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Jehoshaphat King of Judah
First Kings 22:41-50 and Second Chronicles 17:1-19

Jehoshaphat king of Judah DIG: What made King Jehoshaphat spiritually successful? What unusual social and spiritual enrichment ministry did Jehoshaphat start? What was the curriculum of the traveling school? What impact would it have for the worship of ADONAI?

REFLECT: Jehoshaphat had wealth, respect, peace and prosperity. Is it true that true today that people who are close to God are successful and prosperous, while people who worship false gods are unsuccessful and poor? How does the Chronicler's lesson apply to your world?

Jehoshaphat was a man who sought God's counsel.



The background of the king: Jehoshaphat, who had ruled three **years** as coregent with **his father, Asa, began his** independent **reign over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab, king of Isra'el. Jehoshaphat was thirty-five years old when he began to rule, and he ruled** a total of **twenty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was 'Azubah the daughter of Shilchi (First Kings 22:41-42: Second Chronicles 17:1a).**

The significance of his reign: Jehoshaphat strengthened his borders

against Isra'el by placing forces in all the fortified cities of Judah, and by garrisoning troops in the territory of Judah and in the cities of Ephraim that Asa his father had captured (Second Chronicles 17:1b-2). In **the Chronicler's** vocabulary, for **a king** to **strengthen himself** meant that **he consolidated** power so that **his** opponents offered no genuine threat. In this case, **the Chronicler** specified that **Jehoshaphat** was secure **against Isra'el**. Conflict between **Judah** and **the northern kingdom of Isra'el** originated with **Rehoboam** (**to see link click Di – Rehoboam King of Judah**) and extended through **the reigns** of **Abijah** (see **Dj – Abijah King of Judah**) and **Asa** (see **Dl – Asa's Last Years**). **Jehoshaphat**, however, **strengthened his borders** against **northern** aggression. By describing **Jehoshaphat's** security with regard to **Isra'el**, **the Chronicler** immediately prepared **his** readers to understand the following narrative of **Jehoshaphat's** alliance with **Isra'el** against **Syria (2 Chron 18:1** to **19:3)**. **The Chronicler** made it clear that **the king** had nothing to fear from **his northern kinsmen**, but **he** nevertheless entered an alliance in which **he** helped **northern Isra'el** against a common foe.

The Chronicler explained the king's success by reporting **his** domestic blessings. **YHVH was with Jehoshaphat.** The concept of **ADONAI "being with" a king** usually meant that **God** was acting as **his** military leader (see the commentary on **Deuteronomy Ag – The Problem of Holy War in the TaNaKh**). **Jehoshaphat's** successful positioning of **his** troops against **the North** was evidence that **the LORD** was on the side of **Judah. God** was **with him because he lived according to the first ways of his ancestor David.** The Bible lists a number of specific actions that made **Jehoshaphat** comparable to **David**.

First, **he sought the** counsel of **the God of his father** rather than **the Ba'als and lived by his mitzvot, not by what Isra'el did (Second Chronicles 17:3-4). The Chronicler** noted a number of times that **David sought God's** counsel **(First Chronicles 16:11, 22:19,** and **28:8-9)**. **"Seeking God"** for direction and help was one of **the Chronicler's** highest ideals. The rejection of **the Ba'als** contrasts **Jehoshaphat** with syncretism taking place in **the North** under the influence of **Jezebel (First Kings 16:31-33, 18:4).**

Second, **the king's heart was devoted to ADONAI (Second Chronicles 17:6a). Wholehearted devotion** to **the LORD** frequently appears in **Chronicles** as a sincere service that is blessed by **God**. In this way as well, **Jehoshaphat** was like **David**, whose **heart** is highlighted a number of times **(First Chronicles 22:7** and **9, 28:2** and **9, 29:17-19)**.

Third, at the beginning of **his reign Jehoshaphat removed the high places and sacred poles from Judah (Second Chronicles 17:6b).** Just as **David** had been **devoted** to centralizing worship in **Jerusalem**, **Jehoshaphat** destroyed **the high places**. The destruction of pagan worship sites and objects occurs frequently in **Chronicles** as a sign of **devotion to God (Second Chronicles 14:3-5, 17:6, 29:16, 31:1, 33:15,** and **34:3-7).**

Therefore, as a result of **the king's** zeal, **ADONAI consolidated his kingdom. Judah** was strengthened because **of Jehoshaphat's** faithfulness to **God**. **All Judah brought presents to Jehoshaphat,** and **he** was blessed with **great wealth and honor in abundance (Second Chronicles 17:5). Wealth and honor** are mentioned in connection with only a few kings. The use of that terminology here points out that **Jehoshaphat's** early years reached a level of prosperity enjoyed by few. Moreover, the fact that **his wealth and honor** came from **all Judah** is another way **the Chronicler** praised **the king**.

