the king to understand that he should not be afraid to put his army at God's service, since he would obtain victory through His help. King Joachaz the Saviour, with the help of the Lord, waged war on the Syrians, vanquished them, reconquered all the towns they had seized, freed himself from the oppressors' yoke and lived in peace until his death.

5. From his conversion, King Joachaz was always faithful to the Lord. He destroyed all the idols and their altars that he as well as the Syrians had erected in the towns, mountains and other parts of Samaria; he persecuted adorers of idols to death, exterminating those who remained obstinate in idolatry. The great majority of his subjects, following his good example, were converted to the true God of Israel.

6. Therefore, though the first three years of Joachaz's reign belong to his perverse life, he dedicated the remaining seventeen to making reparation and to expiating his sins by an exemplary life, the re-establishment of holy morals and the exaltation of the worship of the true God. Joachaz died in holiness in the year 4369 after a reign of twenty years. This account of his life discredits the adulterated texts in the so-called official bible which has been used up to the publication of this present Palmarian Bible, texts in which Joachaz is presented as a man who was always bloodthirsty and idolatrous.

7. In the same year 4369, a week after the death of Joachaz, occurred the death of his virtuous wife Queen Achinoam, mother of perverse King Joas of Samaria.

Chapter XXVII

Amasias, eighth king of Judah. Joas, eleventh king of Samaria. Amasias' endeavour to reconquer Idumea. War between Amasias of Judah and Joas of Samaria. Death of Joas. Death of Amasias

1. Amasias, son of King Joas of Judah, began to reign in the year 4363. So that it might be seen that God, as chastisement to His people for their continuous infidelities, continued to permit the division of the people of Israel into two kingdoms, independent of whether the new king was to act in a holy or in a perverse way, He was anointed king in Jerusalem by the virtuous Prophet Micheas, after he had sworn the ritual oath to defend the worship of the Lord God of Hosts and to persecute idolatrous worship. Amasias, fearful of God on account of the tragic death of his father and for all the evil that had befallen Jerusalem and all the Kingdom, acted uprightly during the first years of his reign, commanding idolatry to be banished and imposing order among his People, which had been plunged into chaos. But afterwards, when he found himself secure on the throne, a certain spirit of vainglory and ambition took hold of him. Allowing himself to be drawn as well by vengeance, he commanded the servants who had taken the life of his father to have their throats cruelly cut.

2. Joas, from the tribe of Ephraim, son of the virtuous King Joachaz, began to reign in Samaria in the year 4369, and likewise so that it might be seen that God, as chastisement to His people for their continuous infidelities, continued to permit the division of the people of Israel into two kingdoms, independent of whether the new king was to act in a holy or in a perverse way, was anointed king in Sichem by the virtuous Prophet Abdias after he had sworn the ritual oath to defend the worship of the Lord God of Hosts and to persecute idolatrous worship. The reign of King Joas of Samaria, apart from some good acts, was one of unalloyed evil and perversion; for this king again set up the idols and their altars which his father had removed; and not only did he adore false gods, but through his fault a large section of his people also prevaricated.

3. In the year 4371 King Amasias of Judah, who counted on a large army of brave young men skilled in warfare, instead of employing them uprightly in the service of God and for the benefit of his people, put them rather at the service of his personal caprices. With the intention of increasing his own glory, full of vainglory because of his power, he forged an ambitious plan of reconquering Idumea. To this purpose he increased the size of his army by contracting mercenary soldiers from the kingdom of Samaria, where the perverse Joas reigned, to whom he sent in exchange a large sum of gold and silver. Once everything was prepared for the invasion of Idumea, God sent the Prophet Micheas to say to Amasias: "O king, consider first the interests of God rather than your own, and do not let yourself be drawn along by the vainglory of your power. Moreover, do not go to war with mercenary soldiers brought from Samaria in your army, for the Samaritans have turned their backs to the Lord God, and its soldiers will act in conformity with their impiety. Amasias, if you believe that success in war depends solely on the strength of armies, know that it is not so; for God can just as easily give you the victory as permit you to be vanquished." Amasias asked the prophet: "How can I let the mercenary soldiers go when I have already paid for the service they are to render me? Am I to lose, by chance, both soldiers and money?" The prophet replied: "You, obey God, Who can give you much more than that."

4. But King Amasias, disobeying the divine exhortation through the prophet, launched into the invasion of Idumea with an army composed of soldiers of the kingdom of Judah and mercenaries brought from the kingdom of Samaria. Though Idumea was crushed by Amasias's forces, as punishment for his disobedience God did not allow him to reconquer it, but He did allow the Samaritan mercenaries to bring the kingdom of Judah into disrepute by their crimes and ambition; for in the campaign they committed all kinds of atrocities and sackings. Of the immense and valuable booty the mercenaries

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appropriated, they gave King Amasias the chief part, in which was included the golden idols the Idumeans possessed as gods. Amasias, instead of destroying the idols, moved by ambition for riches, took them with him to Jerusalem, for he thought to do great business with the gold. These ambitious designs of Amasias were the cause of his complete deviation into the paths of evil, which God allowed as punishment for his greed.

5. King Amasias, fully given up to impiety and idolatry, raised sumptuous altars in the Temple of Jerusalem for the golden idols he had brought from Idumea, and moreover spread idolatrous worship throughout his Kingdom. The Lord God was angered with Amasias and again sent him the Prophet Micheas to say in His Name: "How is it that you adore those gods that have been unable to free the Idumean people from your cruel and ambitious hands?" The king replied to the prophet: "Have I, by chance, named you my counsellor? Keep quiet, if you don't want me to command you to be killed." As the Prophet Micheas withdrew, in God's name he said to the king: "If you do not correct your abominable misdeeds, destroy the idols and their altars, and truly repentant turn your eyes to God again, you will die a cruel and painful death for your wrongdoings and for despising my paternal exhortations."

6. King Amasias had requested King Joas of Samaria to give one of his daughters in marriage to his son, heir to the throne of Judah, and King Joas had refused. Consequently, Amasias, exceedingly arrogant on account of his success against the Idumeans, seeing his pride trampled on by Joas's refusal, challenged him to war, saying: "We will see each others' faces." To this Joas sent him messengers to inform him that he did not want any war with him. But as Amasias insisted again and again in his war challenge, King Joas sent him an embassy saying: "The thistle that grows in Judah sent a message to the cedar that towers up in Samaria: 'Give your daughter as wife to my son'; and lo! the beasts in the forests of Samaria passed by and trampled on the thistle that grows in Judah. You say: 'I have crushed the Idumeans'; and consequently you have become conceited and proud of heart. But stay at home in peace. Why do you provoke disasters against yourself, so that you perish and Judah together with you?" Amasias disdained to listen to this pacific embassy of King Joas, which was permitted by God so that the king of Judah fall into his hands because of the Idumean idols he had brought into the Temple of Jerusalem.

7. In the year 4382, in view of fresh challenges from Amasias, King Joas of Samaria came up with his powerful army to the frontier of the kingdom of Judah, pitching camp near the town of Bethsames, where Amasias was waiting with his soldiers. The result of this campaign was for Amasias just as fatal as deserved, for his troops suffered a shameful defeat in which many of his bravest warriors perished amid a terror-stricken flight. Joas entered the territory of Judah with his army, took Amasias prisoner in Bethsames and continued with his army and brought him to Jerusalem. There Joas demolished a large section of its famous walls, sacked the Temple of God carrying off a considerable part of its treasures, among them the vessels and other utensils of gold and silver dedicated to divine worship; and moreover, he sacked the royal palace carrying off its immense riches, all of which was permitted by God to punish Amasias and his people for their prevarications and also to move them to conversion. After humbling King Amasias' pride and defiance, Joas let him go free, and returned with his victorious army to the kingdom of Samaria.

8. In the same year 4382 the impious King Joas of Samaria died in Sichem after a reign of thirteen years. King Amasias of Judah survived him eleven years.

9. In the year 4393 a powerful conspiracy was formed in Jerusalem against King Amasias, promoted by many of the princes and courtiers. Amasias fled to the south and took refuge in the town of Lachis, where he was cruelly assassinated by the conspirators. In this way the perverse King Amasias paid for his idolatry, his crimes, his pride and his disobedience to the paternal requirements of God through His prophet. His cadaver was buried in the royal pantheon on Mount Sion. King Amasias died, then, in the year 4393, after reigning thirty years in Judah. At his death his son Ozias inherited the throne of Judah.

Chapter XXVIII

Jeroboam II, twelfth King of Samaria. Death of the virtuous Queen Saphoris. Death of Jeroboam II

1. In the year 4382 Jeroboam II, son of Joas, from the tribe of Ephraim, began to reign in Samaria. He was anointed in Sichem by the virtuous Prophet Jonas, after he had sworn the ritual oath to defend the worship of the Lord God of Hosts and to persecute idolatrous worship. Jeroboam II of Samaria was a great king. The first work of his reign was to destroy all the idols and their altars erected by his father.

2. In the year 4383, in view of a new threat of invasion by the Syrians, the Prophet Eliseus communicated to King Jeroboam II the following command from God: "Arise with your powerful army and go out to meet the Syrians who are on their way to enter the kingdom of Samaria, and pursue them until vanquishing them, and then take the territory of Syria. I will support you." Jeroboam II, obeying the divine orders, went out to meet the invaders, entered Syria, and fighting courageously overcame her thirty-three kings, who were under the command of Benadab III, killing them all with his own sword. He then demolished all the idols and their altars in the reconquered territory, and many of the Syrian people were converted to the true God and Lord. Through this reconquest by the virtuous and valiant Jeroboam II, Syria once again belonged to the People of God, from which it had been separated in the final years of the reign of Solomon when it became independent of his crown. Through the annexation of Syria by the kingdom of Samaria, the latter was greatly enlarged. At no stage, as stated in the adulterated biblical texts in the so-called official bible which has been used up to the publication of this present Palmarian Bible, did Jeroboam II give the kingdom of Judah any of the Syrian territory reconquered by his sword guided by the Lord God of Hosts.

3. In the year 4426, virtuous Queen Saphoris, wife of Jeroboam II, died.

4. Jeroboam II the Valiant died in sanctity in the year 4430, after a reign of forty-eight years in Samaria. At his death he was succeeded on the throne by his son Zacharias.

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Chapter XXIX**Ozias, ninth king of Judah. Death of Ozias**

1. In the year 4393, so that it might be seen that God, as chastisement to His people for their continuous infidelities, continued to permit the division of the people of Israel into two kingdoms, independent of whether the new king was to act in a holy or in a perverse way, Ozias, son of Amasias and Jehelia, began to reign in Judah, at the age of sixteen years, and was anointed king in Jerusalem by the virtuous Prophet Jacharias after he had sworn the ritual oath to defend the worship of the Lord God of Hosts and to persecute idolatrous worship. The Prophet Jacharias, an Essenian religioso, was the son of High Priest and martyr Zacharias, son of High Priest Joyada. The great Prophet Jacharias prophesied to, corrected and admonished King Ozias, in God's name, during the course of his life, when it was necessary for the good of his soul and of his people.

2. Ozias, under the direction of the wise and prudent Prophet Jacharias, was faithful to the Holy Law of God. Thanks to special divine help he regained for the kingdom of Judah the honour and fame lost by the mistakes of his father, and made the sceptre and crown of David's lineage shine anew. He repaired the section of the Jerusalem walls demolished by Joas, king of Samaria. Through glorious campaigns, Ozias, by God's help, reconquered for the kingdom of Judah many of her lost former possessions: the Philistine region in the south-west of Judah, a large part of Arabia, the land of Ammon, Idumea and the Sinai peninsula. His victories equalled his battles in number, so that his fame spread throughout the surrounding countries, instilling terror as far as Egypt itself.

3. Ozias strengthened the walls of Jerusalem and of other towns, placing in their turrets war machines of various kinds, to shoot arrows and large stones. Throughout the territory of his kingdom he sunk many wells to water his numerous livestock, and planted extensive vineyards and wheat-fields, for he was a man much given to agriculture. He painstakingly organized his army, which he put under the command of skilled captains, and equipped it with shields, lances, helmets, breastplates, bows and slings.

4. But when Ozias saw himself so powerful, he became conceited of heart. And it came to pass that in the year 4445 he entered the Temple of God in Jerusalem one day intending to offer incense to the Lord, whereby he profaned the sacred ministry by usurping priestly functions. High Priest Azarias, accompanied by eighty priests, men of great resolve, followed him. Azarias, opposing the king, said to him: "O Ozias, it does not pertain to you to offer incense to the Lord, but to the priests who have been consecrated for this ministry. Leave the sanctuary, then, for you are prevaricating and your action is abominable before the Lord God." Ozias, in a fit of rage, holding the thurible in his hand to offer the incense, threatened those who reproached him, so that the High Priest cursed him in God's name; and immediately the king's forehead became covered with leprosy as a sign of divine indignation. When High Priest Azarias and the other priests observed this, they urged the king to leave the Temple quickly, which he made haste to do, deeply repentant for his sin in view of such evident manifestation of Divine Justice.

5. Ozias, the Repentant Leper, given the impure character implied by leprosy, though he remained king of Judah, was faced with the humiliation of finding himself deprived, until death, of the government of his people, of his magnificent palace in Jerusalem, and of living with his family and courtiers; for as a leper he had to live secluded in another palace outside the city and far from dealings and communication with others. From the year 4445, in which Ozias was chastised with leprosy, until his death in the year 4448, his son Joathan occupied the throne as viceroy. King Ozias, during the three years in which, because of leprosy, he had to live in his palace outside the city walls, expiated his sin with great signs of repentance. A week before the king's death, the Prophet Jacharias, who had admonished Ozias for his sin, visited him again; and observing the king's humble repentance, asked the Lord to cure Ozias of his leprosy. God, acceding to the prayers of His servant the prophet, cured Ozias of leprosy, so that this also serve to show that he had repented of his sin. Following the instructions of the Prophet Jacharias, the same day on which the king was cured of leprosy, the first thing he did was to dress in all his royal pomp and enter the city of Jerusalem amid the acclamations of the people, as well as to go to the Temple to give thanks to God and prostrate himself before High Priest Azarias to manifest his submission and deference to his sacred authority, fulfilling in this way the rite of purification of cured lepers. Ozias then went to live again in his magnificent palace in Jerusalem.

6. King Ozias, the Repentant Leper, died a holy death in Jerusalem a week after having been cured of leprosy, in the year 4448, after having reigned fifty-five years in Judah. His funeral was held with all the solemnity required by his kingly state, and he was buried in the royal pantheon on Mount Sion, beside the sepulchre of David. His son Joathan succeeded him on the throne.

Chapter XXX**Zacharias, thirteenth king of Samaria. Martyrdom of the Prophet Eliecer. Death of Zacharias**

1. In the year 4430, so that it might be seen that God, as chastisement to His people for their continuous infidelities, continued to permit the division of the people of Israel into two kingdoms, independent of whether the new king was to act in a holy or in a perverse way, Zacharias, son of Jeroboam II and Saphoris, from the tribe of Ephraim, began to reign in Samaria and was anointed king in Sichem by the virtuous Prophet Eliecer, an Essenian religioso, after he had sworn the ritual oath to defend the worship of the Lord God of Hosts and to persecute idolatrous worship.

2. The perjurer Zacharias, fourth and last descendant of Jehu to succeed to the throne of Samaria, did not follow the upright paths of his virtuous father Jeroboam II, for he resurrected worship to false gods throughout his kingdom, raising altars to idols. By his abominable life he led many of his vassals into moral corruption. King Zacharias, despite the prophecies, rebukes and threats which the Prophet Eliecer made to him in God's name, not only remained hardened in his errors despising those opportunities of conversion, but in addition killed the prophet. In the year 4433, the Lord God of Hosts, to punish the abominations of King Zacharias, permitted the exiled king of the Syrians to invade and seize all the extensive territory of Syria under the crown of the kingdom of Samaria.

3. Since not even this divine punishment moved the perverse heart of King Zacharias to conversion, in the year 4437, God again unleashed His Holy Wrath on the king by permitting a conspiracy against him, led by Sellum the son of Jabes, who struck and killed Zacharias in the sight of the people, with the approval of the majority.

4. Zacharias, king of Samaria, died, then, in the year 4437, after having reigned seven years. Because of his impiety, he was the last of Jehu's descendants to occupy the throne of Samaria.

Chapter XXXI**Sellum, fourteenth king of Samaria. Death of Sellum**

1. In the year 4437, so that it might be seen that God, as chastisement to His people for their continuous infidelities, continued to permit the division of the people of Israel into two kingdoms, independent of whether the new king was to act in a holy or in a perverse way, Sellum, from the tribe of Gad, began to reign in Samaria, with the approval of the immense majority of the people, being anointed king in Sichem by the virtuous Prophet Micheas, after he had sworn the ritual oath to defend the worship of the Lord God of Hosts and to persecute idolatrous worship. His short reign was one of utter chaos for his people, for the idolatry and other corruptions already in existence thrived exceedingly, given the impiety, baseness and ambition of the king.

2. In the year 4439 there rose up against King Sellum his Generalissimo Menahem who, with a large part of the army, was in the town of Tera. Menahem, at the head of his soldiers, came to Sichem, capital of the kingdom, seized it, assassinated King Sellum and occupied the throne of Samaria himself. Sellum died, then, in that year 4439, after having reigned for two years.

Chapter XXXII**Menahem, fifteenth king of Samaria. Death of Menahem**

1. In the year 4439, so that it might be seen that God, as chastisement to His people for their continuous infidelities, continued to permit the division of the people of Israel into two kingdoms, independent of whether the new king was to act in a holy or in a perverse way, Menahem, from the tribe of Asser, began to reign and was anointed king in Sichem by the virtuous Prophet Micheas, after he had sworn the ritual oath to defend the worship of the Lord God of Hosts and to persecute idolatrous worship.

2. Menahem, of a cruel, savage and bloodthirsty nature, after having been anointed king in Sichem, returned with his army to the town of Tera, for he had received news that its inhabitants were unwilling to accept him as king. When he reached the town, seeing that they had shut the gates and refused to acknowledge him as king, he seized the town by brute force, wreaking havoc among its inhabitants, whom he put to the sword, even killing women with child by cutting open their wombs.

3. Menahem gave signs of great impiety, encouraging idolatry and moral corruption throughout the kingdom of Samaria. His reign was stood out for its despotism and cruelty, which excited general indignation against him and feelings of hatred and vengeance throughout the nation, giving rise, in some parts of his territory, to terrible conspiracies to dethrone him. Menahem, aware of the risk of losing his crown, to make it more secure sought the aid of his friend Ful, king of the Ninevite or Assyrian Empire; who came to Samaria with his army and helped Menahem to crush the multiple uprisings of his vassals. For this service, Menahem not only gave Ful a large quantity of gold and silver before he left for Nineveh, but in addition became his tributary; and to be able to meet this commitment, Menahem imposed excessive taxes on the inhabitants of the kingdom of Samaria.

4. Menahem died in the year 4449 in the city of Sichem, after ten years of disastrous reign. He was succeeded on the throne of Samaria by his son Faceia.

