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Asa's Spiritual Compromise
First Kings 15:16-24 and Second Chronicles 15:16 to 16:14

Asa's spiritual compromise DIG: What was Asa's response to Hanani's bad news? How was Asa's response here different from his response to Azariah (Second Chronicles 15:8)? How did Asa's angry response to Hanani keep him from seeking help from God in another difficulty? What was it?

REFLECT: Has your obedience to God ever alienated family or others around you? When was the last time you responded to criticism in anger? Why does God want you to rely on Him? What characterizes those who finish well in their lives? Is Torah your blueprint for living?

Asa forgot to rely on ADONAI.

Asa's other reforms: The Chronicler concluded **his** record of **Asa's** reforms by returning to familiar material covered in **First Kings 15:13-15**. Several items come into the picture at this point. First, **Asa Asa even deposed Ma'acah his grandmother from her position as queen mother,** who had much influence over the affairs of state, **because she had made a disgusting image for an Asherah pole. Asa cut down this image of hers, chopped it into tiny pieces and burned it in the Kidron Valley (Second Chronicles 15:16).** Apparently, **she** was not fully committed to **Asa's** reforms. **He** not only destroyed **her idol**, but **deposed her** as well. Even **the king's** own family wasn't exempt from **his** reform movements.

Second, **the Chronicler** repeated from **First Kings 15:14** that **although Asa did not remove the high places from** the smaller cities and countryside**.** Despite this failure on **Asa's** part, **the Chronicler included from First Kings** that **Asa's heart was fully committed to ADONAI throughout** most of **his life (2 Chron 15:17).**

Third, the Bible describes how **the king** led the way for **his** people in public

dedication to **God. He brought into the Temple of God the silver and gold and the articles that and his father had dedicated (Second Chronicles 15:18).** This exemplary action recalls the similar actions of **David (First Chronicles 29:3)** and **Solomon (2 Chron 5:1)**. Once again, this part of **Asa's reign** was subtly compared to those ideal monarchs.

Fourth, **the Chronicler** added a final note to this portion of **his** record. **He** had already mentioned **the nation's rest on every side (2 Chronicles 15:15),** but at this point **he** emphasized that **there was no more war until the thirty-fifth year of Asa's reign (2 Chron 15:19).** The allusion to **the** ideal **reign** of **Solomon** is evident **(2 Chron 9:30)**. With these closing remarks **the Chronicler** presented the depth of **Asa's** reforms and the long lasting blessing of peace **he** received. For the post-exilic readers these features of **the king's reign** were desirable.[372]

Asa's spiritual compromise: Although the Bible commends **King Asa** for **his** many reforms, we should not imagine that **he** was the perfect **king**. The Bible frankly admits several of **his** failings, and when we see them, they may remind us of some of our own spiritual struggles. The first **thirty-five years** of **Asa's reign** involved loyalty, victory, prophetic approval and obedience; however, the last **six years** were characterized by disloyalty, defeat, prophetic rebuke and spiritual compromise.

> **The high places: But the high places were not removed from** the smaller cities and countryside**. Nevertheless, Asa was wholehearted with ADONAI throughout** most of **his life** and led the way for **his** people in public dedication to **God. He** collected **gold and silver** for the maintenance of **the Temple**. **He brought into the house of ADONAI all the articles his father had dedicated, also the things he himself had consecrated – silver, gold and utensils that he and his father had dedicated (First Kings 15:14-15).**
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> **Asa's battle with Ba'sha: The king** also failed to honor **God** fully in **his** political relationships. To contrast **Asa's** remarkable victory over **Zerah** (**to see link click Dk – Asa's Reforms: Asa's victory over Zerah**), **the Chronicler** recorded one of **Asa's** battles with **Ba'sha, king of northern Isra'el.** This battle was not a total defeat for **Asa**. In fact, in purely political terms it was only a slight setback. Yet, from **the Chronicler's** point of view it represented a serious violation of **Asa's** loyalty to **ADONAI** and it brought

judgment against **the king**.

