

## From *Tracking Kings* by Roger L. Luther Th.D.

With Jehoshaphat, we encounter one of the oddities of Scripture. Even though Scripture mentions him in I Kings, the book only refers to Jehoshaphat when his affairs interact and affects the business of the northern kingdom - Israel. Thus, the bulk of Jehoshaphat's history is in II Chronicles.

(IKi. 15:24) And Asa slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father: and Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his stead.

(I Ki. 22:41-46) And Jehoshaphat the son of Asa began to reign over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel. 42 Jehoshaphat *[was]* thirty and five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty and five years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name *[was]* Azubah the daughter of Shilhi. 43 And he walked in all the ways of Asa his father; he turned not aside from it, doing *[that which was]* right in the eyes of the LORD: nevertheless the high places were not taken away; *[for]* the people offered and burnt incense yet in the high places. 44 And Jehoshaphat made peace with the king of Israel. 45 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, and his might that he shewed, and how he warred, *[are]* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? 46 And the remnant of the sodomites, which remained in the days of his father Asa, he took out of the land.

(1 Ch 3:10) "And Solomon's son *[was]* Rehoboam, Abia his son, Asa his son, Jehoshaphat his son,"

(2 Ch 17:1-19) "And Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his stead, and strengthened himself against Israel." 2 And he placed forces in all the fenced cities of Judah, and set garrisons in the land of Judah, and in the cities of Ephraim, which Asa his father had taken. 3 And the LORD was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not unto Baalim; 4 But sought to the *[LORD]* God of his father, and walked in his commandments, and not after the doings of Israel. 5 Therefore the LORD established the kingdom in his hand; and all Judah brought to Jehoshaphat presents; and he had riches and honour in abundance. 6 And his heart was lifted up in the ways of the LORD: moreover he took away the high places and groves out of Judah. 7 Also in the third year of his reign he sent to his princes, *[even]* to Benhail, and to Obadiah, and to Zechariah, and to Nethaneel, and to Michaiah, to teach in the cities of Judah. 8 And with them *[he sent]* Levites, *[even]* Shemaiah, and Nethaniah, and Zebadiah, and Asahel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehonathan, and Adonijah, and Tobijah, and Tobadonijah, Levites; and with them Elishama and Jehoram, priests. 9 And they taught in Judah, and *[had]* the book of the law of the LORD with them, and went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught the people. 10 And the fear of the LORD fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that *[were]* round about Judah, so that they made no war against Jehoshaphat. 11 Also *[some]* of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat presents, and tribute silver; and the Arabians brought him flocks, seven thousand and seven hundred rams, and seven thousand and seven hundred he goats. 12 And Jehoshaphat waxed great exceedingly; and he built in Judah castles, and cities of store. 13 And he had much business in the cities of Judah: and the men of war, mighty men of valour, *[were]* in Jerusalem. 14 And these *[are]* the numbers of them according to the house of their fathers: Of Judah, the captains of thousands; Adnah the chief, and with him mighty men of valour three hundred thousand. 15 And next to him *[was]* Jehohanan the captain, and with him two hundred and fourscore thousand. 16 And next him *[was]* Amasiah the son of Zichri, who willingly offered himself unto the LORD; and with him two hundred thousand mighty men of valour. 17 And of Benjamin; Eliada a mighty man of valour, and with him armed men with bow and shield two hundred thousand. 18 And next him *[was]* Jehozabad, and with him an hundred and fourscore thousand ready prepared for the war. 19 These waited on the king, beside *[those]* whom the king put in the fenced cities throughout all Judah.

In BC 914, Judah crowned the thirty-five year old Jehoshaphat as their new king. He was the son of Azubah (*forsaken*) the daughter of Shihi (*armed*). Early on, we learn that Jehoshaphat had an advantage over others. Several factors attributed to this. First, by the time of his thirty-fifth year, he already possessed an element of maturity unlike other kings, both northern and southern.

Secondly, growing up, he had disciplined himself to learn the spiritual and military characteristics of his father Asa. Jehoshaphat's early feats proved to be a reflection of Asa's exemplary royal qualities. Lastly, but greatest of all, Scripture continues to reveal Jehoshaphat's life long relationship with God.

One of Jehoshaphat's first priorities was the re-fortifying of the northern bordering cities his father had captured. His memory of an earlier northern invasion upon his father by King Baasha and the succumbing to temptation of forming an alliance with Benhadad of Syria for protection, along with the terrible ramifications, placed this job at the top of his list. In addition, Jehoshaphat continued building castles around Judah.