Chapter XXXIII**Joathan, tenth King of Judah. Death of the virtuous Queen Jerusalem. Death of the virtuous Queen Cordera. Death of Joathan**

1. In the year 4448, so that it might be seen that God, as chastisement to His people for their continuous infidelities, continued to permit the division of the people of Israel into two kingdoms, independent of whether the new king was to act in a holy or in a perverse way, Joathan, son of Ozias and his virtuous wife Jerusalem, began to reign in Judah at the age of twenty-five years, and was anointed king in Jerusalem by the virtuous Prophet Jacharias, after he had sworn the ritual oath to defend the worship of the Lord God of Hosts and to persecute idolatrous worship. The great Prophet Jacharias, in God's name, rebuked, admonished and prophesied to King Joathan, in the course of his life, when it was necessary for the good of his soul and of his people.

2. King Joathan followed the upright paths of his saintly father King Ozias, so that he was pleasing to the Lord, and was remarkable for his great nobility and dignity. Joathan always showed great respect for the priestly ministry, for he never forgot the humiliation his father had received when punished with leprosy for usurping priestly functions. Joathan ever lived in the practice of virtue, and was greatly loved by God and by his people, and at the same time greatly feared by his enemies; for he became powerful because he followed the upright path before the Lord.

3. Joathan further embellished the Golden Gate of the Temple of Jerusalem, and carried out many works on the walls in the suburb of Ophel. He also built, in certain parts of Judah, strong fortresses and lofty towers, for the defence and vigilance of his kingdom. Only once did he go out on campaign, which was against the Ammonite king in exile, who with his army threatened to invade the territory of the Land of Ammon belonging to Judah. With the favour of the Lord God of Hosts, Joathan obtained a great victory and prevented the invasion.

4. In the year 4451, third of the reign of Joathan, his virtuous mother Queen Jerusalem died.

5. In the year 4461, two months before the death of Joathan, his wife, virtuous Queen Cordera, died.

6. Joathan, after ruling the destinies of Judah happily for thirteen years, died a holy death in Jerusalem in the year 4461, and was buried in the royal pantheon on Mount Sion. He was succeeded on the throne of Judah by his son Achaz.

Chapter XXXIV

Faceia, sixteenth king of Samaria. Death of Faceia

1. In the year 4449, so that it might be seen that God, as chastisement to His people for their continuous infidelities, continued to permit the division of the people of Israel into two kingdoms, independent of whether the new king was to act in a holy or in a perverse way, Faceia, son of Menahem, from the tribe of Asser, began to reign in Samaria, and was anointed in Sichem by the virtuous Prophet Micheas, after he had sworn the ritual oath to defend the worship of the Lord God of Hosts and to persecute idolatrous worship.

2. Faceia followed his father's ways in idolatry and other abominations, leading his people along the path of impiety and moral degradation. His subjects, still resentful because of the cruelty and tyranny of his father Menahem, could not put up with the son who had succeeded him to the throne; for, moreover, Faceia was the living image of his sinister father.

3. In the year 4451, Faceas, general of the Samaritan army, rose up against Faceia, who at the time was in the town of Samaria. Faceas besieged the town, took it and slew the king, seizing the throne of Samaria and reigning in his stead. Faceia died, then, in the year 4451, after a reign of two years.

Chapter XXXV

Faceas, seventeenth King of Samaria. Martyrdom of Faceas. Death of the virtuous Queen Bethel

1. In the year 4451, so that it might be seen that God, as chastisement to His people for their continuous infidelities, continued to permit the division of the people of Israel into two kingdoms, independent of whether the new king was to act in a holy or in a perverse way, Faceas, son of Romelia, from the tribe of Zabulon, began to reign in Samaria, and was anointed king in Sichem by the virtuous Prophet Micheas, after he had sworn the ritual oath to defend the worship of the Lord God of Hosts and to persecute idolatrous worship. King Faceas, during the first twelve years of his reign, followed the path of impiety and idolatry of his predecessor.

2. In the year 4463, twelfth of his reign, King Faceas of Samaria declared war on the impious King Achaz, who had been ruling Judah for two years. In the battle, the army of Samaria, under Faceas' command, fighting with great impetus and courage, killed a large number of Achaz's soldiers who had abandoned the Lord God of Israel, despite the fact that they were valiant men. In the battle Achaz's son Maasias perished, as did his majordomo Ezrica, and Elcana who was the chief authority after the king. Emboldened by their victorious affray, Faceas' soldiers invaded the dominions of Judah. King Faceas, though an idolater, feeling in his soul a certain fear for the true God, sternly commanded his army to respect the Temple of Jerusalem, for he would inflict the death penalty on whoever dared to sack the edifice. Faceas' army took a large number of men, women and children captive and seized considerable and valuable booty, and with all these spoils headed for Samaria.

3. When Faceas and his army were approaching the frontier of the kingdom of Samaria, the virtuous prophet Oded, an Essenian religioso, came out to meet them, to communicate to Faceas in God's name: "You have seen that the Lord God of Hosts is angry with those of the kingdom of Judah and has put them into the hands of your army, which has slain many of King Achaz's soldiers. But it is not God's will that you take the men, women and children you have captured in Jerusalem and other parts of Judah back to Samaria as slaves. So then, restore those prisoners you bring, your brethren, to their homes, since you are all children of the People of Israel, those of Judah as well as those of Samaria. If you do not, the Holy Wrath of God will fall upon you, your army and your people." This command of God transmitted by the Prophet Oded made King Faceas reflect deeply. The king, by a special Divine Grace, moved by the fear of God, not only accepted the command with humble and heroic resolve, but moreover manifested sincere repentance for his sins. Faceas communicated to his generals his firm decision, saying: "We will not take these captives to the kingdom of Samaria, because we would sin grievously against the true Lord and God and bring His Holy Wrath down upon us and our people." When they heard the king's words, the generals and the rest of the army were deeply moved. Consequently, obeying the command of the convert King Faceas, they decided to let all the prisoners of Judah go free and return to them all the valuable booty they had taken in the battle. The merciful and compassionate disposition of Faceas and his army went so far, that they washed the feet of the prisoners to alleviate their tiredness, dressed and shod those who were without clothes or shoes with garments and footwear from the booty, gave them all food and drink, and cared for them attentively. They then handed over the war booty to the prisoners and prepared them to return to their homes; and those who were unable to walk or were physically weak were mounted on horses. Faceas and his army accompanied the prisoners to the town of Jericho; and after leaving them there, returned to the kingdom of Samaria. The conversion of Faceas, his generals and army to the true God was due to a special Divine Grace for having respected the Temple of Jerusalem when the city was sacked. After the return of King Faceas to his palace in Sichem, his wife Queen Bethel was also converted to the true God.

4. As from his conversion, during the remaining eight years of his reign in Samaria, King Faceas not only destroyed all the idols and their altars erected in the extensive territory of his kingdom, but also inflicted the death penalty for any sign of idolatry; moreover, he established very severe laws against the corruptors of sound and holy morals. Thanks to the good example and upright government of Faceas, the kingdom of Samaria again turned its eyes to the true Lord and God, through sincere conversion.

5. But despite the good government and zealous vigilance of King Faceas, there were some who secretly opposed the establishment of worship of the true God in the kingdom of Samaria, and the consequent eradication of idolatry and other corruption. The ringleader of this rebel party was Oseas, son of Ela, a powerful courtier who frequented the

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royal palace in Sichem. In the year 4471, Oseas, availing himself of his great influence over other courtiers, the military and the common people, and by means of considerable sums of money, hatched a plot in which a large section of the army formed part. Oseas, leading the conspirators, demanded of King Faceas again to permit idolatry in the kingdom of Samaria, so that those who wished to adore idols might be free to do so. King Faceas roundly opposed this impious proposal of Oseas, who threatened the king with death. Since the virtuous Faceas persisted in his firm decision not to permit idolatry in his kingdom, and was even prepared to die rather than do so, the wily Oseas, invading the palace of Sichem with his conspirators, ever more numerous, wounded and killed Faceas; who by his martyrdom and holy death also purified himself of his assassination of King Faceia, his predecessor on the throne of Samaria. King Faceas the Convert, saint and martyr of the true Lord God, died then in the year 4471, after having reigned twenty years in Samaria. After the death of Faceas, the regicide Oseas, son of Ela, seized the throne of Samaria.

6. The virtuous Queen Bethel, the Convert, wife of King Faceas, died seven years after her husband, that is in the year 4478.

Chapter XXXVI

Achaz, eleventh king of Judah. Oseas, eighteenth and last king of Samaria. Coalition of King Oseas and King Rasin of Syria against King Achaz of Judah. Crown Prince Ezechias, son of Achaz, prevents the capture of Jerusalem. Martyrdom of the Prophet Jacharias

1. In the year 4461, so that it might be seen that God, as chastisement to His people for their continuous infidelities, continued to permit the division of the people of Israel into two kingdoms, independent of whether the new king was to act in a holy or in a perverse way, Achaz, son of Joathan and Cordera, began to reign in Judah, and was anointed king in Jerusalem by the Prophet Jacharias, after he had sworn the ritual oath to defend the worship of the Lord God of Hosts and to persecute idolatrous worship. The conduct of the perverse perjurer Achaz was quite the opposite of that of his virtuous father Joathan and of his virtuous grandfather Ozias; for, following in all haste the paths of impiety, there was no excess he did not commit nor abomination he left unpractised. The first thing Achaz did was to close the Temple of God in Jerusalem to the celebration of worship of the true God; and at the same time he re-established idolatrous worship, raising up altars to the idols in the Temple of God in Jerusalem, as well as in many parts of this city and of his kingdom; so that the Temple was only used for idolatrous worship, without it troubling Achaz that the Ark of the Covenant was inside. He himself offered incense and victims there to false gods. His cruelty reached the point of offering his own children in the Temple of Jerusalem in holocaust to the idol Moloch. The High Priest at the time was Urias, who, though good when he began, afterwards, for fear of Achaz gradually gave up his authority and became reconciled to the king's impiety.

2. Though the Prophet Jacharias, in God's name, rebuked, admonished, threatened and prophesied to King Achaz during his life, God also frequently sent the Prophet Isaias in order to rebuke Achaz severely for his idolatry, crimes and other abominations. But these recriminations, far from softening the king's perverse heart and moving him to repentance, stirred up his hatred of divine worship and holy morals all the more. God unleashed His Holy Wrath upon him and those of the kingdom of Judah who abetted him, permitting kings of other countries to wage wars on him, such as the one he had first with King Faceas of Samaria, who in the year 4463 defeated him in the war between the two kingdoms and invaded the land of Judah.

3. In the year 4471, so that it might be seen that God, as chastisement to His people for their continuous infidelities, continued to permit the division of the people of Israel into two kingdoms, independent of whether the new king was to act in a holy or in a perverse way, Oseas, from the tribe of Nephtali, began to reign in Samaria, being anointed king in Sichem by the virtuous Prophet Micheas, after he had sworn the ritual oath to defend the worship of the Lord God of Hosts and to persecute idolatrous worship. King Oseas was one of Samaria's perverse kings; for, after having assassinated his virtuous predecessor King Faceas, he spread idolatry throughout the kingdom, raising altars to idols and promoting their worship; moreover, he again erected temples to golden calves in the towns of Bethel and Dan. King Oseas, a perverse man, propagated such moral corruption throughout his territory that the kingdom ended up a complete chaos in the spiritual and moral orders.

4. God, to move the perverse heart of Oseas and give him an opportunity of conversion, in the year 4473, third of his reign, sent him the Prophet Oded to rebuke him for his abominations; and, moreover, to warn him that if he did not banish idolatry and restore good morals, as punishment his kingdom would be invaded and many of his vassals taken away captive. For these rebukes and warnings Oseas displayed the greatest contempt.

5. That same year 4473, Oseas, king of Samaria, moved by ambition and with the aim of invading the territory of King Achaz of Judah, and profaning the Temple of God in Jerusalem, allied himself to Rasin, king of Syria, whose capital was Damascus. When Achaz was informed that the Syrian and Samaritan armies had allied against Judah, he was filled with fear and saw in this a sign of Holy Divine Wrath. God, to give Achaz an opportunity of conversion, said to the Prophet Isaias: "Go out with your son Jacob to meet Achaz and say to him: The Lord God of Hosts says this: 'Be converted, Achaz, banish from Judah all idolatry and other abominations, destroy the idols and their altars, open the Temple of Jerusalem so that the worship I have laid down in My Holy Law may be re-established therein. If you do this, you need not feel afraid or intimidated at the sight of the invading armies of King Rasin of Syria and King Oseas of Samaria; for however dreadful the plans they have forged against you, they will all come to nothing, for I will not permit Rasin and Oseas to invade Jerusalem or any other territory of your kingdom. Moreover, owing to the terrible sins of Oseas and his people, Samaria will soon cease to be a kingdom. But listen well, Achaz, to what I shall now say to you: If you do not comply with what I have commanded, your kingdom will become ever more unstable.'" But as Achaz contemptuously disregarded this rebuke and caution from God through the Prophet Isaias, the latter said to the king: "Humbly ask for yourself of the Lord God of Hosts the sign you desire as proof that my words come from God." Achaz replied with feigned humility: "I will not ask for I do not wish to tempt the Lord God." Isaias

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said: *"Listen Achaz: Is it not already enough to despise me as prophet without in addition offending God by distrusting His infinite power."* The impious Achaz openly despised the warnings of God through the Prophet Isaias, making not the slightest effort to correct his abominable depravity.

6. Then the Prophet Isaias said to Crown Prince Ezechias, Achaz's son: *"Take up your sword and place yourself at the head of the soldiers, and in the name of the Lord God of Hosts defend the city of Jerusalem to prevent its invasion by the kings of Samaria and Syria, and thereby prevent them from profaning the Temple of God. I will be at your side, helping you by my prayers for the success of the battle."* When the forces of Rasin and Oseas laid siege to Jerusalem, Ezechias with heroic courage defended the city. He not only prevented the enemy armies entering, but even went out after them, pursuing them until they entered the kingdom of Samaria, the forces of the two allies suffering great slaughter.

7. The great Prophet Jacharias, Essenian religioso, at the age of one hundred and forty years, was killed by command of perverse King Achaz.

Chapter XXXVII

King Rasin of Syria seizes territories of the kingdom of Judah in Idumea. Invasion of the kingdom of Judah by the Idumeans and Philistines. Achaz allies with Teglathphalassar, king of the Ninevites. God punishes Achaz by means of Teglathphalassar. Death of Achaz

1. In the year 4476, fifteenth in the reign of Achaz of Judah, God again discharged His Just Anger against him and his people for their yet greater attachment to idolatry and contempt for His Holy Law. For King Rasin of Syria and King Oseas of Samaria, once again allied, invaded Idumea and the Sinai peninsula, which were beneath the crown of Judah, and seized some of their towns; including the important Red Sea port of Elat, which remained under the dominion of Rasin. Both kings then returned to their respective kingdoms.

2. At the time the powerful Teglathphalassar was king of the Ninevite Empire, watered by the Tigris river, which embraced Assyria and other nations, and had as its capital Nineveh. Achaz sent ambassadors to Teglathphalassar, saying: *"I am your servant. Come and free me from the hands of the kings of Syria and Samaria, who have again risen up against me and usurped some towns of my realm."* And taking gold and silver from the Temple of Jerusalem, as well as treasure from his palace, he sent costly gifts to the king of Nineveh; who, acceding to the desires of Achaz, invaded Damascus, killed Rasin and seized the territory of Syria, which became part of the Ninevite Empire. In gratitude King Achaz went to Damascus to see Teglathphalassar, king of Nineveh. And having seen the altar to the idols there, he sent some emissaries to Jerusalem to hand over to High Priest Urias the model and precise form of the altar, with the object that he construct a replica in the Temple of God. Urias, who out of fear had been condescending to all that King Achaz commanded, ordered this to be done. When Achaz returned from Damascus and saw the idolatrous altar constructed by Urias, he commanded the latter to remove from the Temple of Jerusalem the sacred bronze altar used for sacrifices to God, and take it to a certain mount, and in its place in the Temple put the replica they had made of the altar in Damascus. Then Achaz said to High Priest Urias: *"You will offer upon the mount on the bronze altar, the holocaust of the morning and of the evening, and the other sacrifices and libations commanded by the Law, and I will offer sacrifices to the idols on the replica of the altar of Damascus, set up instead of the other altar."* High Priest Urias did as Achaz had commanded him. The king also ordered many other things dedicated to the worship of the true God to be removed from the Temple.

3. In the year 4477 the kingdom of Judah was humbled by two fresh invasions: the part of Idumea and the Sinai peninsula still under the crown of Achaz rose up under the command of the heir to the throne of Idumea, who was in exile; and at the same time the Philistines invaded the south-west of Judah, spreading out through the country and seizing the towns of Azotus, Bethsames, Ayalon, Gaderot, Socoth, Gaza and others, with their numerous villages, settling in them all. God wished to give the perverse Achaz another opportunity of conversion, so that He again sent the Prophet Isaias to rebuke the king for his depravity and to communicate to him on His behalf that if he repented of all his sins, demolished the idols and their altars erected in Judah and put an end to all his other corruptions and abominations, He, as Lord God of Hosts, would deliver him from the invaders and his kingdom would enjoy peace and prosperity. Achaz not only despised God's rebukes and exhortations through His Prophet Isaias, but in addition immolated victims to idols, saying: *"My gods are the ones who will protect me."* And again he summoned Teglathphalassar, king of Nineveh, to come to his aid. In this manner God permitted Teglathphalassar to become the most cruel scourge of Achaz and his people; for the Ninevite king, when in Judah with his army, instead of helping Achaz, oppressed his kingdom by all kinds of violence and killings, despoiled the Temple of God of many objects, especially those of gold and silver, and seized all the riches there were in the royal palace and the palaces of the princes. God did not permit Teglathphalassar to seize the whole of the kingdom of Judah, so that He impelled him to return to Nineveh. But before leaving, the king of Nineveh invaded and seized the territory of Moab which was under the crown of the kingdom of Judah.

4. In that same year 4477, King Achaz was struck down by God with a terrible bowel illness, his insides bursting asunder; so that he died in Jerusalem in the most despairing humiliation and abject impiety, after having reigned in Judah sixteen years. The numerous shreds of his burst body were swept away as is dung, and forthwith burnt. His son Ezechias succeeded him on the throne.

Chapter XXXVIII

Martyrdom of the Prophet Oded. Invasion of the kingdom of Samaria by King Teglathphalassar.

First deportation of Samaritans to Nineveh

1. In the year 4477, while Teglathphalassar, king of Nineveh, was cruelly sacking Jerusalem and other towns of Judah, the Prophet Oded went in God's name to communicate to King Oseas of Samaria that if he and his people were not converted to the true God, did not destroy the idols and their altars and abandon their abominations, the Ninevite

army would invade the kingdom of Samaria, conquer many of her towns, slaughter a considerable number of her inhabitants and lead many others captive. The impious Oseas, far from being moved to repentance, not only most brazenly despised God's rebuke and warning through the Prophet Oded, but moreover gave the command that the prophet be killed for having rebuked him. This was carried out with the greatest cruelty.