After listing a number of ways in which **Jehoshaphat** had shown **himself** to be faithful like **David, the Chronicler** paused to point out **the king's** most remarkable act of **devotion**. **In the third year of his reign.** The notation of **Jehoshaphat's third year**, together with the length of **his reign** cited in **First Kings 22:42**, implies that **Jehoshaphat** had a coregency with **Asa** (likely connected with **Asa's** severe **disease in his legs** during the final **three years** of **his reign**). If so, **Jehoshaphat's** strong actions of reform took place following the death of **Asa** and during the initial year of **his** sole reign. At that time, **Jehoshaphat sent** a combination of royal officials, **Levites**, and **priests** to **teach God's Torah** throughout the region of **Judah**. **He sent his leading men Ben-Hail, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nethanel and Micaiah to teach in the cities of Judah; with them were the Levites-Shemaiah, Nethaniah, Zebadiah, Asahel, Shemiramoth, Jehonathan, Adonijah, Tobijah and Tob-Adonijah, and with them Elishama and Jehoram the priests. They taught in Judah, having a scroll of the Torah of ADONAI with them; they circulated through all the cities of Judah, teaching among the people (Second Chronicles 17:7-9).** A similar commissioning of **Levites** teaching **the Torah of YHVH** occurred during the post-exilic ministry of **Ezra** and **Nehemiah** (see the commentary of **Ezra-Nehemiah Bm – Ezra Reads the Scroll of Deuteronomy**).

The Chronicler's keen interest in the mutual support of **king** and **Temple** personnel becomes evident here. **The** ideal **kings David** and **Solomon** concentrated on establishing **the priests** and **Levites** in **their** proper roles **(First**

Chronicles 15:11-24, 16:4-6 and 37-42, 23:1-26:32; Second Chronicles 8:14-15). Hezekiah also gave much attention to **the Temple** personal personnel **(Second Chronicles 29:1-36, 30:15-17** and **21-27, 31:2-21)** as did **Josiah (Second Chronicles 34:8-13** and **35:1-19)**. Here, **Jehoshaphat** established **the priests** and **Levites** in **their** rightful place as **teachers** of **the Torah**.

The Chronicler used the example of **Jehoshaphat** to illustrate the means by which security and wealth could come to **the people of God**. **His** post-exilic readers desired these blessings, but they needed to be reminded of the kinds of actions that would lead to such positive results. **Judah** could find divine support against **her** enemies through **devotion** to purity in worship and instruction in **the Torah**.[379]

In addition to the domestic blessing that secured **Judah** against **Isra'el, Jehoshaphat's** faithfulness was also rewarded on the border's international front. **ADONAI was with Jehoshaphat** (meaning, *God has judged*) to fight on **His** behalf. As a result, **the fear of the LORD seized all the kingdoms in the lands surrounding Judah, so that they did not make war against Jehoshaphat.** Instead, **some of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat gifts and silver as tribute; the Arabs too brought him flocks – 7,700 rams and 7,700 male goats (Second Chronicles 17:10-11).** The tribute brought from **the Philistines** and **Arabs**, together with statements of military fortifications, implies that **the southern kingdom** had a control over the caravan routes across Arabah and Negev to the Coastal Highway. This control provided a lucrative source of tax and tribute income for **Jehoshaphat**. This economic and political stability in turn allowed for further military strengthening, building projects, and governmental expansion.[380] This explains why **Jehoshaphat** was able to fortify **himself** so strongly against **the northern kingdom**. **He** had no other enemies to worry about. All the nations, especially **the Philistines** to the west and **the Arabs** to the east were pacified by **their fear** of **Jehoshaphat's God**. **So Jehoshaphat grew increasingly powerful.**

After explaining how **Jehoshaphat** became so **powerful**, **the Chronicler** returned to the subject of **the king's** military strength. **In Judah he built fortresses and storage cities. He had many projects in the cities of Judah; and in Jerusalem he had warriors, strong brave men. Here is a listing of them by clans: from Judah, the captains of thousands: Adnah the leader, and with him 300,000 strong, brave men; next to him Jehohanan the leader, and with him 280,000; next to him Amasiah the son of Zicri, who volunteered**

to serve ADONAI, and with him 200,000 strong, brave men. From Benjamin: Eliada, a strong, brave man, and with him 200,000 equipped with bows and shields; next to him Jehozabad, and with him 180,000 men prepared for war. These served the king, in addition to those the king assigned to the fortified cities throughout all Judah (Second Chronicles 17:12-19). The number of **brave** fighting **men** totaled **1,160,000.** This is the largest number recorded for **Judah's** army. The Hebrew word translated thousand may be a technical term referring to considerably less than **1,000**. Possibly **his** army numbered **116,000.** But however one deals with the number itself, it is evident that **Jehoshaphat's** army was very large. **The Chronicler** stressed the size of **the king's** army by noting that this number was in addition to those mentioned in **Second Chronicles 17:2** above. **These served the king, in addition to those the king assigned to the fortified cities throughout all Judah (Second Chronicles 17:12-19).**[381]