Asa's religious fervor did not exempt **him** from military threats. **In the thirty-sixth year of Asa's reign, Ba'sha king of Isra'el attacked Judah.** After the death's of **Jeroboam** and **his son Nadab** (see **Do – Nadab King of Isra'el**), a new dynasty began with **Ba'sha** (see **Dp – Ba'sha King of Isra'el**). **Ba'sha's** accession year was the third year of **Asa's reign**. **Ba'sha** apparently was initially occupied with securing the throne and other internal affairs. But with a victorious and strengthened **Judah**, whose renewed vitality had succeeded in drawing away many of **his** citizens, **Ba'sha** could no longer remain inactive.

Moving swiftly, **Ba'sha attacked** and **seized Ramah**, the most northern city of the kingdom of **Judah**. What divided the two nations was a natural valley, and when **Ba'sha** crossed the border and began building siege works around **Ramah**, **he** violated this natural border between **Isra'el** and **Judah**.[373] Furthermore, **Ramah** set on the crossroads between two main trade routes that had access to the sea and were important for **Judah**. This cut **Judah** off from **her** two main supply routes. **And he fortified Ramah to prevent anyone's leaving or entering the territory of Asa king of Judah (First Kings 15:16-17; Second Chronicles 16:1). Judah** simply had to respond to this threat.[374]

Contrary to **his** appeal for divine help in **his** battle with **Zerah**, **Asa** turned to human power to remove the threat of **Ba'sha's** fortification. The Bible clearly indicates that **his** actions were offensive to **YHVH**. Not only did **the king** send **treasure**s from **the royal palace,** but **he** also **took all the silver and gold left among the treasures of the house of ADONAI.** Earlier, **the Chronicler** praised **Asa** because **he** brought **silver and gold into the**

Temple (Second Chronicles 15:18). But here, **Asa** did the exact opposite. **He** took from **Ha'Shem** in order to establish an alliance with a pagan foreign power. **The Chronicler** emphasizes this contrast by repeating a reference to **silver and gold** in **Asa's** speech to **Ben-Hadad (Second Chronicles 16:3).** As we will see, this pursuit of an unequally yoked alliance led to **God** sending **a prophet** to announce **His** judgment against **Asa**.

And, entrusting them to his servants, King Asa sent them to Ben-Hadad, king of Syria, who lived in Damascus, with this message: "There is a covenant between me and you, which existed already between my father and your father. Ben-Hadad and **Asa** functioned as equals, but **Asa** had to buy **Ben-Hadad's** loyalty because **the** pagan **king** would have to break **his** treaty with **northern Isra'el**. **Here, I am sending you a present of silver and gold; go, and break your covenant with Ba'sha king of Isra'el, so that he will leave me alone" (First Kings 15:18-19; Second Chronicles 16:2-3). Isra'el's** covenant with **Syria** was the reason that **Ba'sha** felt confident that **he** could attack **Judah**. **He** assumed **he** would not be attacked from **the North**.

Although **the Chronicler** said nothing explicit at this point about the religious aspects of **Asa's** plan, **he** later exposed this treaty as rebellion against **God**. Treaties and cooperation with foreign powers were not entirely forbidden to **Isra'el** (see the commentary on **Deuteronomy Dp – Regulations for a Holy War: Distant cities outside the Land**). Yet, when these treaties were established in lieu of dependence on **ADONAI** for military security, they were strongly condemned. **The Chronicler** condemned another such alliance in the days of **Ahaz (Second Chronicles 28:16-21).** Such events were important to **him** because **his** post-exilic readers were tempted to find their security in similar ways, rather than relying on **Ha'Shem** for their protection.