2. In the same year 4477, King Teglathphalassar marched from Nineveh with his armies to invade and conquer the kingdom of Samaria. Though the perverse King Oseas and his army went to his encounter, Teglathphalassar, very much the stronger, was the instrument of Holy Divine Wrath against that kingdom of Samaria hardened in its idolatry and corruption. The Ninevite king, after having conquered many of the towns of Samaria and carried out a great slaughter among the population, took two thousand captives, male and female, of all ages, leading them prisoner to Ninevite territory, this being the first deportation of Samaritans. God, in the hope that Oseas and his people would be converted by this punishment, for the time being did not permit the kingdom of Samaria to disappear, so that He impelled Teglathphalassar to abandon the unconquered part of the territory. Oseas continued to reign in the now shrunken territory of his Kingdom.

Chapter XXXIX

Ezechias, twelfth King of Judah. Holy Year in Jerusalem

1. In the year 4477, so that it might be seen that God, as chastisement to His people for their continuous infidelities, continued to permit the division of the people of Israel into two kingdoms, independent of whether the new king was to act in a holy or in a perverse way, Ezechias, son of Achaz and Abi, began to reign in Judah and was anointed king in Jerusalem by the Prophet Isaias, in the presence of High Priest Urias, the other priests, the courtiers and the people, after he had sworn the ritual oath to defend the worship of the Lord God of Hosts and to persecute idolatrous worship. After being anointed, Ezechias, from the Golden Gate of the Temple, addressed the whole multitude assembled there. Firstly, he exhorted High Priest Urias, the other priests and the levite ministers, zealously to fulfil their respective ministries, saying to them: *"Purify yourselves, cleanse the Temple of Jerusalem of all filth and re-establish therein worship to God with all the solemnity His Divine Law requires, as I so often asked my perverse father to do, but he never did."* He then publicly rebuked Urias for his cowardice, commanded all to be converted sincerely to the Lord God, ordained the destruction of the idols and their altars erected in the Temple of Jerusalem, in the city and throughout the territory of Judah, and re-established worship to the true God and Lord. Moreover, in this first discourse on his elevation to the throne of Judah, he reproached the impiety that had existed in the previous reign, saying: *"They did evil in the presence of the Lord our God. They abandoned Him, withdrew their faces from God's Tabernacle and turned their backs on Him; they closed the doors of the Temple of Jerusalem, extinguished the lamps, and neither burnt incense nor offered holocausts in the Tabernacle to the God of Israel. That is why the Lord's fury was aroused against Jerusalem and the rest of Judah, and He delivered its inhabitants up to confusion, to ruin and to ridicule, many of them being put to the sword. Now, then, is the moment for us to make a firm covenant with the Lord God of Israel, that He may show to us His benignity and mercy. My children, do not be unmindful. The Lord has chosen you to be in His presence, serve Him and render Him worship."* Ezechias' words were received with great manifestations of jubilation and acclamations: *"Viva Ezechias, King of Judah and faithful servant of the Lord God of Hosts!"*

2. After this ceremony, High Priest Urias, the other priests and the levite ministers removed from the Temple the idols and other filth that had been placed there, and carried everything to the Cedron Brook, where it was destroyed and burnt. Afterwards they spent eight days purifying themselves and expiating their faults by fasting, penance and prayer. When the Temple had been purified, they carried back the altar of holocausts which was on the hilltop, as well as the other utensils for worship, and went to tell Ezechias: *"After purifying ourselves we have purified the entire Temple of the Lord and brought back the altar of the holocausts, the vessels and so forth; and everything is in perfect order."* The following day, rising very early in the morning, King Ezechias presented himself in the Temple accompanied by the princes and a large number of the people. With all the solemnity prescribed by the ceremonial of Moses, High Priest Urias and the other priests offered in holocaust many animal victims, in expiation for the sins of the people and as a sign of reconciliation of all to the Lord God. While the holocausts were offered on the altar, they began to sing the Psalms of David and sound the trumpets and play the various sacred instruments, amid great joy, since worship to God in the Temple of Jerusalem had been re-established. When the sacrifices were over, King Ezechias fell to his knees before the Lord God of Hosts, and the whole people also knelt down in sign of adoration.

3. King Ezechias, consumed by zeal for the glory of God, sent messengers with letters throughout the kingdom of Judah to communicate to all that the Temple of Jerusalem had been opened and worship to God re-established; and, moreover, to exhort them to come for the celebration of the Passover, established in the Law of Moses, the next feast following the opening of the Temple. The messengers sped quickly from town to town throughout the kingdom of Judah, ordaining, in the king's name, that all the idols and their altars be destroyed, and that all be converted to the Lord God and faithfully comply with the commands of His Holy Law.

4. He also sent messengers with letters throughout the kingdom of Samaria, so that King Oseas and his people might know that the Temple of Jerusalem had opened its doors, and worship to the true God re-established therein. Moreover, he invited them to come and celebrate the Passover, which was the next feast. Ezechias, in letters sent to the kingdom of Samaria, said among other things: *"Inhabitants of the kingdom of Samaria: you are children of the People of Israel, so be converted to the Lord God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob. And He will have mercy upon you, and will cause your people taken captive by the king of Nineveh to return. Do not harden your hearts. Consecrate your souls to the Lord and come to the Temple of Jerusalem which He sanctified forever. Serve the Lord your God and the fury of His Anger will depart from you. For if you return to the Lord, your brethren and children will encounter mercy before those who took them captive, and they will return to your land, for the Lord our God is kind and merciful and will not*

turn His Face away from you if you return to Him." Many of those in Samaria jeered at the letters of King Ezechias of Judah; but there were also those who accepted them with great hopefulness. A great multitude from the kingdom of Judah, and also some from the kingdom of Samaria, came to Jerusalem and celebrated the solemnity of the Passover or unleavened bread for the space of seven days, with great splendour and jubilation. This solemnity produced very sound and beneficial effects, awaking in everyone true religious feelings, almost extinguished by idolatry.

5. We see, then, that by Ezechias's elevation to the throne, the kingdom of Judah arose from the prostration and degradation in which she lay immersed; for the House of David arose in a magnificent and vigorous manner. At the outset of his reign, Ezechias not only exterminated all the idols and their altars erected in Jerusalem and throughout the territory of Judah, but also shattered the bronze serpent Moses had commanded to be made in the desert, and which had been placed in the Temple for veneration from the times of Solomon. Many had been rendering it idolatrous worship, looking upon it as an idol and not as a figure of the future Saviour. By this measure Ezechias wished to avoid all danger of prevarication because of the bronze serpent.

6. The year 4484 was declared a Holy Year by King Ezechias, since it was the third centenary of the inauguration of the Temple of God raised by King Solomon in Jerusalem.

Chapter XL

Teglatphalassar, king of Nineveh, again invades the kingdom of Samaria. Second deportation of Samaritans to Nineveh.

Salmanassar, king of Nineveh, invades the kingdom of Samaria. Third and final deportation of Samaritans to Nineveh.

Death of Oseas. End of the kingdom of Samaria

1. In the year 4483, to punish the unceasing abominations of King Oseas and a large part of his people, God permitted King Teglatphalassar of Nineveh again to invade the kingdom of Samaria. After he had conquered many towns and carried out great slaughter among the population, he took another two thousand captives, male and female, of all ages, and carried them off as deportees to Ninevite territory. God, once again, in the hope that Oseas and his people would be converted by this fresh punishment, did not permit the kingdom of Samaria to disappear for the time being, so that He impelled Teglatphalassar to abandon the unconquered part of the territory. Nonetheless the king of Nineveh made King Oseas of Samaria his tributary, with the obligation of yearly payments of a heavy tribute. Oseas, then, continued to reign in the yet further diminished territory of the kingdom of Samaria.

2. After six years had passed, as King Oseas was no longer willing to bear the humiliation of living subject to the tributary yoke of the Ninevite king, it came to pass that in the year 4489 Oseas sent an embassy to Sua, king of Egypt, to help him in his subversive plan against King Salmanassar of Nineveh, Teglatphalassar's successor. Salmanassar, however, warned of the rebellious plans of King Oseas, invaded the kingdom of Samaria with his victorious forces, laid siege to the city of Sicheim, took King Oseas prisoner and slew him. After carrying out a great slaughter among the population, he took captive the immense majority of the inhabitants of the kingdom of Samaria. This was the third and final deportation of Samaritans to Ninevite territory, on the other side of the Euphrates. From this captivity were spared those who had fled to other countries before they could be captured; and also those who had taken refuge on Mount Carmel, who were not troubled in any way, since this was a refuge very specially protected by God. King Oseas of Samaria died, then, in the year 4489, after a reign of eighteen years.

3. At this third and final deportation, the kingdom of Samaria came to an end, after having been ruled by eighteen kings from the year 4218 until 4489, and therefore for a period of two hundred and seventy-one years. In this way were fulfilled the announcements of the prophets, who had so very often foretold the disappearance of the kingdom. The Samaritan captives were forbidden to leave Ninevite territory, which was for them a great humiliation.

4. Salmanassar, to populate the territory of Samaria, almost uninhabited, sent people from the different nations under his sway, for them to settle in the towns and cultivate the land. These new inhabitants were Ninevites, Cutheans, Avadians, Ematheans and other peoples. They were all pagans, and therefore idolaters, and each rendered worship to the gods of his own country.

Chapter XLI

Grievous sin of Ezechias, King of Judah. God punishes Ezechias' sin by a fatal illness.

The king's repentance and miraculous recovery of health. Ezechias' prophetic dream

1. In the year 4492, fifteenth of his reign, King Ezechias, grown conceited by his power, sinned when tempted to usurp priestly ministrations; for one day, when in the Temple of God in Jerusalem, he dared to take a thurible and head towards the Sacred Fire, intending to light the incense and offer it to God. But while on his way to the Sacred Fire, the virtuous High Priest Azarias II intervened, saying: "Desist, O king. If you do such things you will offend God grievously"; at which Ezechias, proud and disobedient, took another three steps towards the Fire. The High Priest then cursed him, and immediately Ezechias was struck down by God with a fatal illness, namely a pestilential ulcer. God sent the Prophet Isaias to communicate to the king: "The Lord God says this: 'Dispose of all your things, for you are going to die.'" Thereupon Ezechias, who lay prostrate in bed dying, face turned to the wall, deeply sorry for his sin, prayed to God saying: "O Lord, I have sinned grievously against You; but I beseech You to forget my wickedness and remember how I previously walked before You in sincerity and uprightness of heart, doing what was pleasing in Your sight." And Ezechias wept profusely for his very grievous sin. Before Isaias had left the king's palace, the Lord told the prophet: "Return and tell Ezechias, Caudillo of My people: The Lord God says this: 'I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears, and you will be healed of your illness; accordingly, in three days time you will be cured and will go up to the Temple of the Lord. I will add fifteen years to your life for My greater glory and for love of My servant David.'" Isaias said to the servants: "Bring me a mass of figs"; and when they had brought it, he applied it to the ulcer of the king, who at once felt some relief. Ezechias said to Isaias: "What will be the sign that the Lord will

heal me in three days time, and that I am to go up to the Temple of the Lord?" Isaias replied: "Here is the sign the Lord will give you that He will fulfil the word He has spoken: Do you want the shadow of that sundial you see to go forward or back ten lines?" The king said: "Either is an easy matter for the Lord. I wish the shadow to go back ten lines." At that same moment the sundial suddenly and miraculously went back ten lines, which was seen by the king with hope-filled astonishment. When King Ezechias was healed of his malignant ulcer, he went to the Temple of God in Jerusalem; and prostrate before High Priest Azarias II, he humbly begged pardon for his sin of sacrilege, and at the same time gave thanks to God for having forgiven him and healed him of his illness.

2. A few days after his recovery, Ezechias had the following prophetic dream: He saw that a king of Babylonia sent him ambassadors with letters and gifts out of regard for his having been ill; and that the arrival of these ambassadors gave great joy to Ezechias, who showed them the workshop where the perfumes and ointments of perfumed oil were made, the utensils of gold and silver, the place the jewels were kept, the armoury and everything he had in his treasury. There was nothing in his palace nor anything in his possession that Ezechias did not show them. Since the Prophet Isaias came to visit Ezechias, the king asked him what the dream signified. The Prophet Isaias revealed, in God's name, what it signified, saying to him: "Ezechias, listen to the word of the Lord: 'Lo there will come a time when all these things you have in your house and whatever your predecessors have gathered together up to the present day will be transported to Babylonia without anything remaining here. And even your own children and your people will be led captive to Babylonia.'" When King Ezechias heard this, he said to the Prophet Isaias: "Just is every sentence of the Lord pronounced by your lips. May peace and truth at least reign during my life." Therefore, this visit of the Babylonian ambassadors to King Ezechias was a prophetic dream and not a reality; though the prophetic dream was fulfilled after his reign. In the biblical texts of the so-called official bible used up until the publication of the present Palmarian Bible, this episode was falsified by perverse King Manasses, when prisoner in Babylonia, to make his father King Ezechias appear responsible for Manasses' own misfortunes and those of his people.

Chapter XLII

King Ezechias reconquers Idumea and the Sinai peninsula. Siege of Jerusalem by King Sennacherib of Nineveh.

Intervention of the Angel of the Lord. King Ezechias conquers other territories in Judah, the territory of the former kingdom of Samaria and other territories. Death of the virtuous Queen Jericho. Death of Ezechias

1. In the year 4493, King Ezechias, commanding an organized and powerful army, invaded and reconquered that part of Idumea and the Sinai peninsula lost in the time of his father Achaz's reign, and which had been incorporated under the crown of Sennacherib, king of the Ninevite Empire.

2. Sennacherib, having been informed that Ezechias had reconquered those territories of Idumea and the Sinai peninsula, prepared his large army and with it headed for Judah. When King Ezechias came to know of this, putting his confidence in the Lord God of Hosts, he made no proposition at all to the Ninevite king to detain the invasion; therefore, to Sennacherib he sent neither sum of money nor gold nor did he remove the doors of the Temple of God to make a gift to him, as it said in the adulterated biblical texts of the so-called official bible used up until the publication of the present Palmarian Bible. Sennacherib together with his army, entering the kingdom of Judah, laid siege to the city of Jerusalem; and from outside the walls he and his general Rabsaces, with great cries and blasphemies, threatened and insulted King Ezechias, his chief generals and the people, in an endeavour to intimidate them; moreover, reminding them that the Ninevite forces had in other countries obliterated very powerful cities that had likewise resisted them.

3. King Ezechias, and with him all Jerusalem, in view of the repeated threats by Sennacherib and his general Rabsaces, put their confidence in the Lord God of Hosts. The king sent messengers to the Prophet Isaias to beseech him that, by his efficacious prayers, he obtain from God victory over such a terrible enemy. Then the virtuous king, dressed in hairshirt and sack-cloth, accompanied by the High Priest and the other priests and princes, went up to the Temple and, in the presence of the Lord, with humble pleas implored His powerful and efficacious help, saying: "Lord God of Hosts, You are Lord of all the kings of the earth. You made whatever exists. Open Your eyes and see how Sennacherib besieges us, and incline Your ear and listen to the blasphemies he hurls against You, the Living God, and against Your people. It is certain, Lord, that the armies of the powerful kings of Nineveh have desolated nations. For that reason, O Lord our God, save us from his hands so that all kingdoms of the Earth may know that You are the Lord God Almighty." The Prophet Isaias, in God's name, sent a message to Ezechias, saying: "The Lord says this: 'I have heard the prayer you have made to Me in the face of the siege by Sennacherib. Do not be intimidated on hearing the enemies' blasphemous words, for I will send My Angel, Who with His sword will answer those blasphemies, so that the Ninevite army will be almost completely annihilated, and its king, terror-stricken, will flee to his own country. Therefore, the Lord says of this king of Nineveh: He will not enter the city of Jerusalem, for he will be crushingly defeated and, by the way he came, shall return to his country. I, the Lord God of Hosts, will protect the city and will save it for My greater glory and for love of My servant David.'" "

4. That same night in the year 4493, the Angel of the Lord, that is, the Most Divine Soul of Christ under the form of Invincible Warrior of God, bearing a flaming sword, exterminated the greater part of the large Ninevite army besieging Jerusalem. The following day, when King Sennacherib saw his encampment full of cadavers, his general Rabsaces among them, he understood that the Powerful God of the army of Judah fought against him. Consequently, terrified and ashamed, he fled with his few remaining forces, and returned to Nineveh. There, in that same year 4493, forty-five days after arriving, he was assassinated by two of his sons, Adramelech and Sarassar, when the king was praying in the temple of the idol Nesroc. Both assassins fled to Armenia, so that he was succeeded on the throne of Nineveh by his youngest son Assarhaddon.

5. Following the overwhelming annihilation of the Ninevite army, King Ezechias, impelled by God, invaded and reconquered with his army all the territories in Judah under Philistine sway; whose armies were crushed and almost

exterminated. In the year 4497 the valiant King Ezechias, impelled by God, embarked upon the conquest of the former kingdom of Samaria, vanquishing the Ninevites. From then on the kings of Judah bore as well the title of king of Samaria. Therefore Ezechias was the first King of Judah and Samaria united or reunified kingdom of Israel. Ezechias with his army also reconquered the territory of Syria, which had been incorporated under the crown of the king of Nineveh, so that the kingdom of Israel expanded its frontiers as far as the river Euphrates.

6. In the year 4499, eight years before his death, King Ezechias reconquered all the territories of Moab, Madian, Ammon, Arabia, Lebanon, etc., so that Ezechias bestowed on his son Manasses the same extensive territory of the People of Israel bestowed by David on his son Solomon.

7. In the year 4506, a year before the death of Ezechias, his virtuous wife Queen Jericho died.

8. King Ezechias died a holy death in Jerusalem in the year 4507, after a reign of thirty years, and was buried in the royal pantheon on Mount Sion. He was succeeded on the throne by his son Manasses.

Book V The Book of Tobias

Chapter I

Tobias of Bethulia, faithful servant of God

Tobias was born in the town of Bethulia or Megiddo in the year 4444 during the reign of impious and idolatrous King Menahem of Samaria. Orphaned when very young, he was cared for by his grandmother Deborah, who gave him a pious education. During Tobias' childhood and youth the kingdom of Samaria was a hotbed of idolatry. But despite the widespread moral corruption, the heart of young Tobias remained pure and innocent, unstained by the abominations of his contemporaries. He never consented to adore the idols erected throughout the territory of the kingdom. From childhood Tobias distinguished himself by great zeal in the observance of the divine Commandments and laws. He was extremely charitable, sharing the tenth part of all his produce among the poor, orphans and widows. When come to a mature age, he married a virtuous woman called Anne. Tobias and his wife Anne were from the tribe of Nephtali, but with a crossing of Madian in their forebears; accordingly, the two were Elders of Madian, who had a quasi-patriarchal mission.

Chapter II

Deportation of Tobias and his wife Anne to the Ninevite territory. Tobias is honoured for his virtues in the court of the king of Nineveh

1. In the year 4489, when he was forty-five years old, Tobias and his wife Anne were led captive to the Ninevite territory in the final deportation of Samaria's inhabitants by Salmanassar, king of the Ninevite Empire.