The summary of his reign: Jehoshaphat received the same sort of favorable evaluation as **Asa his father, and did not turn away from doing what was right from ADONAI's perspective. His** spiritual condition was basically sound and largely commended by **God**. **He rid the land of the male and female cult-prostitutes remaining from the time of his father Asa.** Lost by **Solomon (First Kings 11:14-25), Jehoshaphat** reestablished **Judah's** authority over **Edom. There had previously been no king in Edom, but now a deputy was made king.** This opened up the exploitation of **Ezion -Beber**, a port on the Sea of Reeds. Altogether, **his** concern for spiritual things manifested itself in religious and social reforms. Accordingly, **YHVH** blessed **his reign (Second Chronicles 17:1-6** and **12, 18:1)**.

But by the end of **his reign**, however, like **David**, **Solomon**, and **his father Asa**, there were problems. First, **idolatry** had slowly crept back into the southern kingdom. **It** died hard throughout **Judah's** history. This could be seen by the fact that **the people still sacrificed and presented offerings on the high places (Second Chronicles 20:33).** Second, the marriage of **his son Jehoram** to **Athaliah, Ahab's daughter**, was to bring about a tragic condition in **Judah (Second Kings 8:18-19** and **11:1-3; Second Chronicles 21:6-7** and **11).** Third, **Jehoshaphat made peace with the king of Isra'el. He** went with **Ahab** to the battle of **Ramoth Gilead**, despite **the prophet Micaiah's** warning **(Second Chronicles 18:28-19:3).** Fourth, **he** entered into an ill-fated commercial venture with **Ahaziah, king of Isra'el. Jehoshaphat built some large "Tarshish" ships**

to go to Ophir for gold, but they didn't make the voyage, because they were wrecked at Ezion-Geber. Because **Ahaziah** was an apostate, **Ha'Shem** sent a storm to destroy the fleet before it could set sail. Evidently **Jehoshaphat** was wise enough to refuse a second trading proposal put forward by **Ahaziah**. **At that time Ahaziah the son of Ahab suggested to Jehoshaphat that his men should go to sea with Jehoshaphat's men, but Jehoshaphat refused (2 Chronicles 20:35-37).** Fifth, **he** later went with **the king** of **the northern kingdom** on an expedition into the Transjordan **(2 Kings 3:6-27)**. **Other activities of Jehoshaphat, all his power that he demonstrated and how he made war are recorded in the Annals of the Kings of Judah (1 Kings 22:43-49).**

Jehoshaphat was not perfect. In fact, as we have seen, the Bible records some of **his** failures. However, **he** walked with **God** and lived in peace with **his** brothers. **He** stood against sexual immorality and refused to compromise with other sinful practices. **He** proved to be a godly **king** because **he** sought **God's** counsel **(First Kings 22:5-7)**. Every believer should strive to become a son or daughter of **Jehoshaphat**. When faced with a difficult decision, **his** first inclination was to seek the counsel of **ADONAI**. **He** didn't rely on **his** own instincts, but rested on **God's** counsel. But, specifically, how do we seek **God's** counsel? Today we cannot consult **the LORD's** prophet in quite the same way that **Jehoshaphat** did. **God** does not need any new prophets because **He** has already said everything that **He** needs to say through **Yeshua Messiah (Hebrews 1:2)**. So where *do* we find **God's** will for our lives?

First and foremost, we learn **God's** will from **God's Word,** which is our blueprint for living. Indeed, the Scriptures in the TaNaKh, and the B'rit Chadashah teach us everything we need to know for life and godliness. Second, we receive guidance from mature friends who are believers. One way **God** shows us **His** will is through the counsel of friends tho know us and know the Scriptures. Finally, we discover **God's** will through prayer. Wisdom for life is part of the mysterious work of **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh** in the heart and mind of the believer.

The death of the king: Then Jehoshaphat rested with his fathers and was buried with them in the city of David his ancestor. And Joram, his son (not **the king of Isra'el** of the same name) **succeeded him,** thus continusing the **Davidic** line **(First Kings 22:50).** But even though **he died** a physical **death**, **his**

name points to an important event in the future.