When news of Jehoshaphat's wealth and might reached Ahab, it is no surprise that Israel's evil and debauched king desired a visit. Perhaps stories of the once unified nation under David and Solomon were deeply stirring in Jehoshaphat's heart because in the early part of his reign, Jehoshaphat, believing politics to be in his favor, initiated, and formed an alliance with King Ahab of Israel.

**“And Jehoshaphat made peace with the king of Israel (IKi.22:44)”**

If that were not enough, Joram (Jehoshaphat's son), sealed the fate of his nation for many years to come when he married Ahab's daughter Athaliah. No one could have imagined the complexity of future horrors this union would generate!

The longer Jehoshaphat reigned the stronger and more effective he became. All who will invest the time and effort to study his commitment to God and His Word can easily see the reason for his rapid popularity and power.

**“And the LORD was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not unto Baalim; 4 But sought to the [LORD] God of his father, and walked in his commandments, and not after the doings of Israel” (II Chr. 17:3-4).**

Again, Jehoshaphat's compass for living was in whom he sought and how he walked.

In Jehoshaphat's third year, BC 917, he started a spiritual reform that involved his entire nation. Once again, Jehoshaphat led the way by holding God's Word as his personal standard. His heart and life continued to soar in the ways of the Lord. Jehoshaphat began this reform by removing the remnant of the sodomites and the remaining places of Baal worship. Secondly, the following verses provide even more insight:

**“...nevertheless the high places were not taken away; [for] the people offered and burnt incense yet in the high places (IKi.22:43b) “...moreover he took away the high places and groves out of Judah (2Ch.17:6b).**

As time progressed, Jehoshaphat not only made short work of all forms of paganism but he did away with the out-post-type of places where God's people would often gather and attempt to commune with God in their own ways. This action in itself directed people back to the priority and place of the temple worship. In spite of all of Jehoshaphat's efforts, the high places would eventually reappear sometime prior to his death as recorded in II Chronicles 20:31.

Jehoshaphat's next move would undoubtedly prove be God's primary tool in bringing His people back to Himself! He organized a missionary journey consisting of three categories of people. The first selected group consisted of his princes – Benhail (*son of might*), Obadiah (*serving Jehovah*), Zechariah (*Jehovah has remembered*), Nethaneel (*given of God*), and Michaiah (*who is like Jehovah*). Secondly, these men were joined by nine Levites – Shemaiah (*Jehovah has heard*), Nethaniah (*given of Jehovah*), Zebadiah (*Jehovah has given*), Asahel (*God has made*), Shemiramoth (*name of heights*), Jehonathan (*Jehovah-given*), Adonijah (*worshipper of Jehovah*), Tobijah (*goodness of Jehovah*), and Tobadonijah (*pleasing to the Lord*). Thirdly, Jehoshaphat included two priests - Elishama (*God of hearing*) and Jehoram (*Jehovah raised*). The priest's primary responsibility was that of traveling through Judah teaching the Word of God.

**“And they taught in Judah, and [had] the book of the law of the LORD with them, and went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught the people.” (2Ch.17:9)**

Not only did Jehoshaphat's priests represent the king's complete authority but also even more importantly, they carried along a copy of God's Word, thus, representing the authority of the Most High God. The results were astonishing! God began blessing even if it meant using the surrounding kingdoms. Judah's neighboring pagans were excited because they experienced peace rather than war from Judah! The dreaded aggressive Philistines even brought Jehoshaphat silver and presents while the Arabians presented him with seven-thousand and seven-hundred rams and seven-thousand and seven-hundred he goats.

This era proved one of the greatest times in Old Testament History! While Jehoshaphat's subjects were experiencing spiritual unification, his army was assembling, organizing, and strategizing in ways his father could have only dreamed! Jehoshaphat's military forces were divided into five divisions – three from Judah and two from Benjamin. First, within Judah, we note three hundred thousand under the authority of Adnah (*pleasure*). Second to Adnah, there were two-hundred and eighty-thousand men of valor under the command of Jehohanan (*Jehovah favored*). Suddenly, Amasiah (*Jehovah has loaded*) the son of Zichri (*memorable*) willingly offered himself to the lord and pledged the services of an additional two-hundred thousand fighting men. From Benjamin, Eliada (*God is knowing*) was in charge of two-hundred thousand men armed with the bows and shields. Second to Eliada stood Jehozabad (*Jehovah endowed*) with one-hundred and eighty-thousand men **“ready prepared for war.”** This vast army of one-million one-hundred and sixty-thousand men excluded those already stationed within the fenced cities.

It is at this time that Jehoshaphat traveled northward to visit King Ahab of Israel. Thus, it is needful to rejoin the narrative of King Ahab and later return to our beloved friend Jehoshaphat.

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