2. God rewarded Tobias' great virtues abundantly, for he came to win the confidence of King Salmanassar to such an extent that the king named him majordomo of his palace in Nineveh, showered goods upon him and granted him ample faculties to do whatever he pleased; he could even tour the provinces of the kingdom without let or hindrance. Tobias made use of this privilege to satisfy the vehement impulses of his burning charity; accordingly he frequently went out to visit the other captives, whom he consoled in their affliction, exhorted to resignation and succoured in their needs. Tobias performed these tasks in such a spirit of disinterestedness and generosity that he succeeded in winning the esteem of the pagans themselves. Having arrived one day at the Median town of Rages, seeing the extreme poverty in which a relative of his called Gabelo lived, Tobias handed him the sum of ten talents of silver, obtaining in return the corresponding receipt for the loan.

Chapter III

Tobias is persecuted for his heroic virtues. Birth of his son Tobias

1. At the death of King Salmanassar, his son Sennacherib occupied the throne of Nineveh, Tobias losing the royal favour he had enjoyed in the previous reign. As from the year 4493, due to the bloody defeat suffered by this king at the siege of Jerusalem, in which the Angel of the Lord took the lives of the immense majority of his soldiers, on his return to Nineveh, Sennacherib decreed a barbarous and ferocious persecution of the children of Israel in captivity there, killing many of them. Tobias, deeply afflicted at the misfortunes which befell his brother Israelites, carried out an intense labour of charity among them; for not only did he console them in their sufferings, but in addition, from his own goods, helped each of them as far as he was able; so that he gave food to the hungry and drink to the thirsty, clothed the naked and buried the dead; and fearing God more than the king, he even secretly took the cadavers of Israelites killed by royal command lying abandoned in the streets, squares and fields, hid them in his home, and at dead of night buried them on his own property.

2. In that same year 4493, when Tobias' merciful work with the cadavers of the Israelites whom Sennacherib had commanded to be slain reached the ears of the king, he issued the command to have Tobias killed and all his goods confiscated. But Tobias and his wife succeeded in fleeing the city of Nineveh, remaining in hiding until Sennacherib's death, which took place eight days later. The new king, Assarhaddon, allowed Tobias and his wife to return to their home in the city of Nineveh, and restored to Tobias part of his confiscated goods.

3. In the year 4500, when Tobias, Elder of Madian, was fifty-six years old, his wife Anne, Eldress of Madian, bore him a son to whom he gave the name Tobias; who, from infancy, was educated by his parents in the holy fear of God and in the observance of His holy Commandments. During the captivity, Tobias, his wife Anne and their son Tobias always remained faithful to God, never letting themselves become contaminated by the pagan morals widespread throughout the Ninevite Empire.

4. The virtuous Tobias had the custom of celebrating with some formality the solemn feasts prescribed in the Law of Moses. On such occasions, he, his wife Anne and their son Tobias did special prayer and penance, and also concluded the celebrations with a good meal at home, to which they used to invite some of the poorer Israelites. It came to pass that, in the year 4518, on the occasion of the feast of Pentecost, when a good meal had been prepared, Tobias said to his son: "Off with you, and bring back some of our poorest and most God-fearing brothers to share our dinner." Tobias the Younger very diligently complied with his father's command. On returning, however, he told his father that the body of one of the children of Israel, whose throat had been cut by the king's command, lay in the middle of the square. Tobias the Elder, leaving the food on the table, rushed out accompanied by his son to where the body lay and carried it secretly into his home to give it burial at night on his own property. When the body was hidden, he sat down at table; and his heart filled with bitterness, ate tremblingly and tearfully, calling to mind the Lord's prophecy through the Prophet Amos: "Your feast days will be turned into lamentation and weeping." Later, at night, he buried the corpse. But his brother Israelites reproached him saying: "Tobias, for this cause, some time ago, a royal command was issued to have you killed, and you barely managed to escape with your life. Are you going to bury the dead again?" But Tobias, the same as on other occasions, acted uprightly and mercifully, disregarding the dangers to which he exposed himself.

Chapter IV

Tobias the Elder loses his sight. Tobias' dark night

1. In the year 4524, when Tobias the Elder, eighty years old, returned home one day exhausted after having carried out great works of mercy, he lay down upon the wall by the entrance to his home and fell asleep. When he awoke and opened his eyes, a little hot dung from a swallows' nest fell into them, blinding him at once. God permitted this trial to befall His very faithful servant so as to leave to posterity an example of patience similar to that of Saint Job. Tobias the Elder, finding himself blind and with his property diminished because of his great generosity towards the needy, never opened his lips to complain about providence, but remained steadfast in the holy fear of God, rendering Him thanks for His many benefits. Some of his brother Israelites criticized him sharply saying: "Is that how God pays you for the many alms and other works of mercy you have performed?" But Tobias rebuked them saying: "We are children of the People of God, and we hope in that life which the Lord will give forever to those who preserve their Faith in Him and serve Him loyally."

2. God permitted Tobias the Blind to experience in his soul a dark night of desolation to further refine his virtue. Since he believed that this spiritual suffering had befallen him because of his own sins and those of his people, weeping profusely Tobias prayed thus to God: "You are just, O Lord, and all Your judgements are just; and all Your ways are of mercy, truth and justice. Now, then, Lord, remember me more especially and do not take vengeance for my sins or for those of my people. Because we did not obey Your commands, we were led into captivity to this people among whom You have scattered us. But, Lord, do with me whatever is pleasing to You and command my spirit to rest in peace, for now it is better for me to die than to live." We see in this humble and sincere prayer how Tobias the Elder, amid his dark night, felt more vividly his littleness in the face of the infinite greatness of the Lord God of Israel, to the point that, being innocent, he takes upon himself the sins of his people deeming himself to be the most blameworthy of all. And this feeling of his own blameworthiness causes him such pain that only God can remedy it by giving him the eternal peace to which the death of the just leads.

Chapter V

Tobias the Blind sends his son Tobias to the city of Rages

1. The aged and blind Tobias, thinking that his fervent prayer had been heard by God, and believing that his end was near, in that same year 4524 called his son Tobias, twenty-four years old, saying to him among other things: "Listen, my son, to the words of my lips and lay them up firmly in your heart. After God has received my soul, bury my body. Honour your mother all the remaining days of her life, remembering that she bore you in her womb and how greatly she suffered for you; and when she dies, bury her beside me. Keep God always in your thoughts, observe His Commandments and keep yourself from ever consenting to sin. Give alms from what you have, and never turn your back upon the poor, so that thereby God never turn His Face away from you; be, then, charitable according to your means. So that if you have much, give abundantly; and if little, try to give with a good will even of that little, because alms purify from sin and serve to give great confidence before God to all who bestow them. Guard yourself, my son, from all impurity; and when you have taken a wife, desire not another woman, for our being Essenian terciarios demands this of us. Never allow pride to hold sway in your heart, or in your words, because it was the beginning of all evil. Scrupulously pay the salary of your labourers, and be careful never to do to anyone what you would not wish anyone to do to you. Share your bread with the hungry and the needy, and with your clothing cover the naked. Always seek the counsel of wise men. Praise the Lord at all times, asking Him always to direct your steps, and base on Him all your plans."

2. Days later, thinking that his death was at hand, and so as to leave his wife and son sufficient economic means to enable them to live, Tobias the Blind called his son Tobias and said to him: "My son, before you were born I lent ten talents of silver to Gabelo, who lives in the city of Rages, in the land of the Medes. I still have the receipt he signed in his own hand. Therefore, endeavour to go and see him and recover that sum of money and return the receipt to him. Fear not, my son, nor be afflicted. We will lack for nothing if we fear God, do good and flee from sin." Then Tobias the Younger replied to his father: "O my father, I will do what you have commanded. But I do not know how I shall recover the money, for Gabelo does not know me nor I him, and I do not even know the way there." To this his father replied: "Take the receipt, and when you show it to him, he will give you the money at once. Off you go, look and see if you can find a trustworthy man to accompany you along the way for a wage in payment."

Chapter VI

Archangel Saint Raphael accompanies Tobias the Younger on his long journey

1. On leaving the house to look for someone to accompany him, Tobias came across an elegant young man as though in travelling clothes about to set out. Without knowing he was Archangel Saint Raphael, Tobias greeted him, saying: "Where are you from, good young man?" To which the Archangel replied: "I am of the children of the Lord God of Israel." Tobias asked: "Do you know the way to Rages, in the land of the Medes?" He replied: "Yes, I do, for I have often walked those roads, and I have been in the home of Gabelo, your relative, who dwells in Rages." Tobias said to him: "Wait, I pray you, while I go and inform my father." When Tobias the Younger entered the house and related everything to his father, the latter, marvelling greatly, told his son to ask the young man to come in. The Archangel, under that human appearance, greeted blind Tobias, saying: "The peace and joy of the Lord be with you"; who answered him: "What joy can I have deprived of my sight and with my soul desolate?" The Archangel said to him: "Be of good cheer, for soon you will be healed by God." Tobias the Blind said to the Archangel: "Are you able, by chance, to take my son to the home of Gabelo who lives in Rages? When you return I will pay you your wages." The Archangel said: "I will take him, and I will bring him back again." Tobias the Elder then asked: "Tell me, I pray, from what family and from what tribe are you?" The Archangel responded: "Though that is not the most important thing, if you want to know my lineage, I am Azarias, son of the great Ananias." When Tobias the Blind heard the reply of Archangel Raphael or Azarias, it occurred to him that an Angel sent by God stood before him; but deeming himself unworthy of such a thing, he considered the Archangel's reply to be a labourer's ironic humour, and therefore made answer: "You are of great lineage." The Archangel said to him: "I shall take your son sound and well, and sound and well I shall bring him back again." Tobias the Elder replied: "Go then gladly, and may God help you on your way and His angel accompany you."

2. When Archangel Saint Raphael, under the appearance of a young man, at Tobias the Blind's question, said that he was called Azarias, he did not lie, for that is also his name. Azarias, among other things, means: 'Medicine of God' and 'Staff of travellers and the needy'. When Archangel Saint Raphael, at Tobias the Blind's question said that he was son of the great Ananias, he did not lie, for this Ananias is God the Father. The name Ananias, among other things, means: 'Dispeller of darkness'; that is, firstly, He who gives sight to the blind of soul; and secondly, He who gives sight to the blind of body. When Archangel Saint Raphael or Azarias said to Tobias the Younger that he had often lodged at the home of Gabelo, he did not lie, for he had also often succoured him and dwelt in his home.

3. Tobias the Younger, with everything prepared for the journey, said farewell to his parents and set off on his way accompanied solely by that heavenly personage. Scarcely had they left when Tobias the Blind's wife Anne began to weep bitterly because she felt distressed at living separated from her son, whom she considered her greatest treasure. But Tobias consoled her saying: "Don't weep, our son will arrive there safely; and will return home safely, and you will see him again, for I feel in my soul that it is an Angel of God who accompanies him, and will take care of him so that he return with great joy to our home." Anne was consoled by these words and ceased to weep.

4. Young Tobias and his heavenly companion Azarias travelled together along the banks of the river Tigris and spent the night at an inn. And it chanced that in the morning Tobias went up to the banks of the river to cool his feet. But at that moment a large fish approached the river bank making as though to bite his feet. At the sight of it, Tobias, terrified, gave a great cry saying to the Archangel: "Sir, it is coming for me." The Archangel said to him: "Do not be afraid, seize it by the gills and drag it towards you," which, having done, he dragged it out onto dry land. The Archangel said to Tobias: "Gut the fish and keep its heart, gall and liver, since these things will serve us as useful medicines." God, in His mysterious plans, wished to make use of those poor viscera as future instruments of spiritual and corporal health. When he had done exactly as the Archangel had indicated, Tobias asked him of what medical use were the viscera he had ordered him to keep. The Archangel replied that he would know in due course. Then they took the road east leading to Media, where the town of Rages was located. Many of those deported from Samaria lived in Media, since that country pertained to the Ninevite Empire.

Chapter VII

Sarah, daughter of Raguel, is harassed by the demon Asmodeus by way of seven husbands.

God slays Sarah's seven licentious husbands

1. In the town of Ecbathana in the land of Media there lived a relative of Tobias called Raguel, a virtuous man who had been deported from the kingdom of Samaria. Raguel was married to Anne, and both were from the tribe of Nephtali, but with a crossing of Madian in their forebears; therefore, both were Elders of Madian. Raguel and Anne had a virtuous daughter called Sarah, who had successively married seven husbands, the sons of an Israelite from the tribe of Dan, one after the death of the previous, for God took the life of each of the husbands before their marriage with Sarah was consummated. This divine punishment occurred because they, impelled by the demon Asmodeus, went to matrimony not with the aim of giving children to God, but to enjoy its pleasures and pervert Sarah; and God wanted to keep Sarah intact to give her as wife to a virtuous man capable of valuing the sanctity of marriage. Great were the afflictions the innocent Sarah underwent owing to the misfortunes that befell her; for she was the object of criticism and sarcastic mockery among many in the town. They even came to conclude that it was she who had killed her husbands. One day, when Sarah reproved one of her father's maidservants for a fault committed, the servant in a loud voice retorted, saying to Sarah: "May we never see on earth among us a son or daughter born of you, murderess! You who have killed seven husbands! Do you by chance want to put an end to me as you have done to the seven victims?" The demon Asmodeus, among other special missions, has that of promoting lust.

2. The virtuous and innocent Sarah was deeply afflicted and retired to the uppermost room of her home, where she spent three days and nights without eating or drinking, beseeching God with abundant tears to free her from the opprobrium in which she found herself, saying: "O God, our merciful Lord, who forgives the sins of those who invoke You. To You, Lord, I turn my countenance, on You I fix my gaze. I beseech You, O Lord, to free me from this opprobrium, or at least to take me out of this world. You know, Lord, that I have never desired any man, and that I have kept my soul clean of all concupiscence. I never kept the company of the licentious, nor had dealings with those who behave loosely. If I consented in taking a husband, it was in Your holy fear, and not out of carnal or loose affection. So then, either I was unworthy of them or perhaps they were unworthy of me; for possibly You have reserved me for another husband. For it is not within man's power to penetrate Your designs. And it is quite certain that those whom You refine, You afterwards reward, that it is You who free from tribulation and that all can take refuge in Your mercy. O Lord, after the storm You send the calm, and after tears and sighs You fill with jubilation and happiness. O God of Israel, may Your Holy Name be forever blessed." These humble pleas of Sarah had been received with pleasure by the Lord God of Israel. Therefore He had disposed the journey to Rages of young Tobias accompanied by Archangel Saint Raphael, so that, passing by Ecbathana, the virtuous and innocent maiden might be freed from the snares of Satan and the opprobrium she suffered from many in the town, and be highly recompensed by uniting in holy matrimony to the virtuous young Tobias. Archangel Saint Raphael, among other special missions, has that of promoting and defending chastity.

Chapter VIII

Marriage of young Tobias to the young Sarah

1. When Tobias, and Archangel Saint Raphael in human form and bearing the name Azarias, had covered a good part of the journey to Media, the young man asked his heavenly Guide: "Where do you want us to spend the night?" The Archangel replied: "In the nearby town of Ecbathana lives a man called Raguel, a relative of yours, and of the same tribe, who has as only descendant a daughter called Sarah, and therefore the only heiress to his property. You should take her to wife. Ask her hand, then, of her father, and he will give her to you as wife." Tobias became fearful on hearing this proposal, for he already knew the lamentable history of that young lady, for the strange happenings of the successive deaths of her seven husbands on the first night of each espousal had acquired some notoriety in many towns. So Tobias said to the Archangel: "I am afraid that the same will happen to me and that the grief will send my parents down to their grave, for I am their only son." But the Archangel told Tobias the reason why those seven husbands had perished, and how he was to prepare himself so that the same might not happen to him: "Listen to me, and I will teach you who are those over whom the demon has power. Those who embrace matrimony in such a spirit that they separate themselves and their minds from God, yielding to their passions as if they were animals; they, then, are those over whom the demon has power. But you, when you have taken her as wife, entering the chamber, will not join yourself to her for three days, and will not occupy yourself in anything other than praying in her company. That same night, burning the heart and liver of the fish will be like an exorcism against the harassments of the demon. The second night you will receive the spirit of sound discernment regarding the sanctity of marriage, in order to live chastely with your wife. And the third night you will obtain the blessing for healthy children to be born to you. After the third night, you will join yourself to the young lady in the fear of God, rather out of desire to have children than out of concupiscence, so as to obtain the blessing proper to the lineage of Abraham in your children."

2. That same year 4524, when Tobias the Younger and Archangel Saint Raphael found themselves in the town of Ecbathana, they entered Raguel's home, who received them with joy. When Raguel laid his eyes on Tobias, he said to his wife Anne: "How like my first cousin Tobias this young man appears!" Having said this, he asked the young man: "Where are you from?" Who answered: "I am from the tribe of Nephtali, among the captives of Nineveh." So Raguel asked the two visitors: "Do you know Tobias, my first cousin, a man of great virtue?" Archangel Saint Raphael intervened saying: "We know him. That Tobias is the father of this young man, also called Tobias." Then Raguel embraced his nephew, tearfully kissed him, and sobbing said: "May you be blessed, my son, for you are the son of a good man, a very virtuous man." His wife Anne and their daughter Sarah likewise burst into tears. And after they had conversed for a long time, Raguel ordered a good meal to be prepared. When they urged him to sit at table, Tobias, feeling in the depths of his soul that to marry Sarah would be pleasing to his parents, said to Raguel: "I will neither eat nor drink if first you do not grant my petition and give me your daughter Sarah as wife." When he heard this Raguel was troubled, remembering what had befallen the seven men who had married her; for he was afraid that the same misfortune might befall Tobias. With Raguel perplexed and making no reply, the Archangel said to him: "Do not be afraid to give her to him, because it is to Tobias who fears God that you ought to give your daughter as wife, and that is why no other man has deserved to have her." Raguel said: "There is no doubt that God has accepted my prayers and tears. I believe that is why He has brought you to my home, so that my daughter receive a husband from her parentage and according to the sanctity required by the Law of God. Therefore, Tobias, I give her to you as wife." And the same day that they arrived at Raguel's home, he, taking his daughter's right hand, placed it in Tobias's right hand, saying: "May the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob be with you, join you in holy matrimony, and fulfil in you His blessing." Forthwith, taking a parchment, they drew up the marriage document. Then they held a banquet, all blessing God. Tobias, twenty-four years old, married Sarah in the year 4524.

Chapter IX

Tobias and Sarah pray for three days before consummating their marriage.

God protects Tobias and Sarah from the harassments of the demon Asmodeus

1. The wedding feast over, Raguel called his wife Anne and told her to prepare the room for the newly-weds; into which Anne led her daughter Sarah, who burst into tears. But Anne said to her: "Be of good heart, my daughter, for

the Lord of Heaven will fill you with joy after all that you have suffered." Then they led young Tobias to his wife's room.

2. Tobias, who had kept in mind the Archangel's counsel, took the miraculously conserved heart and liver of the fish out of his knapsack and laid them on burning coals. God rewarded the Faith and obedience of young Tobias, protecting him from the harassments of demon Asmodeus. In this way the Lord God of Israel also gave His approval to the marriage of Tobias and Sarah, given the upright intention of both husband and wife, in harmony with His Holy Law.