In **far eschatological future,** when **Messiah** returns at the end of the Great Tribulation (see the commentary on **Isaiah Kg – The Second Coming of Jesus Christ to Bozrah**) **all Isra'el will be saved (Romans 11:26-27),** and **Yeshua** will battle the armies of the world lead by **the antichrist** (see the commentary on **Revelation Ex – The Eight Stage Campaign of Armageddon**). The end of the fighting will be at **the Valley of Jehoshaphat**, where **Ha'Shem** declares: **I will gather all nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. There I will enter judgment against them (Joel 3:2),** because **Jehoshaphat** means, *God has judged.*

Today the world is uncomfortable with **Jesus Christ** being a righteous warrior. That is why Christmas is more popular than Easter. At Christmas we see a little helpless baby in a manger, but at Easter we are forced to look at the **God**-man dying for our sins. Before the fall of **Jericho**, **Joshua** had an encounter with a theophany, or the preincarnate **Yeshua Messiah**. **Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of Him with a drawn sword in His hand. Joshua went up to Him and asked, "Are you for us or our enemies?" "Neither," He replied, "but as Commander of the army of the LORD I have now come." Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked Him, "What message does my lord have for His servant. The Commander of the LORD's army replied, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so (Joshua 5:13-15).** The fact is that **Yeshua** is **the Commander of the army of ADONAI. He** had **the Israelites** walk around **Jericho** seven times, while **ADONAI** fought the **battle** alone. The same will be true when **the Arm of the LORD (51:9, 52:10, 53:1, 59:1)**, **Messiah Himself**, will defeat the armies of the world.

Revelation 19:17-20 deals with **Christ** as the righteous warrior, for we see **Him** defeating Satan's armies in what is often called "**the Battle of Armageddon**," but in reality is **the War of the Great Day of the LORD of heaven's** angelic **armies (Revelation 16:14 CJB)**. **Armageddon** means *Mount of Slaughter*. This **war** will take place in a single day, and **the battle of Armageddon** will be just one of the battles of that **war**. Actually, this **war** will encompass more than just **the Valley of** Megiddo (**Jezreel**), but as we shall see, it will cover practically all of the land of Palestine. **The battle** starts at **Bozrah** and will continue all the way back to the eastern walls of **Jerusalem** which overlook **the** Kidron **Valley**, also known as **the Valley of Jehoshaphat**.

Among the very first casualties of **the battle** will be **the antichrist himself**. Having ruled the world with great power and spoken against the true **Son of God**, the counterfeit son will be powerless before **Messiah (Habakkuk 3:13b).** The ease with which **Christ** will slay the antichrist is described by Paul in **Second Thessalonians 2:8, And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.** The one who has claimed to be **God**, the one who has been able to perform all kinds of miracles, signs and wonders, the one who exercised all authority of Satan as he ruled the world, will be quickly dispensed with by the word of **the Righteous Warrior**. The arrival of the antichrist into hell is described in **14:3-11.** And later **Isaiah** describes the fate of his dead body on the earth in **14:16-21. The antichrist** and **the false prophet** will spend **a thousand years** in **the lake of fire (Revelation 20:14-15)** together before the end of the Messianic Kingdom. The unsaved that die prior to this time are cast into sh'ol, a place of torment, but not into **the lake of fire**, which is reserved for those who have rejected **Yeshua Messiah**. The rest of the wicked dead will be judged at the Great White Throne Judgment (see the commentary on **Revelation Fo – The Great White Throne Judgment**) and follow **the antichrist**, **the false prophet**, and **Satan** into this eternal torment. because **Jehoshaphat** means, *God has judged.*

After **the death of the antichrist**, the slaughter of **his army** will continue. **The Commander of ADONAI's army** will continue marching through **the Land** in indignation, as if **treading the winepress of His wrath, causing blood to be sprinkled on His garments. Zechariah 14:12-15** describes the manner in which this massive army will be destroyed. This carnage will continue all the way back to **Jerusalem**, coming to an end in **the Valley of Jehoshaphat**. **The nations** that will gather against **the Jews (Joel 3:9-11)** will now find **themselves** being slaughtered by **the King of the Jews**. **The blood** from this encounter with the living **God** will run about one mile wide and one hundred and eighty miles long, from **the Valley of Jezreel** in the north of **Isra'el**, to **Bozrah** in the south and will literally reach to **the horses' bridles (Revelation 14:20)**. A sea of humanity will become a sea of **blood**. Because they did not *accept* the sacrifice of **Messiah's** blood on the cross, they *became* the sacrifice. **Their blood** will practically cover the length of **Isra'el**, and when this battle comes to an end in **the Valley of Jehoshaphat,** so does the seventh stage of the Campaign of **Armageddon**.[382]