Beyond this, it is important to note that in this situation **Asa** not only allied **himself** with a pagan foreign power, but **he** did so against **northern Isra'el**. This fact may have also inspired **the Chronicler's** condemnation. Although **the northern tribes** were in apostasy **(Second Chronicles 13:4-12)** and aggressive toward **Judah**, conspiring with foreign nations against fellow **Jews** was outrageous. **The northern tribes** troubled the early post-exilic community (see the commentary on **Ezra-Nehemiah At – Opposition during the Reign of Cyrus**), but here **the Chronicler** instructed **his** readers not to make war against them through **Hanani the seer**, especially by means

of an alliance with foreign powers.[375]

Ben-Hadad did as King Asa asked – he sent the commanders of his armies against the cities of northern **Isra'el, attacking Iyon, Dan, Abel-Mayim, the Sea of Galilee and all the storage cities of Naftali. As soon as Ba'sha heard of it, he stopped building Ramah and abandoned his work, staying in Tirzah, the Israelite** capitol**. King Asa then issued a proclamation requiring every man in Judah, with no exception, to come and carry off the stones and timber Ba'sha had used to fortify Ramah,** which was only four miles north of **Jerusalem** on the main route to the coastal plain. **With them Asa fortified Geba of Benjamin and Mizpah (First Kings 15:20-22; Second Corinthians 16:4-6). The Chronicler** reported these events to convey the apparent success of **Asa's** strategy.

To the unsuspecting reader, the whole series of events looked like a great victory for **Asa**. **His** plan worked out splendidly. Only subtle hints of religious failure appear up to this point. However, **the Chronicler** was ready to spring a surprise on **his** readers. Although the event seemed to honor **Asa** for **his** diplomatic and military skills, it will soon be seen for what it really was, an act of rebellion against **God**.

Prophecy and response: The Chronicler immediately offered an explicit judgment of what **the king** had done. Instead of congratulating **the king** for **his** clever diplomacy, the prophet accused **him** of **sin**. **It was around then that Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah and said to him, "Because you relied on the king of Aram and didn't rely on ADONAI your God, the king of Aram's army has escaped from your power.** To highlight the folly of **Asa's** actions, **the prophet** continued to contrast this situation with the previous war with **Zerah. The army of the Ethiopians and Libyans was huge, wasn't it? How many chariots and horsemen did they have? Yet you** defeated them **because you relied on ADONAI. He handed them over to you.** To support **his** claim, **the prophet** appealed to a doctrinal belief. **For the eyes of ADONAI move here and there throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those who are wholehearted toward Him. You acted foolishly in this regard; for from now on, you will have war" (Second Chronicles 16:7-9).** In sharp contrast with the blessing of peace during the first **thirty-five years** of **Asa's reign,** the last six **years** of **his reign** would be plagued by **war**. The message to **the Chronicler's** post-exilic audience was perfectly

clear. Since they longed to avoid **war** with their neighbors, only reliance on **ADONAI** could bring them peace.

But Asa became angry at the seer. Instead of repenting for the disobedience exposed by the prophet, **the king** was outraged at the accusation. Therefore, **because of his rage at him over this matter he threw him in prison,** much like **King Zedekiah imprisoned Jeremiah** at a later time **(Jeremiah 32:3)**. When **prophets** rebuked someone and predicted negative consequences, **they** often suffered severe punishment. Once again, **the Chronicler's** keen concern with the prophetic office is evident. **Asa** not only imprisoned **the prophet**, but **he** also **brutally oppressed some of his** own **people** who apparently sympathized with **the prophet Hanani (Second Chronicles 16:10).** This subsequent oppression of **God's people** underscored how much **the king's heart** had turned away from **wholeheartedly** seeking **ADONAI** and following **His** ways.