3. After laying the fish's liver and heart on burning coals, Tobias said to his young wife: "Sarah, let us make prayer to God today, tomorrow and the day after. We will spend these three days united in prayer to God, and following the third night we will live the marital life; for we are children of the People of God and cannot act in the manner of the Gentiles who know Him not." The two spouses prayed in unison with great fervour so that God might deign to keep them safe, as this prayer of Tobias demonstrates: "O Lord God of our fathers, may Heaven and earth, the sea, the wellsprings and the rivers, and all the creatures in them bless You. You fashioned Adam from the clay of the earth, and gave him Eve as wife and companion. Now then, Lord, You know that I have taken Sarah to wife, moved not by concupiscence, but only by the desire to have children to bless Your Holy Name for all eternity." Likewise Sarah said: "Have mercy on us, O Lord, have mercy on us, and provide that we both safely arrive at old age for Your greater glory."

4. The three days of prayer having elapsed, Tobias and Sarah successfully consummated their marriage. Raguel and Anne manifested their gratitude to God in these praises: "We praise You and give You thanks O Lord God of Israel, because You have caused us to experience Your mercy, and have cast far from us the infernal enemy who persecuted us, taking pity on our daughter and her husband. Let them both, O Lord, bless You more abundantly, and offer You sacrifices of praise for their perfect health, so that all the world may know that You are the one and only God in all the Earth." Raguel at once ordered all his servants to prepare everything necessary for the celebration of great festivities over several days, for the happy wedding of Tobias and Sarah.

5. During the three days Tobias and Sarah had retired to the matrimonial chamber preparing themselves by prayer to consummate their marriage, Archangel Saint Raphael, who manifested himself in human form with the name of Azarias, had gone to the town of Rages to recover the ten talents of silver which old Tobias had lent to Gabelo; who rejoiced greatly on receiving news of his relative Tobias, and above all on learning that Tobias' son had married Sarah in the town of Ecbathana. The Archangel invited Gabelo to accompany him so that he might be present at the marriage feast. When Gabelo saw young Tobias seated at table in the home of his father-in-law Raguel, he embraced him closely, and weeping praised God in these words: "May the God of Israel bless you, for you are the son of a very upright man, fearful of God and an almsgiver. May His blessing extend to your wife, and may you see your children and your children's children, and may your descendants be blest of the God of Israel, who reigns forever and ever." And all having said amen, they sat at table, and in the holy fear of God celebrated on that day and on the other days the great festivities of Tobias's and Sarah's wedding. Raguel then asked Tobias to remain with them for two weeks before returning home to his parents. Raguel gave half of all his goods to Tobias and his wife, reserving the other half for them to inherit after he and his wife had died.

Chapter X

Concern of Tobias the Blind and his wife Anne for their son. Young Tobias sets out with Sarah for Nineveh

1. However, since young Tobias had delayed in Ecbathana because of the wedding, his father, Tobias the Blind said: "What will be the reason for my son's belatedness, or why should he have been delayed there? Has Gabelo perhaps died, and is there no one to return him the money?" At this he began to feel exceedingly grieved, as did his wife Anne. Both began to weep together, seeing that their son did not return at the expected time; above all, his mother wept bitterly and inconsolably and said: "Pity help me! Alas my son! Why did we send you to faraway lands, light of our eyes, staff of our old age, solace of our life, hope of our posterity? You being our greatest wealth, we should not have let you go so far from us." Tobias, however, said: "Be quiet, don't be anxious, our son will be all right; the man with whom we sent him is very trustworthy." But she would not be consoled in any way; rather, going out each day, she looked every way in the hope of seeing her son arrive from afar.

2. In the meantime, Raguel said to his son-in-law: "Stay here a while longer, and I will send news that you are well to your father Tobias." But Tobias replied to his father-in-law: "I know that my father and my mother are now counting the days and that their souls are in continual torment." And after Raguel had urged him repeatedly, without Tobias wishing to condescend in any way to his pleas, Raguel handed over to Tobias his daughter Sarah and her servants, with half the property in livestock, camels and cows, and a large sum of money, and let him leave his home healthy and joyous. And he said to Tobias and Sarah: "May the holy angel of the Lord guide you on your way and lead you safe and sound, and may you find your parents and all their household well and thriving. May my eyes see your children before I die. I have given Sarah to you; she is my daughter; take good care of her." This said, the parents embraced their daughter, kissed her and let her go; reminding her to honour her parents-in-law, love her husband, care for her family, govern her household, and in everything behave in an irreproachable way.

3. Young Tobias, his wife Sarah, the servants and the considerable property they had been given, accompanied by the heavenly personage Azarias, set out for the city of Nineveh. When they were nearing the city, Archangel Raphael said: "My brother Tobias, you well know the state in which you left your parents; if it seems good to you, let us go on ahead, you and I, and your wife, the servants and animals follow us at their own pace." Having decided, then, to go on ahead, the heavenly Azarias said to Tobias: "Bring with you the fish gall, for it will be needed." Tobias, then, took the gall, and both set off in haste for Nineveh.

Chapter XI

Happy meeting of young Tobias and his elderly parents. Tobias the Blind recovers his sight. Jubilation for the whole family

1. Anne, wife of Tobias the Blind, was accustomed to sit near the road on the top of a hill from where she could see a long way off, in the hope of her son arriving at some time. And it came to pass that one day in that same year of 4524, she saw him coming from afar and ran to give the news to her husband, saying: "Look, our son is coming." While Archangel Saint Raphael and Tobias the Younger were approaching the house, the heavenly personage said to Tobias: "Brother Tobias, as soon as you enter your house, prostrate on your knees at once to adore the Lord God. And after having given Him thanks, approach your father and kiss him. Forthwith anoint his eyes with that fish gall you have with you; for you must know that they will then be opened, and your father will recover his sight, and he will be filled with joy at seeing you safe and sound."

2. Tobias the father, when he knew from his wife that his son was coming, blind as he was, began to run, risking a fall at each step; but, taking his wife's hand, both went out to receive their son Tobias, whom they embraced and kissed weeping for joy. After entering the house they adored God and gave Him thanks. Immediately, Tobias the Younger, taking the fish gall, anointed his father's eyes, saying to him: "Take heart, father"; and all of a sudden a kind of scales fell from them, and he recovered his sight. When old Tobias saw his son, crying he said: "I bless You, O Lord God of Israel, for after having tried me You have had mercy on me, and I see my son Tobias again." Young Tobias, with great joy, related to his father all the marvels that had occurred in the land of Media and the many benefits he had received from God through the man who had guided him; among them, how he had married the virtuous Sarah, daughter of his relative Raguel.

3. The next day old Tobias learnt that his son's wife Sarah, with her train of servants and animals, was approaching the city gates of Nineveh, so that he went out very contentedly with Anne, his son and the heavenly Azarias to meet them, blessing God. At Sarah's arrival, old Tobias blessed his daughter-in-law saying: "Welcome, my daughter; blessed be God, who has brought you among us, and blessed be your parents." All these happy events were the occasion of great joy for the friends and relatives of old Tobias who lived in Nineveh. Tobias' first cousins Achior and Nabath also came to visit and congratulate him for all the favours God had showered upon him. The marriage of Tobias and Sarah which had taken place in Ecbathana days previously, was celebrated in Nineveh for seven days with great rejoicing.

Chapter XII

The heavenly personage Azarias reveals himself as Archangel Saint Raphael. Old Tobias' canticle of praise

1. The nuptial feasts over, old Tobias called his son aside and said: "Reflect, my son, on the salary you should give to this holy man who has accompanied you, and what is proper to add for his good services." To this his son Tobias replied: "My father, what reward shall we give him? How can we respond worthily to his benefits? He took me and brought back me safe and sound; he in person collected Gabelo's money; he provided me with a wife and protected us from the harassments of the demon, and filled her parents with consolation; likewise he freed me from the fish that was going to bite me; he has healed you of your blindness, and through him we have been laden with all kinds of goods. What can we give him, then, that would be proportionate to so many favours? It even appears little to me to give him half the goods I have brought with me. I ask you, my father, to entreat him to take that half for himself." His father answered: "He has deserved all that." Then father and son called the heavenly young man Azarias to one side and besought him, saying: "Deign to accept half of my son's goods which you have brought here." Then Azarias ordered the whole family to gather; and in the presence of the aged Tobias, his wife Anne, young Tobias and his wife Sarah, the heavenly personage said: "Bless the God of Heaven, and glorify Him before all the living, for He has caused His mercy to shine forth in you. For as it is good to keep the secret entrusted by the king, it is glorious indeed to proclaim the works of God. Prayer accompanied by fasting is good; and it is far better to give alms than to store away treasures; for alms purify from sin and help to obtain mercy and eternal life. Those who practise mercy and justice will be filled with happiness, while sinners are enemies of their own well-being. Therefore, I shall manifest the truth to you, and I do not wish to conceal any longer from you what has been hidden. When you, Tobias, prayed with tears, and buried the dead, and rose from table during meals, and hid the dead in your home by day and buried them on your property by night, I presented your prayers to the Lord. And as you were acceptable to God, it was necessary for you to be tried by affliction. For this reason the Lord sent me to cure you, find a worthy wife for your son and protect both from the harassments of the demon. I am Archangel Raphael, one of the seven principal spirits who assist before the Lord." When they heard these words and saw the glory the Archangel manifested to them, filled with consternation they fell to the ground on their faces. But the Archangel said to them: "Peace be with you, do not be afraid. The time I have been with you has not been by my will but by God's disposition. Bless Him, then, and sing His praises. When I ate and drank with you I did so merely in appearance. For I sustain myself with an invisible food, and with a drink that cannot be seen by men. This food and drink is to do the will of Almighty God and to praise and bless Him before the throne of His Infinite Majesty. It is now time for me to return to Him who sent me. You however, bless God and announce all His marvels and leave a written record of all that has happened." This said, Archangel Saint Raphael disappeared from their sight. Then the four members of Tobias's family, face to the ground, stayed blessing God.

2. Old Tobias, in a rapture of holy jubilee, sang the grandeurs and mercies of God, saying among other things: "Blessed and great are You, O Lord, from all eternity, and Your Kingdom will endure forever, for You put your own to the test and give them health. You have power over life and death. None can escape Your hands. Bless the Lord, O children of Israel, and praise Him in the presence of all men. He has permitted many of His People to be scattered among the pagans, in order that they give testimony to the pagans of the sanctity, grandeur and marvels of the God of Israel, so that they may know that there is no other Almighty God apart from His Infinite Majesty. He has punished many of His

People because of their iniquities, but He Himself will save us by His mercy. Consider, then, what God has done for His People; glorify Him with fear and trembling, and by your good works exalt the King of Heaven and Earth. I myself will glorify him in the land of my captivity because He has displayed His power and majesty. Be converted, then, O sinners, and be just before God, and believe that He will act mercifully towards you. In the meantime, I will rejoice in Him and He will be the joy of my soul. Bless the Lord all of you, His children. Let your days be happy, and render Him praise. May all those who love You and rejoice in Your peace and happiness be blest, O Lord. O my soul! bless the Lord for ever and ever. Amen." This canticle was afterwards propagated by old Tobias among the people of the Ninevite territory, both among the children of the People of God as well as among the pagans. All knew the grandeurs and marvels worked by the God of Israel for Tobias's family, and how an Archangel of the Lord had shown himself to them and helped them.

3. After recovering his sight, which was in the year 4524, during the remaining twenty-seven years of his life old Tobias lived in great peace and happiness in the company of his wife, his son, his daughter-in-law, his grandchildren and great-grandchildren. He served God with greater dedication every day and attained a high degree of sanctity.

Chapter XIII

Last days of old Tobias. Counsel to his son Tobias. Death of old Tobias and of his wife Anne

1. On the 30th of July in the year 4551, old Tobias, feeling the hour of death approaching, called his wife Anne, his son Tobias, his daughter-in-law Sarah, his seven grandchildren and their respective wives, and his great-grandchildren, and spoke thus to his son: "Soon the destruction of Nineveh foretold by the Prophet Nahum will come to pass, for the word of the Lord cannot fail. Our Israelite brothers scattered here will return to the land of Israel. Now then, my son, listen to your father: Serve the Lord with a sincere heart, always doing what is pleasing in His sight. And with painstaking zeal, endeavour that your children do likewise. Keep God always in mind, so that He bless you at all times. Look, my son, after I die, care for your mother well; and after she dies, and you have buried her beside me in the same grave, on that same day you will prepare your journey to depart from here, to free yourselves from the dreadful calamities that will follow upon the destruction of Nineveh, whose vices and evils are calling down the Holy Wrath of God." Tobias then blessed the whole family.

2. The following day, the 31st of July that same year 4551, the virtuous Tobias, Elder of Madian, died a holy death in the city of Nineveh at the age of one hundred and seven years, and was buried there by his son. Seven days after the death of Tobias, his wife Anne, Eldress of Madian, died a holy death, and was buried by her son beside the tomb of her husband. Old Tobias died five weeks before Nabuchodonozor I, king of Babylonia, invaded the Ninevite kingdom and destroyed the large and beautiful city of Nineveh.

Chapter XIV

Tobias the Younger leaves the city of Nineveh and goes to live with his parents-in-law in Ecbathana. Destruction of the city of Nineveh. Death of Raguel and Anne

1. In the same year 4551, immediately after the death of his mother, Tobias and his wife Sarah, both Elders of Madian, with their seven sons, their daughters-in-law, their grandchildren, their servants and numerous animals, heeding the counsel of the deceased Tobias, left the city and went to live in Ecbathana, in the land of Media, at the home of Sarah's parents. Great was the sorrow of Raguel and Anne, Elders of Madian, to learn of the death of Tobias' parents, and great also was the joy they felt on again seeing their daughter and their son-in-law and getting to know their grandchildren and great-grandchildren, fruits of their marriage. Five weeks after the death of old Tobias, the city of Nineveh was destroyed by King Nabuchodonozor I.

2. The city of Nineveh, which had been freed by God from destruction thanks to the preaching of the Prophet Jonas and the penance performed by the Ninevites in view of the exhortations and predictions of the prophet, was afterwards punished by God with destruction in the year 4551, when the Ninevite Empire was invaded by Nabuchodonozor I, king of Babylonia. This catastrophe occurred four weeks after Tobias and Sarah had left Nineveh for Ecbathana of Media following the counsel of the deceased Tobias. The city of Nineveh was afterwards rebuilt by Nabuchodonozor I himself with even greater beauty and splendour than before. By the invasion of the Ninevite Empire by Nabuchodonozor I, this disappeared as an empire, for its territories were annexed to the Babylonian Empire. When this happened, Assarhaddon's son Saoduchin was reigning in the Ninevite Empire.

3. In the year 4559, first Raguel and then a week later his wife Anne as well, died in sanctity in Ecbathana. Both were buried by Tobias in that city.

Book VI

The Kingdoms of Judah and Samaria united or reunified kingdom of Israel

Chapter I

Manasses, son of Ezechias and Jericho, second king of Judah and Samaria united or reunified kingdom of Israel. Martyrdom of the Prophet Isaias

1. In the year 4507, following the death of the virtuous King Ezechias, first King of Judah and Samaria united or reunified kingdom of Israel, he was succeeded on the throne by his son Manasses.

2. So that it might be seen that God, as chastisement to His people for their continuous infidelities, continued to permit them to be governed by kings as they had requested, independent of whether the new king was to act in a holy or in a perverse way, Manasses, second king of Judah and Samaria united, began to reign in the year 4507, over the extensive territory of the kingdom of Israel delivered over to him by his saintly father; and was anointed king in Jerusalem

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by the Prophet Isaias, after he had sworn the ritual oath to defend the worship of the Lord God of Hosts and to persecute idolatrous worship.

3. The perjurer Manasses, as from his elevation to the throne of Israel, showed himself to be a fanatical enemy of the worship of the true God, of observance of His Holy Law and of sound morals. He erected altars to idols, including to the sun, the moon and the stars, in the Temple of God in Jerusalem and in all the synagogues of his extensive kingdom, as well as in many other places. In the Temple of Jerusalem itself he moreover erected a statue of himself, so that he might be adored as god. Manasses, then, infested the whole extensive territory of the reunified kingdom of Israel with idolatry. Besides, he dedicated himself fully to all kinds of superstition and magic, for he converted the science of astrology into idolatrous worship, consulted fortune-tellers, made use of witchcraft and kept sorcerers and enchanters at his side. He sank to such a depth of abomination as even to offer his own children in holocaust to the idol Moloch in the Temple of God. By his abominable conduct, Manasses induced the inhabitants of Jerusalem and of all his kingdom to do evil before God. Manasses falsified many biblical texts with perverse aims; among them to make it appear that none of the kings that preceded him were good, neither in the kingdom of Judah nor in the kingdom of Samaria.

4. The prophets admonished Manasses on different occasions, reproaching him for his impiety and threatening him with punishments from Heaven. He, however, enraged at those who exhorted him to conversion, persecuted them savagely, treating them with the greatest cruelty. He killed many of them, for example the Prophet Isaias in the year 4533, whose body he commanded to be sawn apart with a wood-saw.

Chapter II

The Ark of the Covenant is taken from Jerusalem to the town of Bethulia or Megiddo.

High Priest Joachim, governor of the Holy City of Bethulia or Megiddo

1. That same year 4533, following the death of the Prophet Isaias, the Prophet Jeremias came to Jerusalem to communicate to High Priest Joachim God's command that he should accompany the prophet to Mount Carmel, in order to remove from there the portable Tabernacle and transport it to the fortified and strategic town of Bethulia, with the object of installing it in that safe place. For this work a good number of priests, levite ministers, as well as faithful in their majority Essenes, accompanied the Prophet Jeremias and High Priest Joachim. This mission fulfilled, in God's name the Prophet Jeremias, High Priest Joachim and the same entourage returned to Jerusalem and removed from the Temple the Ark of the Covenant, which was borne by them to Megiddo or Bethulia and enthroned in the portable Tabernacle, in order to celebrate there all the worship commanded by Holy Law, until the day in which God would determine its return to Jerusalem. In this way, God, through the Prophet Jeremias, also intervened so that the impious King Manasses might not profane the Ark of the Covenant.

2. In the year 4533, from the moment in which the Ark of the Covenant was enthroned within the portable Tabernacle at Bethulia, this town became the Holy City of the People of Israel; and, also, from this moment, High Priest Joachim, by God's command through the Prophet Jeremias, stayed there as governor of the town. Within the Ark of the Covenant were deposited, among other sacred things: the Chalice of Melchisedech containing the Triple Benediction, the Tablets of the Law, the golden cup containing manna, Moses' staff, Aaron's staff and the Pentateuch or original books of Moses.

3. So the town of Megiddo, during the eighteen years it was governed by High Priest Joachim, was the Holy City of Israel, closed to all idolatrous influence and corrupt morals. For it was the will of God that the remnant of His people's children faithful to Him be secure not only in the holy, privileged and specially protected place of Mount Carmel, but also within the town of Bethulia, name which means 'City of the House of God'. In her, then, together with High Priest Joachim, all the other priests, levite ministers, elders and princes of the people who remained faithful to the true God took refuge; for those who had apostatized from God to follow idolatry were in Jerusalem and other towns of Israel. Though the inhabitants of the town of Bethulia maintained certain commercial relations with other towns, since the need to acquire provisions to survive demanded this, nonetheless such relations were strictly controlled by the guard of High Priest Joachim, to avoid any pagan influence on the citizens of Bethulia that might come from outside the town.

4. God, through the Prophet Jeremias, told the impious King Manasses to make no attempt to enter Bethulia or Megiddo, for if he did so, he would immediately be struck down by Holy Divine Wrath. This warning so terrified Manasses that he never dared to enter the town.

5. The translation of the Ark of the Covenant from the Temple of Jerusalem to the town of Bethulia took place, therefore, seven centuries prior to the Passion and Death of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Chapter III

Loss of many of the territories of the kingdom of Judah and Samaria united or reunified kingdom of Israel.

King Nabuchosopolor besieges Jerusalem, sacks it and leads Manasses away prisoner

1. From the year 4533, in different campaigns, King Manasses lost not only the territories conquered by his virtuous father King Ezechias, but others as well. In this manner the kingdom of Judah and Samaria united or reunified kingdom of Israel forfeited the territories of Idumea, the Sinai peninsula, Syria, Arabia, Moab, Madian, Ammon and so forth, which passed under the dominion of their respective kings, and other territories in the north and south which fell under Philistine control.

2. In the year 4545 the powerful Nabuchosopolor was king of the great Babylonian Empire, watered by the Euphrates River, and which embraced Mesopotamia and Chaldea, among other nations, and whose capital was Babylon. In order to chastise Manasses' abominations once again, God permitted King Nabuchosopolor and his army to invade the greatly reduced kingdom of Israel. The Babylonian army, after sacking and setting fire to many other towns, besieged the city

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of Jerusalem, taking Manasses prisoner. He, shackled and weighed down by chains, was led off prisoner to Babylon in that same year 4545. Though it is true that Nabuchosopolor carried out great slaughter among the inhabitants of Israel, God did not permit the Babylonians to take complete control of the kingdom of Israel at that time. When imprisoned in Babylon, Manasses, after thirty-eight years of legitimate reign, abdicated in favour of his son Ammon.

Chapter IV

Ammon, third king of Judah and Samaria united or reunified kingdom of Israel. Ex-king Manasses, freed from captivity, lays claim to the throne of Israel. The king of Egypt sets Joachim up as king of Israel. Ammon kills his father Manasses and Joachim, and then commits suicide. High Priest Joachim presents the boy Josias as Crown Prince, heir to the throne of Israel

1. So that it might be seen that God, as chastisement to His people for their continuous infidelities, continued to permit them to be governed by kings as they had requested, independent of whether the new king was to act in a holy or in a perverse way, Ammon, son of Manasses and Mesalemeth, began to reign in the year 4545, and was anointed king by the Prophet Jeremias, after he had sworn the ritual oath to defend the worship of the Lord God of Hosts and to persecute idolatrous worship. Ammon, also a perjurer king, followed in the footsteps of his impious father, and even surpassed him in many abominations. Through the Prophet Jeremias, God also told Ammon not to make any attempt to enter Bethulia, for he would immediately be struck down by Holy Divine Wrath. This warning so terrified Ammon that he never dared to enter the town.

2. In the year 4548, after a little more than two years of captivity in Babylon, ex-king Manasses was released from prison as a gratuitous concession of Nabuchosopolor's son Nabuchodonozor I. Manasses, returning to Jerusalem falsely repentant of his abominations, with the support of a third of the people, required his son Ammon to yield him the throne of Israel. In that same year 4548, many of the People of Israel who wanted neither Ammon to reign nor Manasses to regain the throne, had recourse to the king of Egypt in order that he intervene in the affair. The king of Egypt, for ambitious ends, named as king of Jerusalem, with the approval of another third of the people, a descendant of the Royal House of Judah called Joachim who, in exchange for gold and other riches, was anointed by the apostate prophet Misael, against God's will, so that the anointing was invalid. Thus the People of Israel was split into three factions or bands: the partisans of the legitimate king Ammon, those of Manasses and those of Joachim. This Joachim is distinct to another Joachim who was to reign forty-two years later.

3. During the schism of the three kings, God, through the Prophet Jeremias, told Joachim, and also reminded Ammon and Manasses, that if any of them should attempt to enter Megiddo or Bethulia, he would immediately be struck down by Holy Divine Wrath.

4. In the year 4551 King Ammon killed his two rivals Manasses and Joachim. After killing his two rivals, King Ammon committed suicide in despair when he found himself encircled by a multitude under the command of the anti-high priest Ozias, priest and brother of High Priest Joachim, assigned to the post by ex-king Manasses when he returned from prison in Babylon. By all this, the schism ended, as did Ammon's six-year reign, which was in two stages: the first, lasting a little over two years, in which he was the sole king; and the second, lasting three and a half years, in which there was a schism of three kings. After King Ammon's death, High Priest Joachim, from Bethulia, sent a commission of priests and military men to take the boy Josias from the palace and bring him to Bethulia.

5. That same year 4551, the schism of the three kings ended, High Priest Joachim assumed the regency of the kingdom of Judah and Samaria united or reunified kingdom of Israel; and in the town of Bethulia, before the portable Tabernacle, presented the child Josias, son of Ammon, eight years of age, whom he proclaimed Crown Prince in the presence of the people.

Chapter V

Nabuchodonozor I, king of the Babylonian Empire, seizes the Ninevite Empire.
Great campaigns of Holophernes, Nabuchodonozor I's Generalissimo

1. In the year 4550, Nabuchodonozor I, king of Babylonia, who had already conquered extensive territories in the east, having become conceited at the power he wielded, was bold enough to send ambassadors to the kings of other nations in order that they acknowledge him as their god and emperor. Since they rejected his pretensions and treated the ambassadors with scorn, Nabuchodonozor I, indignant, swore by his throne and by his kingdom that he would take vengeance on all those nations. He at once gathered in secret council all the members of his government and the chief generals of his army to propose his plan to them of submitting the whole earth to his empire. As this plan was approved by all, King Nabuchodonozor I summoned Holophernes, Generalissimo of his armies, saying: "Go out on campaign against all the kingdoms of the west, principally against those who have despised my commands. Have compassion on no one and subject all kingdoms and their cities to my dominion." Moreover, Nabuchodonozor I gave the command to destroy all the gods of the earth, with the aim that he might be held as the one only god.

2. Generalissimo Holophernes organized a powerful army, well-armed and disciplined, and embarked on the conquest, beginning with all those nations who had rejected the imposition of the king of Babylonia that he be acknowledged as god and emperor of all. Many kings, terror-stricken at the ferocious dynamism and barbarity of Holophernes' armies, sent ambassadors to him so that he communicate to his king: "Let your fury now cease against us, for it is better to serve the great King Nabuchodonozor I and depend on him, than to die at the hands of his forces. Our families, towns, possessions, mountains, hills, fields, livestock and all we possess are at your disposal. We and our children are your slaves. Come to us as a peaceful lord and use us in your service as you please." For the terror seizing all those nations was so great that, when Holophernes came up with his army, they went out to meet him, receiving him with crowns, lighted torches and dances to the sound of drums and flutes.

3. In the year 4551, Nabuchodonozor I, king of Babylonia, commanding his own troops, invaded the Ninevite kingdom, whose king was Assarhaddon's son Saoduchin, and destroyed the extensive and beautiful city of Nineveh. The Ninevite Empire having been absorbed by the Babylonian Empire, consequently Nabuchodonozor I was from then on king of Babylonia and Nineveh, that is, of the whole Babylonian Empire.

Chapter VI

Siege of the town of Bethulia by Generalissimo Holophernes

1. The news of the victorious conquests, the barbaric impositions and the cruel outrages carried out by Nabuchodonozor I and by his Generalissimo Holophernes, filled the People of Israel who had taken refuge in the town of Bethulia with terror. As a precaution, in the final months of the year 4551, High Priest Joachim, governor of the town, commanded the walls to be strengthened and provisions to be stocked, for survival in the case of a siege by the Babylonian army.

2. At the same time High Priest Joachim commanded those of all ages, male and female, living in Bethulia, to invoke the Lord God of Hosts with great insistence and to practise fasting and other penances. The priests and many of the people dressed in hairshirts, and all cried out with one accord to the Lord God of Hosts to preserve the town from the enemy forces, so that the Tabernacle might not be profaned and the citizens be freed from death and any other outrage. High Priest Joachim spoke to all, saying: "Be confident that the Lord will hear your prayers if you persevere in His presence fasting and praying." Moved by these and other exhortations, all persevered, commending themselves to the Lord God of Hosts without turning away from His presence; and many of them, heads covered with ashes and in hairshirts, besought God from their hearts to help and console them.

3. Holophernes, Generalissimo of the Babylonian armies, pitched camp with his forces in the south of Lebanon, close to the northern frontier of the kingdom of Judah and Samaria united, and not far from the town of Bethulia or Megiddo. His principal aim was to conquer that town at all costs, since he considered it the most important objective, for at that time it was the religious, political and military hub of Israel. In the town resided High Priest Joachim and other priests, Crown Prince Josias, the elders and princes of the people and the chief generals of the army. When Holophernes was notified that the children of Israel who dwelt in Bethulia had reinforced the walls with soldiers and weapons to defend the town, becoming enraged he called together his chief officers and asked: "Tell me what kind of people these Israelites are and who commands their troops, for they have the town strongly guarded to resist us. Only the inhabitants of Bethulia, despising our power, are preparing to receive us with arms included." God, to dissuade Holophernes from his intent to invade Bethulia, sent the Prophet Jeremias from Mount Carmel to the Babylonian encampment, to respond to the questions he had asked his chief officers concerning the People of Israel. Thus the Prophet Jeremias said to Holophernes: "If you deign to listen to me, I will tell you the truth concerning this people." Then the prophet gave him a historical summary of the origins of the People of Israel, of their captivity in Egypt, of how they had been miraculously freed and guided by God, of their conquests, of the great empire they came to form, and above all, of God's protection over them when faithful to His Commandments and divine plans. Finally, Jeremias said: "Look well, Holophernes, to what you are about to do, for day and night the inhabitants of the town of Bethulia are imploring the help of Almighty God, in order that He save them from the clutches of your army, which cannot resist the power of God. Therefore you and your soldiers will become the object of ridicule because of this people." When Jeremias had finished speaking, Holophernes said angrily: "Who is this man who says that the children of Israel can resist King Nabuchodonozor I and his powerful army when they are but few, and almost without weapons, with little valour and quite unskilled in the art of war?" And in turn, exceedingly enraged, he said to the prophet: "Since you have become a prophet saying that the town of Bethulia is defended by their God, to make you see that there is no God other than Nabuchodonozor I, after we have killed its inhabitants, you too will perish at the point of my sword and all Israel will be utterly annihilated with you, and you will learn by experience that Nabuchodonozor I is the lord and god of all the earth." Holophernes commanded Jeremias to be seized; and bound hand and foot they kept him in their encampment. Nonetheless, the Prophet Jeremias continued to warn Holophernes that if he dared to lay siege to Bethulia, the Almighty God of Israel would vanquish him. Finally Jeremias foretold to Holophernes his tragic end in these words: "If you continue in your obstinate blindness, the Lord God of Hosts, by means of the sword of Mount Carmel, will strike off your head." Holophernes, unable to resist the uprightness and integrity of Jeremias any longer, nor the curses which he, in God's name, hurled at him and his principal officers, terror-stricken, commanded him to be untied and taken to the gates of Bethulia so that its inhabitants might take him in; and thus, in the town, he might no longer be troublesome to him and his army.

4. On the 22nd of November of that year 4551, the Prophet Jeremias, now inside the town of Bethulia, weeping profusely related to its inhabitants everything he had said to Holophernes, how the latter had wished to kill him, that they had bound him hand and foot, and how finally they had brought him to the town to be rid of him and thus not hear anathemas and prophecies contrary to their designs. All the inhabitants of Bethulia, when they saw Jeremias and heard his words, prostrated themselves face to the ground and adored the Lord, weeping profusely and saying: "Lord God of Heaven and Earth, behold the pride of the Babylonian army and turn Your eyes to our humiliation, and by Your power make our enemies see that You do not forsake those who trust in You, and that You crush those who presume in themselves and boast of their power." After the weeping and the prayer of the people had ceased, they consoled Jeremias saying: "The God of Israel, whose power you have proclaimed, will go forth in defence of His people, who will see the ruin of their enemies." The Prophet Jeremias then lodged at the home of High Priest Joachim, who in addition to being regent of the Kingdom was governor of the town. At dusk Joachim convoked the whole people, and they spent the night in prayer before the Temple, pleading for succour from the God of Israel.

5. On the 23rd of November of that year 4551, that is, eighty days after Nabuchodonozor I took and destroyed the city of Nineveh, Holophernes and his army laid siege to the town of Bethulia or Megiddo. The children of Israel living

in the town, seeing the huge besieging army, prostrate to the ground and covering their heads with ashes, with one accord besought the Lord God of Hosts to show His people mercy. At the same time, the Israelite soldiers took up arms in defence of the town, which they guarded closely.

Chapter VII

Most Holy Melchisedech reconquers all the territory lost by the People of Israel

On the 23rd of November that year 4551, the siege by Holophernes' army of the town of Bethulia barely having begun, Most Holy Melchisedech, under the figure of Invincible Warrior, with the seven Archangels, legions of warrior angels and Israelite soldiers faithful to God, began the reconquest of the territories of the People of Israel occupied by pagan kings and by anti-high priest Ozias. The reconquest took thirty-three days, coinciding with the number of days Bethulia was besieged by Holophernes. Most Holy Melchisedech carried out His reconquest in four stages of eight days, thus: In the first eight days He carried out the reconquest of all the northern or septentrion territories, that is, the part occupied by the Philistines, as well as Lebanon and Syria; the following eight days He reconquered all the southern or meridian territories, that is, Idumea and the Sinai peninsula; the subsequent eight days He reconquered all the eastern or oriental territories, that is, the territories occupied by the Moabites, Ammonites, Madianites, Amalechites, etc., as well as Arabia; and in the final eight days He reconquered the western or occidental territories, that is, the other part occupied by the Philistines. Within these thirty-two days, He also conquered the rest of the territory of Israel in the hands of the anti-high priest Ozias, who resided in Jerusalem, and who was slain by the sword of Most Holy Melchisedech. In the four stages employed by Most Holy Melchisedech to reconquer the occupied territories of the kingdom of Israel, besides realizing great war campaigns, He carried out an intense apostolic labour, preaching to all the inhabitants of those territories in order to convert them to the true Lord God. The innumerable converts went on to form part of the People of Israel; but as for those who chose not to be converted, some died under the swords of Most Holy Melchisedech's armies, and others succeeded in fleeing, either to the far side of the Euphrates River, or to Egypt, and so forth. After Melchisedech's reconquest, the territory of the People of Israel again had the same extension as that delivered by David to Solomon. In each of the zones in which Most Holy Melchisedech waged war, night did not fall during the eight days of the respective conquest. This miracle was observed by all the inhabitants and greatly favoured conversions. But Holophernes and his army, despite these miraculous signs, remained blindly obstinate in their eagerness to conquer Bethulia. In the measure that Most Holy Melchisedech reconquered the territories of Israel, these miraculously underwent a prodigious transformation, fertility and improvement in nature. Also, the deserts of Israel were yet again transformed into lush verdant woods and high yielding fields.

Chapter VIII

In the town of Bethulia hardship and discouragement run rife.

The heroine Judith cuts off the head of Generalissimo Holophernes, defeats his army and frees Bethulia from the enemy siege

1. Holophernes continued to tighten the siege of Bethulia further and further in view of the tenacious resistance of its inhabitants. He had as well cut the aqueduct which supplied the town with water, so that the reservoirs and tanks ran dry. Given, then, the extreme shortage of water and provisions needed for survival, discouragement ran rife among many of the inhabitants, who came flocking to High Priest Joachim weepingly to urge him, saying: "May God judge between you and us, since you are responsible for all these evils, not having agreed to peace with the Babylonians; that is why God has abandoned us into enemy hands, without there being anyone to succour us in this situation in which we are brought low by hunger, thirst and misery. Let us all voluntarily give ourselves up to Holophernes' army, for it is preferable to live as captives than to die and be the opprobrium of the whole world after we see our wives and children perish." High Priest Joachim, who was not disposed in any way to surrender the town to the enemy, said to all, that trusting in the mercy and power of God, they should ask pardon for their sins and pray insistently to the Almighty. The dejected citizens of Bethulia cried out to God for many hours, saying: "O Lord God of Israel! We have sinned, we have committed much evil. But You, who are kind, have mercy on us, or at least punish our sins Yourself. But do not abandon us into the power of a pagan people which neither acknowledges You as the true God, nor those who honour You; for if the enemy takes possession of us, they will say: 'Where is the power of Israel's God, of which they speak so much?'" After crying out and praying for long hours, now almost spent, they remained silent. Then High Priest Joachim said to them: "Be of good cheer my brothers, and let us await the mercy of the Lord, Who will cause the glory of His Holy Name to shine forth"; for the High Priest, who fully trusted in God's help, never condescended to the wish of many of the people to surrender the fortified town of Bethulia to Holophernes' forces.

2. On Friday the 25th of December of that year 4551, when thirty-two days of the siege of Bethulia by Holophernes' army had elapsed, the Lord God of Hosts prompted a courageous woman named Judith to become His victorious instrument in defence of the city.

3. Judith descended from the tribe of Joseph, both on her father Merari's side through Ephraim, and on her mother's side through Manasses. She was born in the year 4511 in the Samaritan town of Megiddo or Bethulia. Judith, who was exceptionally beautiful, married Manasses, bearing him six children, boys and girls. The whole family belonged to the Essenian Third Order. When Manasses died, he left his wife Judith a fortune in gold, silver, servants, livestock and fields. When widowed, Judith became an Essenian religiosa, leaving the custody and care of her younger children to her eldest son. Judith converted one of her houses in Bethulia into an Essenian convent, community of which she was the superioress. Together with the other Carmelite religiosas, she lived a life of complete austerity, dedicated to prayer, fasts and rigorous penance.