The summary of his reign: **The other activities of Asa from beginning to end, all his power, all his accomplishments and the cities he fortified are recorded in the Annals of the Kings of Judah (First Kings 15:23a; Second Chronicles 16:11).** Like **his** great-grandfather, **Solomon**, **Asa** started out well, but ended up being characterized by faithlessness, failure, and spiritual compromise. However, when **the Chronicler** summarized **his** entire **forty-one year reign**, **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh** inspired **the author** to write that **Asa did what was good and right from the perspective of ADONAI his God, as David his ancestor had done (First Kings 15:11 and Second Chronicles 14:2). David,** although guilty of adultery and murder, was viewed in a positive light for the totality of **his reign**; and thus, **Asa**, despite the faithlessness of the last six **years** of **his forty-one year reign**, is also viewd positively.[376]

The death of the king: **Asa's death** marked the end of **Judah's** first great reforming **king**. **He** built cities, fought battles, and enjoyed other achievements, but **his** spiritual achievements mattered most to the author of **First** and **Second Kings**. **In the thirty-ninth year of his reign, Asa suffered from a disease in his legs.** The Bible gives no cluses as to the precise nature of **the disease**, but it is evident that **the Chronicler** considered **it** a curse. **It was a very serious disease, yet even with this disease he did not seek out ADONAI but turned to the physicians. His** sin here was similar to **his** sin in the conflict with **Ba'sha, he** relied on human power rather than divine help. As a result, **Asa** found no relief from **his disease**.

The book of **Kings** ends **its** account of **Asa's kingship** with this: **Asa slept with his ancestors, dying in the forty-first year of his reign. The Chronicler** recorded **his death** in a way that brought honor to **the king**. **They buried him in his own burial cave, which he had ordered cut for himself in the City of David. They laid him in a bed filled with sweet spices of various kinds, expertly compounded; and a very great fire was kindled in his honor and then Jehoshaphat his son became king in his place (1 Kings 15:23b-24; 2 Chron 16:12-14).** After **the king's death**, we are left to evaluate **his** life. Usually we see things in black and white, but his is hard to do with **Asa**. **The king** had a long and prosperous reign during which – against all expectation – **he** brought reformation to **Judah's** worship. **He** made a costly commitment to **ADONAI**, sacrificing **his** own peace and prosperity to advance the kingdom. Yet, **Asa** was also guilty of tragic spiritual compromise. Was **Asa** a hero or a villain, a saint of a sinner? It is impossible to put **him** in only one category. **He** wanted to follow **God**, and sometimes **he** did, but **he** also made spiritual compromises that went against everything **His** heavenly Kingdom stood for. In other words, **Asa** was a lot like us; called to be a saint, but still struggling as a sinner.[377]

We don't serve a fallen, dead **king**; we serve a risen, living **King**. The writer to the **Hebrews** tells us that **the Son is the radiance of God's sh'khinah glory and the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things by His powerful Word. After He had provided purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven (Hebrews 1:3).** Someone has said that **Yeshua Messiah** came from the bosom of **the Father** to the bosom of a woman. **He** put on humanity that we might put on divinity. **He** became **the Son of Man** that we might become the children of **God**. **He** was born contrary to the laws of nature, lived in poverty, was reared in obscurity, and only once crossed the boundary of the land in which **He** was born – and that in **His** childhood. **He** had no wealth or influence and had neither training nor education in the world's schools. **His** relatives were inconspicuous and uninfluential. In infancy **He** startled a king. In boyhood **He** puzzled the learned rabbis. In manhood **He** ruled the course of nature. **He** healed the multitudes without medicine and made no charge for **His** services. **He** never wrote a book and yet all the libraries of the world could not hold the books written about **Him**. **He** never wrote a song, yet **He** has furnished the theme for more songs than all the songwriters together. **He** never founded a college, yet all the schools together cannot boast of as many students as **He** has. **He** never practiced medicine and yet **He** has healed more people than all the hospitals in the world. This **Yeshua Messiah** is **the Star** of astronomy, **the Rock** of geology, **the**

lion and the lamb of zoology, **the Harmonizer** of all discords, and **the Healer** of all diseases. Throughout history great men have come and gone, yet **He** lives on. Herod could not kill **Him**. The devil could not tempt **Him**. Death could not destroy **Him** and the grave could not hold **Him**.[378]