4. The anguish of the citizens of Bethulia so came to transfix the heart of Judith, that she besought the Lord God Almighty to help His people in a very special way. God, taking compassion on His children, impetuously moved Judith

in order that she might become the instrument of His divine plans in the town's favour. When Judith heard that many in Bethulia preferred to surrender the town to Holophernes rather than perish in the siege, she said to all with superhuman steadfastness and energy: "How is it that you tempt the Lord God of Hosts asking for the surrender of the town? Where is your confidence in divine help? This is not the way to draw down God's mercy; rather, it is the way to provoke His Wrath and to extend His fury. Therefore, let us humble our souls before Him, and thoroughly contrite, as His servants that we are, let us beseech the Lord with tears that we may experience the effects of His mercy, so that, just as the pride of our enemies has filled our hearts with alarm and terror, so may our humility become for us a motive of glory, since the Almighty God of Israel is with us." When he heard these words, High Priest Joachim, who saw that God confirmed his thoughts and desires through the Prophetess Judith, perceptibly moved, said: "Judith, everything you have said is true, and there is nothing to reproach in anything you have spoken. Now, then, pray for us, for you are a holy religiosa and fearful of God." All the people inwardly backed the words spoken by Joachim. Forthwith Judith said to all: "In the same way as you acknowledge that what I have just said is from God, in like manner you will acknowledge that what I have determined to carry out is also from Him. Make prayer to God in order that I fulfil His design. To do so, I will leave the town with my sister in religion Sonya. I am not going to reveal my project to you until it is executed, when I return to you. Meanwhile, pray to Our Lord God for me and my companion." The High Priest, in a loud voice, said to Judith in the presence of all: "Go in peace, and may the Lord be with you and take vengeance on our enemies."

5. But before setting out on her risky mission, Judith, prostrate before the portable Tabernacle, cried out to the Lord saying: "Lord God of the Hosts of Israel, raise Your powerful arm against the encampment of Holophernes and crush our enemies, for You are our God who, from ancient times strengthens the armies of Your People when faithful to You. Raise, then, Your holy arm, as You have so often done; and by Your infinite power, cause the strength of the enemy army to crumble, so that their fury be brought to nothing at the blow of Your Wrath, since they endeavour to profane Your Tabernacle. Cause, Lord, the head of that proud Holophernes to be cut off by my sword if he does not desist from besieging the town. Instil courage into my heart to destroy him, if he is not converted to You, since it would be a glorious monument to Your Holy Name for Holophernes to be overthrown by a woman. O God of Heaven, Creator and Lord of all things! Harken to the plea of this miserable woman who has recourse to You, and hopes for everything from Your mercy. Remember, Lord, Your alliance with our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and may You put the words on my lips, and strengthen my heart in this undertaking, so that Your Tabernacle remain always secure and all nations acknowledge that You are the True Lord God and that there is none other than You."

6. Before going out to fulfil her mission, by divine command Judith dressed as a soldier, and in conformity with the same divine command, so did the Prophetess Sonya, who was to accompany her in the heroic enterprise; since military uniform was the most adequate for fulfilling a strategic war mission; and, moreover, the ideal means for them to be able to conceal their identity as women and thereby avoid the attraction which, as women, they might arouse in the soldiers. Though Judith's and Sonya's respective military dress accorded with those of the Israelite army, nonetheless, worn by them they were similar to the corresponding ones of the Lord God of Hosts' heavenly militia.

7. The courageous Judith, forty years old, whose name means 'Sword of Mount Carmel', together with the other religiosa Sonya, whose name means 'Shield and Parapet of Mount Carmel', left the town of Bethulia dressed as men soldiers and headed for Holophernes' encampment, both bearing, as sole means of carrying out their plans, Faith in Israel's God, a sheathed sword and an empty knapsack. When Judith and her companion arrived, the enemy sentries fell to the ground in a faint on seeing the great splendour surrounding the two beardless apparent soldiers. Judith, accompanied by Sonya, entered the tent of Holophernes, who, among many other vices, was given to excessive drinking, as well as licentious pleasures with both men and women. Judith, in her mission, cherished various hopes: one, that Holophernes, for fear of God, would raise the siege; another, that Holophernes and his army would be converted to the true God; and another, that Holophernes would remain blindly obstinate, in which case she would have to vanquish him by cutting off his head.

8. When in the presence of Holophernes, the virtuous and courageous Judith said to the Generalissimo: "I, in the name of the God of Israel, Whom I serve faithfully, and for the good of my People whom I help with sincere and loyal dedication, come, Holophernes, to tell you to desist as soon as possible from besieging and trying to conquer Bethulia, for the Lord God Almighty will grant His People victory. You and your forces can do nothing against the infinite power of the Lord God of Hosts. He assists and protects us with fatherly love. Humble, then, your head, O Holophernes, before the True God. It is not too late to withdraw." Judith uttered these words in her Hebrew language and natural feminine voice, but Holophernes heard them in the Babylonian tongue and in his own masculine voice, a supernatural phenomenon occurring frequently enough in the case of mystics and prophets, as was the case of Judith. While Judith and Sonya were in the presence of the satanic Holophernes, she was spiritually accompanied by the five principal religiosa prophetesses of the Essenian convent of Megiddo, namely Hulda, Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance, who in their convent remained in prayer to obtain the happy outcome of Judith's mission.

9. The perverse Holophernes, Generalissimo of the army of the powerful King Nabuchodonozor I, faced with the majestic and manly beauty of the two beardless apparent soldiers, became enchanted with and enamoured of Judith, deeming her a man. When he heard Judith's warnings, Holophernes, who was not at any time prepared to heed them, did not aspire to anything other than satisfying his wanton desires with someone he thought to be a seasoned soldier, and not a virtuous woman, since she had concealed her feminine attractions beneath the uniform of a soldier for reasons of modesty and military tactics. At no time did the very virtuous and chaste Judith come to realize that Holophernes felt attracted to her deeming her a man.

10. Holophernes, resolved to enjoy Judith, whom he took to be a handsome man, commanded his servants to bring wine in plenty for the two apparent soldiers to drink, thinking that they would accept his invitation, which would

make his unchaste plan succeed more easily. But as Judith and Sonya disdainfully refused the cups of wine offered them by Holophernes, he, much given to excessive drinking, began to do so immoderately, so as to stimulate himself more for pleasure and to provoke them into drinking. But Judith, invested with courage, said to Holophernes with great integrity: *“Generalissimo Holophernes, instead of meditating on the message I bring you in God’s name in order to execute it promptly, do you engage in drinking wine to excess? How is it that you, the man chiefly responsible for an army, give yourself up to excessive drinking? How can you rule this encampment well if you become drunk? Moreover, in view of this state of war, dare you drink so much wine? Are you not afraid of losing your judgement? Do you not reflect, Holophernes, in view of the warnings I bring you from the Lord God of Hosts, that if you do not comply with them, your head may be cut off?”* All these wise exhortations, and more, which Judith, inspired by God, made to him, were not listened to by Holophernes; for his whole wish was to drink wine and to provoke his two visitors to drink in order to intoxicate them, or at least weaken their wills, so as to carry out his unchaste intentions. Holophernes, with howls of coarse laughter in which his lewd passions were discernible, continued to drink and drink, despite the fact that Judith gave him this warning saying: *“If you keep on drinking, your head is going to roll on the ground, for the sword of Mount Carmel will cut it off.”* Holophernes, who had lain down on the couch where he was accustomed to rest, reached such a state of intoxication that he completely lost consciousness. Judith, who with great honour and rectitude had done what was possible to dissuade Holophernes with the objective that he and his army raise the siege of Bethulia, convinced that all was useless since he was now completely drunk, decided to kill him.

11. But before doing so, Judith prayed to the Lord God saying: *“Give me courage, O Lord God of Hosts, so that my hands may happily conclude this undertaking, and You be exalted in the midst of Your People, and Your Power fill Israel’s enemies with terror.”* Her prayer ended, she drew her sword, and grasping Holophernes by the hair, prayed thus to the Lord: *“O my God, give me courage in this hour”*; and unhesitatingly, at one sure stroke, cut off his head. Then Judith, helped by Sonya, put the tyrant’s head in the knapsack, and both left Holophernes’ chamber taking his head with them, without encountering any difficulty along the way, since God had immersed in deep sleep the soldiers and sentries who could have hindered them from leaving the encampment freely.

12. When Judith and her companion reached the town gates of Bethulia, she cried out to the sentries on the walls saying: *“Open the gates, for God is with us and has worked a wonder in Israel.”* When the sentries recognized her voice they called High Priest Joachim, the Prophet Jeremias, the elders of the town and the people, for all to come. Judith, when inside Bethulia, went up to an elevated spot, commanded silence and spoke in this manner: *“Praise, O People of Israel, the Lord our God, for He has not forsaken those who placed their trust in Him, and through me, His slave, has given a further token of the mercy He promised to the House of Israel, and by my hand has taken the life of Holophernes, the enemy of our People.”* And taking the tyrant’s head out of the knapsack, she displayed it saying: *“Look at the head of the diabolical Holophernes, Generalissimo of the Babylonian army, who has been beheaded by God through the hands of this poor woman. Let all praise the God of Israel for His surpassing Goodness and because His Mercy is everlasting.”* Then all, adoring the Lord, said to Judith: *“The Lord has poured out His blessings upon you; for by His power, you have annihilated our enemies.”* The cheers and acclamations, mixed with tears of gratitude to the Almighty, were repeated unceasingly in Bethulia. Judith, addressing the Prophet Jeremias, said to him: *“The God of Israel, of whom you testified saying that He knows how to avenge Himself on His enemies, Himself, by my hand, has cut off the head of the caudillo of the Babylonian armies.”* And the Prophet Jeremias, with unspeakable joy, said: *“Blessed be the Lord God of Hosts, who guided your hand in severing the head of Holophernes.”* High Priest Joachim, deeply moved, said to Judith: *“Blessed be the Lord God Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth, Who guided your hand in cutting off the head of our chief enemy, and blessed be you, my daughter, by the Lord God Most High.”* And all the crowd present said: *“Amen. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!”*

13. Judith commanded the head of Holophernes to be placed high up on one of the turrets in the walls, and gave the order for battle. The hosts of Israel, bearing their arms and to the sound of trumpets, impetuously sallied forth from the town to fight against the enemy army. The Babylonians were alarmed by the unforeseen movement of attack, and one of their generals went to warn Holophernes, whom they believed to be fast asleep; great, however, was their surprise to find him decapitated on the ground in a pool of blood. When the news of Holophernes’ death spread among the Babylonian soldiers, the confusion was so frightful that, terror-stricken, they suddenly abandoned the encampment and fled. But the brave soldiers of Bethulia followed them, effecting great slaughter among the enemy hosts and seizing immense booty. Nonetheless, some soldiers of the Babylonian army were converted to the true God and others managed to escape alive outside Israel’s territory.

14. The Prophetess Judith, cutting off the head of the proud Holophernes, is figure of the Immaculate Virgin Mary crushing the head of Satan, the infernal dragon, the ancient serpent.

Chapter IX

Most Holy Melchisedech anoints the Prophetess, Religiosa and Heroine Judith as Caudilla of the People of Israel

1. That same Friday the 25th of December of that year 4551, after Judith had cut off the head of Holophernes, and his army had been utterly routed, Most Holy Melchisedech, accompanied by the seven Archangels, the legions of angels and the Israelite soldiers who had followed Him in the reconquest of the territories of the People of Israel, entered triumphant and glorious into the town of Bethulia, amid the fervent acclamations of its inhabitants. That glorious Friday, the 25th of December in the year 4551, Most Holy Melchisedech, in the presence of the multitude, anointed the Prophetess, Religiosa and Heroine Judith as Caudilla of the whole extensive territory of the kingdom of Israel, without the need for any oath. Most Holy Essenia, though not manifesting Herself visibly in the reconquest of the territories of the People of Israel, nonetheless entered Bethulia visibly accompanying Most Holy Melchisedech and

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all His entourage. After Judith’s anointing, Most Holy Melchisedech, Most Holy Essenia, the seven Archangels and the legions of angels that had accompanied Him, suddenly vanished from the view of all.

2. The immense multitude witnessing the anointing of Judith as Caudilla of the People of God acclaimed the Heroine in these eulogies: *“You are the glory of Israel, the joy of Bethulia, the honour of our People.”* Then Judith sang the Lord’s praises saying, among other things: *“All intone the praises of the Lord God of Israel to the sound of tambourines and cymbals; sing a new and harmonious song in His honour and exalt and invoke His Holy Name. He it is who defeats armies. His name is Most High, Almighty, Lord Creator of Heaven and Earth. Let us sing a new hymn to the Lord God of Hosts: Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts, Heaven and Earth are full of the majesty of Thy glory! O, my Lord, You are great and glorious for Your infinite power, and none can surpass You! Let all creatures obey You, for by Your mere word they were made.”* Judith, Prophetess, Religiosa and Heroine of the People of Israel, forty years of age, began her rule as Caudilla on the 25th of December in the year 4551, after being anointed by Most Holy Melchisedech. Three hours later, on that same day, High Priest Joachim died in sanctity in Bethulia, filled with joy untold. At his death his virtuous son Archias succeeded him in the post of High Priest.

Chapter X

Judith, Caudilla of the People of Israel. Death of Judith

1. When Judith began as Caudilla, the extensive territory of the People of Israel was spiritually re-established, thanks to the intense labour of reconquest, zealous apostolate and extermination of all idolatry carried out by Most Holy Melchisedech.

2. Judith’s primary concern was the restoration of the Temple of Jerusalem, badly deteriorated during the reign of the impious Manasses and the schism of the three kings. She employed a year and three months on this important work. In the meantime worship continued to be celebrated in the portable Tabernacle installed in Bethulia. During the restoration of the Temple of God in Jerusalem, the Prophetess Hulda, widow and Essenian religiosa, who lived in the convent of Bethulia and afterwards came to Jerusalem with Judith and the other religiosas, discovered in one of the outbuildings of the Temple the historical-prophetic Book of Enoch, lost long before. In that Book Enoch had written down all that had happened in the People of God until he was taken up to the Planet of Mary, and moreover, had foretold everything to come until the end of time. The Prophetess Hulda, in God’s name, handed the Book over to High Priest Archias; who, in the presence of Caudilla Judith and Crown Prince Josias, as well as the priests, elders and princes of the people, read a large part of its contents, above all that concerning the future of the monarchy of the People of Israel. Since many of the prophecies were hard to understand, Archias asked the Prophetess Hulda to clarify some of those relating to the boy Josias and the calamities that would befall the People of Israel, in particular the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem and the Babylonian captivity. The Prophetess Hulda, after consulting the Lord God, communicated God’s answer to High Priest Archias, to Judith, to Josias and the rest: *“The Lord God of Israel says this: Say the following to the person who has sent you to Me: ‘Assuredly I will permit the calamities written in the Book of Enoch to befall Jerusalem and the whole territory of the People of Israel; but these punishments will not come to pass in the reign of the future king Josias, but as consequence of the idolatry and other abominations into which, after his death, My People will again relapse.’”*

3. In the year 4553, when the Temple of Jerusalem had been restored, God, through the Prophet Jeremias, ordered High Priest Archias to bring the Ark of the Covenant from Bethulia to Jerusalem; and, moreover, commanded the portable Tabernacle in Bethulia to be dismantled and stored on Mount Carmel. In the month of February of that same year, the Ark of the Covenant was borne from Bethulia on the shoulders of the priests, presided by High Priest Archias, Caudilla Judith and the ten-year-old Crown Prince Josias. The entourage was formed by priests, levite ministers, elders and princes of Israel. The Ark of the Covenant entered the Golden Gate with great solemnity to the blast of trumpets and to the canticles of choirs harmonized by the chords of sacred instruments. A vast multitude of faithful assembled to witness the moving event. High Priest Archias enthroned the Sacred Ark once again in the Sanctum Sanctorum.

4. With the translation of the Ark of the Covenant to the Temple of Jerusalem, divine worship was re-established there after twenty years’ celebration in the portable Tabernacle of Bethulia. In March of that year the solemnity of the Passover was celebrated, for which feast multitudes of faithful of the People of God proceeding from the whole extensive territory of the kingdom of Israel assisted at the Temple of Jerusalem. In the eight days of the solemn feast of unleavened bread, a large number of animal victims was offered on the altar of holocausts in the Temple of Jerusalem by High Priest Archias and the other priests. The Passover Feast that year 4553 was one of the most glorious and solemn in Israel.

5. During Judith’s almost eight years as Caudilla, the extensive territory of the People of Israel enjoyed perfect peace. The Prophetess and Caudilla Judith died in sanctity in the Essenian convent in Bethulia on the 12th of October 4559 at the age of forty-eight years, three days prior to the arrival of the deportees from the former kingdom of Samaria who had been captives in the erstwhile Ninevite Empire. Judith was buried with great solemnity on Mount Carmel.

6. This historical account of the Prophetess and Caudilla Judith gives the true version of her life, heroic exploit and caudilloship over the kingdom of Israel, and thereby discredits the falsifications of biblical texts in the so-called official bible which has been used up to the publication of the present Palmarian Bible, carried out by perverse Levitical priests of the Temple of Jerusalem.

Chapter XI

The Israelites deported to the Ninevite Empire return to the reunified kingdom of Israel. Death of Tobias the Younger

1. In the year 4559, while Nabuchodonozor I, king of Babylonia, was temporarily residing in the reconstructed city of Nineveh, God sent to him the Prophet Ado, accompanied by Tobias the Younger, to tell him through the prophet: *“It is not enough that My people possess freedom of movement within your territories, but you must permit them to*

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return to the reunified land of Israel." Faced by this petition, King Nabuchodonozor I laid down a condition: "If my son Nabuchodonozor, who is dying, and whom none of my gods has been able to cure, is healed by your God within thirty-two days, then I will assent to your petition." In that same year 4559, having reached the time limit of thirty-two days, God healed the future Nabuchodonozor II, son of Nabuchodonozor I and father of Nabuchodonozor III. In that year 4559, after the miraculous healing of the future King Nabuchodonozor II, the Israelites of the Ninevite deportation, together with the Prophet Ado and Tobias the Younger, returned in complete freedom to the reunified land of Israel. Sadly, a large section of the returning People of God was contaminated by the pagan environment in which they had lived.

2. Thus on the 15th of October in the year 4559, the seventy years of captivity of the inhabitants of Samaria in the former Ninevite Empire having elapsed, and three days after the death of Caudilla Judith, those who had been deported, together with the Prophet Ado and Tobias the Younger, returned to the reunified land of Israel. The Prophet Ado, from the tribe of Ephraim, had been born during the captivity.

3. The Prophet Elias, accompanied by Henoah and Moses, after being rapt up to the Planet of Mary, among many other occasions, returned to Earth in the year 4559, when the inhabitants of the former kingdom of Samaria returned with the Prophet Ado from captivity in the former Ninevite Empire.

4. Tobias the Younger, Elder of Madian, entered the land of Israel with his wife Sarah, Eldress of Madian, their sons and daughters, sons-in-law and daughters-in-law, grandsons and granddaughters, and settled in Bethulia, his father's town of birth. Tobias the younger came to know his great-grandsons and great-granddaughters, great-great-grandsons and great-great-granddaughters, and great-great-great-grandsons and great-great-great-granddaughters. Among this last generation was Mardoqueus, Esther's uncle.

5. Tobias the younger died in holiness in the year 4612 at the age of one hundred and twelve years, seventeen years before the deportation to Babylonia. He was buried in Bethulia. Mardoqueus, great-great-great-grandson of Tobias the Younger and uncle of Esther, Queen of the Persians, was twenty-five years old when deported to Babylonia in the year 4629.

Chapter XII

Josias, fourth King of Judah and Samaria united or reunified kingdom of Israel.

Josias conquers the extensive kingdom of Cilicia. Death of the virtuous Queen Hebronia. Death of Josias

1. On the 20th of October in the year 4559, after eight days of mourning for the death of Caudilla Judith, Josias, aged sixteen years, in the presence of the virtuous High Priest Archias, the Council of Elders, princes and courtiers, and a vast crowd, was anointed king by the Prophet Jeremias before the Golden Gate of Jerusalem, after he had sworn the ritual oath to defend the worship of the Lord God of Hosts and to persecute idolatrous worship. All, with great jubilation, acclaimed: "Viva Josias, King of Israel!" Josias, a pious man, continued Judith's work, maintaining the spirit of piety and justice in all his dominions, never deviating from the upright path. Josias, then, masterfully completed the great work begun by Caudilla Judith.

2. In the year 4562, third of Josias' reign, the Prophet Jeremias, in God's name, communicated to the king the following: "Etruscus, king of Cilicia, with a powerful army, is advancing towards the Israelite territory of Syria to invade it. Josias, arise with your powerful army and go out to meet King Etruscus, for the Lord God of Hosts will deliver him over to you together with the Cilicians. You must kill all who are not converted to the true God and destroy all the idols and altars in Cilicia, beginning with the temple erected in Tarsus, capital of Cilicia, in honour of the idol Diana." Josias, obeying the command of the Lord God of Hosts through the Prophet Jeremias, set out for Cilicia and fought a great battle against the Cilician armies, inflicting great slaughter on the enemy hosts, and with his own sword killed Etruscus, king of Cilicia. In addition, Josias conquered the whole extensive territory of the kingdom of Cilicia, which became incorporated into his crown of the reunified kingdom of Israel. Many of the Cilicians were converted to the true God, others were exterminated for their obstinacy in idolatry, and yet others succeeded in fleeing to countries outside the limits of the territory of the kingdom of Israel. King Josias removed from Cilicia all the abominable works of impiety therein, so that his fame spread through many countries. Josias' reign was one of complete peace, except for the war with Cilicia, until then outside Israel's territory.

3. In the year 4563, Josias' wife, the virtuous Queen Hebronia, died giving birth to their youngest son, the future King Joachaz.

4. On the 8th of September in the year 4583, after a glorious reign of almost twenty-four years, at the age of forty Josias died a holy death, of natural causes, in his bed in the palace of Jerusalem. Prior to death he had named as heir to the throne of Israel his son Joachaz, who, though not the eldest, was the one he deemed most obedient and fit to be king. A firstborn son did not have the right to inherit the throne for being firstborn, for kings possessed the right to choose their heirs from among their children. Josias was buried in the royal pantheon on Mount Zion.

Chapter XIII

Joachaz, fifth king of Judah and Samaria united or reunified kingdom of Israel. Death of Joachaz

1. In the year 4583, so that it might be seen that God, as chastisement to His people for their continuous infidelities, continued to permit them to be governed by kings as they had requested, independent of whether the new king was to act in a holy or in a perverse way, Joachaz, son of Josias and Hebronia, began to reign at the age of twenty years. The thirty days of mourning for the death of his father having elapsed, Joachaz was anointed in Jerusalem by the Prophet Jeremias, after he had sworn the ritual oath to defend the worship of the Lord God of Hosts and to persecute idolatrous worship.

2. Joachaz inherited from his father all the extensive territory received from Caudilla Judith, and in addition the territory of Cilicia conquered by Josias' sword.

3. The perjurer Joachaz was notorious for his impiety and idolatry, for he again propagated the worship of idols throughout his kingdom, erecting a multitude of altars for them in the Temple of Jerusalem, in the city and throughout the extensive territory of Israel. His perversity sank to such depths of aberration that he erected a statue to himself in the Temple of Jerusalem to be adored as god. On several occasions he was rebuked by the Prophet Jeremias, who, moreover, foretold that he would die in the most despairing impiety if he did not turn his eyes towards the Lord God of Israel, destroy the idols and their altars he had erected, and cease his depravity. But despite the exhortations and prophecies of Jeremias and other prophets, Joachaz did not for that reason amend his life; quite the contrary, he became even more obstinate in evil, for he persecuted the followers of the true God and martyred many prophets and priests of the Lord.

4. In the final year of Joachaz's reign, by divine permission, and as punishment for the king and his people, some of the territories of the kingdom of Israel began to be invaded by the heirs of previous pagan kings.

5. In the year 4590 King Joachaz was struck down by God with a terrible intestinal illness, his insides bursting asunder; accordingly, he died in Jerusalem in that same year in the most despairing humiliation and abject impiety, after having reigned seven years. The numerous shreds of his burst body were swept away as is dung, and forthwith burnt. Joachaz died without leaving any descendants, so that the throne of Israel was occupied by his elder brother Joachim, Josias' firstborn.

Chapter XIV

Joachim, sixth king of Judah and Samaria united or reunified kingdom of Israel.

Invasion of the kingdom of Israel by King Nabuchodonozor II. First deportation of Israelites to Babylonia. Death of Joachim

1. In the year 4590, so that it might be seen that God, as chastisement to His people for their continuous infidelities, continued to permit them to be governed by kings as they had requested, independent of whether the new king was to act in a holy or in a perverse way, Joachim, the firstborn son of Josias and Hebronia, began to reign and was anointed king in Jerusalem by the Prophet Oseas, after he had sworn the ritual oath to defend the worship of the Lord God of Hosts and to persecute idolatrous worship. Joachim followed the perverse ways of his deceased brother Joachaz. In the first year of his reign, God wished to give King Joachim opportunities for conversion, often sending him the Prophet Oseas to exhort him and foretell to him the disasters that would soon befall if he and his people did not mend their ways. All these rebukes and warnings from God were despised by the perverse king, who plunged to such a depth of impiety that he erected a statue to himself in the Temple of Jerusalem to be adored as god. As his brother Joachaz had done, Joachim persecuted the adorers of the true God and martyred many prophets and priests of the Lord.

2. In the year 4591 God punished the idolatry and corruption of His People by allowing Nabuchodonozor II, king of Babylonia, to invade the kingdom of Israel. Though the perverse King Joachim went out with his army to confront him, Nabuchodonozor II, much the stronger, after vanquishing him, conquered many towns, effected a great slaughter among the population, and from among all the People of Israel took captive three thousand five hundred persons of all ages, male and female, and took them away prisoners, this being the first deportation of Israelites to Babylonia. God, in the hope that Joachim and his people would be converted by this punishment, did not permit the kingdom of Israel to disappear at that time, so that He impelled Nabuchodonozor II to abandon the unconquered part of the territory.

3. During the seventeen years Joachim continued to reign in the now diminished territory of Israel, by divine leave, and as punishment for the king and his people, other territories of the kingdom of Israel were invaded by heirs of pagan kings.

4. In the year 4608 King Joachim was struck down by God with a terrible intestinal illness, his insides bursting asunder. Accordingly, he died that year in Jerusalem in the most despairing humiliation and abject impiety, after having reigned for eighteen years. The numerous shreds of his burst body were swept away as is dung, and forthwith burnt. He was succeeded on the throne of Israel by his son Jechonias.

Chapter XV

Jechonias, seventh king of Judah and Samaria united or reunified kingdom of Israel. Second invasion of the kingdom of Israel by King Nabuchodonozor II. Second deportation of Israelites to Babylonia. Death of Jechonias

1. So that it might be seen that God, as chastisement to His people for their continuous infidelities, continued to permit them to be governed by kings as they had requested, independent of whether the new king was to act in a holy or in a perverse way, Jechonias, son of Joachim, began to reign at the age of sixteen years in the year 4608, and was anointed king in Jerusalem by the Prophet Oseas after he had sworn the ritual oath to defend the worship of the Lord God of Hosts and to persecute idolatrous worship. Jechonias, also a perjurer, followed the perverse ways of his father and uncle. Though he was often rebuked by God through Oseas and other prophets, who foretold to him the disasters that would come to pass during his reign if he did not rectify his perverse conduct, he paid no heed to the divine reprimands and warnings; plunging to such depths of impiety that he erected a statue of himself in his own honour in the Temple of Jerusalem to be adored as god. Jechonias, like his father and uncle, persecuted the adorers of the true God and martyred many prophets and priests of the Lord.

2. In the year 4615, God punished the idolatry and corruption of His People anew by permitting Nabuchodonozor II again to invade the kingdom of Israel. The king of Babylonia, after conquering many other towns and effecting great slaughter among the population, took captive another three thousand five hundred persons from among the whole Israelite People, of all ages, male and female, and deported them to Babylonia. God, in the hope that Jechonias and his people would be converted by this punishment, did not permit the kingdom of Israel to disappear at that time

either, so that he impelled Nabuchodonozor II to abandon the unconquered part of the territory. Nonetheless the king of Babylonia made King Jechonias his tributary, with the obligation of paying him a heavy annual tribute.

3. Jechonias continued to reign for another three years in the increasingly diminished kingdom of Israel. Jechonias' perverse wife Rachel, a month before the king's death, conceived their son Salathiel, from whom the line of succession to Christ continued.

4. In the year 4618 King Jechonias was struck down by God with a terrible intestinal illness, his insides bursting asunder; accordingly, he died in Jerusalem in that same year in the most despairing humiliation and abject impiety, after having reigned ten years. The numerous shreds of his burst body were swept away as is dung, and forthwith burnt. At Jechonias' death he was legally succeeded on the throne of Israel by his uncle Sedecias, brother of Joachim and Joachaz, all three sons of King Josias.

Chapter XVI

Sedecias, eighth and last king of Judah and Samaria united or reunified kingdom of Israel.

The Prophets Jeremias, Ezechiel and Oseas, among others, foretell the immediate destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple

1. In the year 4618, so that it might be seen that God, as chastisement to His people for their continuous infidelities, continued to permit them to be governed by kings as they had requested, independent of whether the new king was to act in a holy or in a perverse way, Sedecias, second son of Josias and Hebronia, began to reign, and was anointed king in Jerusalem by the Prophet Jeremias, after he had sworn the ritual oath to defend the worship of the Lord God of Hosts and to persecute idolatrous worship.

2. King Sedecias surpassed the wickedness of his three predecessors on the throne of Israel for his idolatry, cruelty and excesses of all kinds. Since idolatry was already widespread in the Temple of God, in the city of Jerusalem and throughout the kingdom of Israel, the impious Sedecias, no longer knowing how to satisfy his idolatrous delirium, caused the walls of the inside and outside of the Temple of Jerusalem to be painted with the numerous idols that had been adored by members of the People of Israel during those many years in which they were given up to idolatry. The Prophet Jeremias, sent by God, and with the authority vested in him, vigorously reproached the abominations of King Sedecias and of his people; and threatened that if they did not amend, God would again cause His just wrath to fall upon Israel, this time with greater devastation, and would even permit the destruction of the city of Jerusalem and its sacred Temple. Long before, Jeremias had foretold the total destruction of Jerusalem and the arduous captivity the Israelites would undergo in Babylonia for the space of seventy years; but despite the prophet's announcements, his people remained obstinate in their abominations.

3. While Jeremias clamoured in Jerusalem, with great patience suffering contempt, insults and persecution from his own people, in their turn the Prophets Ezechiel, Oseas and others also vigorously prophesied the now imminent desolation of the kingdom of Israel and the disastrous end of the impious Sedecias. Ezechiel himself clamoured thus: *"Woe to the kingdom of Israel because of her iniquitous abominations! For she is to perish by the sword and by hunger and by plague. The end is coming, the end is now coming from all sides of the country. The king who will be in Jerusalem during the city's siege will be led captive to Babylonia, which he will not see because they will put out his eyes, and there he will die. And many of the People of Israel will become captives and be scattered about the different territories of the Babylonian Empire."*

Chapter XVII

The Triple Benediction, the Ark of the Covenant and the Sacred Fire are taken from the Temple of God prior to the siege of Jerusalem

Prior to the siege of Jerusalem by Nabuchodonozor III:

1. Most Holy Prophet Malachias, Who is the Holy Spirit, took the Triple Benediction out of the Ark of the Covenant and bore It to the Cave of Elias on Mount Carmel, where it remained under the custody of the Essenes. There It stayed until the Temple of Jerusalem was rebuilt one hundred and eighteen years after its destruction, being newly transported to the Temple by the Holy Prophet Aggeus.

2. The Prophet Jeremias, at God's command, and helped by the angelic hosts, faithful priests and Essenian religiosos, secretly took the Ark of the Covenant from the Temple of Jerusalem and hid it on Mount Nebo in the same cave from whence Moses had been translated to the Planet of Mary. The Sacred Ark will not reappear until the conversion of the Jewish People at the end of time.

3. Priests fearful of the Lord took the Sacred Fire which was on the altar of the Temple of Jerusalem and hid it in a deep dry well to be found in a valley. After the Babylonian captivity it was found there by Nehemias, no longer in the form of fire but of fatty liquid, and was taken out at his command and again placed in the Temple they were rebuilding, miraculously assuming the form of fire again.

Chapter XVIII

Nabuchodonozor III besieges the city of Jerusalem. Third and final deportation of Israelites to Babylonia.

King Sedecias is led captive to Babylon. Destruction of Jerusalem and of the Temple of God.

The Prophet Jeremias laments before the ruins of Jerusalem and of its Temple

1. In the year 4627, ninth of his reign, Sedecias rebelled against Nabuchodonozor III intending to shake off the heavy tributary yoke imposed on Israel. By divine permission, the king of Babylonia, to avenge King Sedecias' rebellion, placed himself at the head of his army and invaded the territory of Israel; along the way he razed towns to the ground and slaughtered many of their inhabitants, until falling impetuously upon Jerusalem, and besieged it. Sedecias, his army and the numerous citizens of Jerusalem, not for the glory of God but merely out of material interests, after closing

the gates and strengthening the walls, held out within the city for almost two years, until finally, overcome by hunger, thirst and plague, they were compelled to yield before the fierce attacks of the powerful besieging forces, who succeeded in entering the city. The Babylonian soldiers captured King Sedecias and all his children and led them out before King Nabuchodonozor III, who gave orders for the children to be killed in the presence of their father, whose eyes they then put out.

2. Nabuchodonozor III, helped by Nabuzardan, general of his troops, after capturing Jerusalem in the year 4629, had compassion neither on men nor women nor children, nor even on the sick who had taken refuge within the walls during the siege, since he slaughtered the great majority of the inhabitants. Then, entering the Temple of God, he seized all the vessels and other sacred utensils, together with other immense treasures, and did likewise with the riches in the palaces of the king and of the other court magnates, all of which he was to take with him to Babylonia. That same year 4629, the Babylonian armies flattened the walls of Jerusalem, burnt all the houses, and finally set fire to the Temple of God. The edifice was reduced to rubble, as was the city.

3. Sedecias, after a reign of eleven years, blind and bound with chains, was led to the Babylonian captivity, and with him many of the Israelites who had survived the siege of Jerusalem, as well as others from all the cities, towns and villages of the kingdom of Israel, and therefore from all the tribes. Among those deported to Babylonia were: the Prophets Ezechiel, forty-nine years of age; Daniel, twelve years of age; High Priest Saraías; the perverse Queen Rachel, wife of King Jechonias; and their son Salathiel, ten years of age. Some, so as not to be deported, fled to other countries, and others took refuge on Mount Carmel, God's very privileged spot. Many others remained in the territory of Israel. In the year 4629, therefore, the massive third and definitive deportation of the children of the People of God to Babylonia was effected.

4. Sedecias had imprisoned Jeremias in Jerusalem prior to the destruction of the city. When they endeavoured to lead the Prophet captive in chains to Babylonia, General Nabuzardan set him free by order of Nabuchodonozor III, who, moreover, commanded that he be not harmed in any way. Jeremias, before the ruins of Jerusalem, lamented that because of the sins of his people the Temple of God and the city had been destroyed. Among other lamentations, he said: *"What has become of Jerusalem, the once populous city! The mistress of the nations is like a destitute widow. She who was sovereign is now servant. Inconsolable, she weeps the night long. Tears run down her cheeks. There is no one to console her. The roads to Jerusalem are in mourning, for there is no one to come to the solemnities in the Temple of God, since the Temple has been destroyed."* The Prophet Jeremias was at the time Superior General of the Essenes.

Chapter XIX

Nabuchodonozor III names Godolias, of the tribe of Ephraim, Viceroy of the territory of Israel. The Viceroy's Godiel and Goniel

1. Many Israelites who had not been led into captivity remained living in Israel's territory. Among them were all the prophets and religiosos who were living on Mount Carmel, the Prophet Jeremias and the Prophet Baruch who were living in Jerusalem, princes of the people, some levite priests, and others.

2. To govern those who had remained in Israelite territory, Nabuchodonozor III, king of Babylonia, named Godolias the son of Ahichan as viceroy. The total number of Israelites or Jews in the territory of Israel under the authority of Viceroy Godolias was ninety-one thousand, from the thirteen tribes of Israel, of all ages, male and female, and of different social classes, of whom more than three thousand belonged to the Order of the Essenes: some as religiosos and others as terciarios.

3. Godolias, from the tribe of Ephraim, established the seat of his government in the town of Mapha, also called Nobe, to the north of Jerusalem. There many went to acknowledge him as the new authority. Godolias assured them all with an oath, saying: *"Fear not to be subject to the Babylonians. Stay in the country and obey the king of Babylonia. No harm will befall you."* As this order of Godolias was in conformity with the designs of God, the Prophet Jeremias commanded the inhabitants of Israel to submit to the authority of the viceroy.

4. On the 8th of December in the year 4629, while the Prophet Jeremias was in Jerusalem weeping inconsolably, beholding the ruins of the Temple of God and of the city, Most Holy Ananias appeared to him and said: *"Go to the town of Mapha and seek out the Levitical chief priest Azariel, and anoint him with oil upon his head, in order that he be Vicar of the High Priest in captivity. You will carry out this anointing in the presence of the Levitical priests who remain in the territory of Israel, the levite ministers and My faithful people. Next you will all go to Mount Carmel, from where you will take the replica kept there of the Ark of the Covenant, and as well the portable Tabernacle, and you will take both to the town of Mapha. The replica of the Ark of the Covenant will be borne on the shoulders of Levitical priests, and the portable Tabernacle by levite ministers. Members of My beloved Religious Order shepherded by you, are to accompany you from Mount Carmel. The portable Tabernacle is to be installed in the town of Mapha. The Ark of the Covenant is to be enthroned in the Tabernacle, so that on the 25th of this month of December all the worship in accordance with My Law may begin. In this town of Mapha all the sacrifices will be performed, including those of morning and evening, as well as the Passover and all the other worship, until the end of the final day of the Passover of the year 4633; day on which the exterior Sacred Fire will be automatically extinguished. After this, everything is to be dismantled and solemnly borne to Mount Carmel, where it will be stored until the month of December of the year 4636; in which month it will again be installed with the same solemnity in the town of Mapha, so that worship may begin on the 25th of that month; and this shall be done for consecutive periods of seven years until My people return from the Babylonian captivity."*

5. The Prophet Jeremias, faithfully complying with God's order, from Mount Carmel took the replica of the Ark of the Covenant and the portable Tabernacle. When the Tabernacle had been installed in Mapha, he enthroned the Sacred Ark inside. On the 25th of December of that year 4629 the first worship began, corresponding to the first period of