

### Abijah, Rehoboam's Son, Assumes the Throne of Judah (915t BC)

1 Kings 15:1–2

2 Chronicles 13:1–2a

1 Now in the eighteenth year of King Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, Abijah became king over Judah.  
2 He reigned three years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Maacah the [*grand*]daughter of Abishalom [*Absalom*].

1 In the eighteenth year of King Jeroboam, Abijah became king over Judah.  
2a He reigned three years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Micaiah the daughter of Uriel of Gibeah.

### Abijah's War With Jeroboam (c. 914t BC)

2 Chronicles 13:2b–20a

#### Abijah Is Outnumbered

2b Now there was war between Abijah and Jeroboam.

3 Abijah began the battle with an army of valiant warriors, 400,000 chosen men, while Jeroboam drew up in battle formation against him with 800,000 chosen men *who were* valiant warriors.

#### Abijah's Speech

4 Then Abijah stood on Mount Zemaraim, which is in the hill country of Ephraim, and said, "Listen to me, Jeroboam and all Israel:

5 Do you not know that the LORD God of Israel gave the rule over Israel forever to David and his sons by a covenant of salt?

6 Yet Jeroboam the son of Nebat, the servant of Solomon the son of David, rose up and rebelled against his master,

7 and worthless men gathered about him, scoundrels, who proved too strong for Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, when he was young and timid and could not hold his own against them.

8 So now you intend to resist the kingdom of the LORD through the sons of David, being a great multitude and *having* with you the golden calves which Jeroboam made for gods for you.

9 Have you not driven out the priests of the LORD, the sons of Aaron and the Levites, and made for yourselves priests like the peoples of *other* lands? Whoever comes to consecrate himself with a young bull and seven rams, even he may become a priest of *what are* no gods.

10 But as for us, the LORD is our God, and we have not forsaken Him; and the sons of Aaron are ministering to the LORD as priests, and the Levites attend to their work.

11 Every morning and evening they burn to the LORD burnt offerings and fragrant incense, and the showbread is *set* on the clean table, and the golden lampstand with its lamps is *ready* to light every evening; for we keep the charge of the LORD our God, but you have forsaken Him.

12 Now behold, God is with us at *our* head and His priests with the signal trumpets to sound the alarm against you. O sons of Israel, do not fight against the LORD God of your fathers, for you will not succeed."

#### God Helps Abijah Win a Victory Over Jeroboam

13 But Jeroboam had set an ambush to come from the rear, so that *Israel* was in front of Judah and the ambush was behind them.

14 When Judah turned around, behold, they were attacked both front and rear; so they cried to the LORD, and the priests blew the trumpets.

15 Then the men of Judah raised a war cry, and when the men of Judah raised the war cry, then it was that God routed Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah.

16 When the sons of Israel fled before Judah, God gave them into their hand.

17 Abijah and his people defeated them with a great slaughter, so that 500,000 chosen men of Israel fell slain.

18 Thus the sons of Israel were subdued at that time, and the sons of Judah conquered because they trusted in the LORD, the God of their fathers.

19 Abijah pursued Jeroboam and captured from him *several* cities, Bethel with its villages, Jeshanah with its villages and Ephron with its villages.

20a Jeroboam did not again recover strength in the days of Abijah;

### The Death of Abijah (912t BC)

1 Kings 15:3–8	2 Chronicles 13:21–14:1a
<p>3 He walked in all the sins of his father which he had committed before him; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, like the heart of his father David.</p> <p>4 But for David's sake the LORD his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem, to raise up his son after him and to establish Jerusalem;</p> <p>5 because David did what was right in the sight of the LORD, and had not turned aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, except in the case of Uriah the Hittite.</p> <p>6 There was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all the days of his [<i>Abijah's</i>] life.</p> <p>7 Now the rest of the acts of Abijah and all that he did, are they not written in the</p> <p>Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? And there was war between Abijah and Jeroboam.</p> <p>8 And Abijah slept with his fathers and they buried him in the city of David; and Asa his son became king in his place.</p>	<p>13:21 But Abijah became powerful; and took fourteen wives to himself, and became the father of twenty-two sons and sixteen daughters.</p> <p>22 Now the rest of the acts of Abijah, and his ways and his words are written in the treatise of the prophet Iddo.</p> <p>14:1a So Abijah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David, and his son Asa became king in his place.</p>

### Asa, Abijah's Son, Assumes the Throne of Judah (912t BC)

1 Kings 15:9–10

9 So in the twentieth year of Jeroboam the king of Israel, Asa began to reign as king of Judah.

10 He reigned forty-one years in Jerusalem; and his [*grand*]mother's name was Maacah the [*grand*]daughter of Abishalom [*Absalom*].

### Asa's Early Reign Marked by Religious Reform (c. 912–907 BC)

1 Kings 15:11–12	2 Chronicles 14:2–5a
<p>11 Asa did what was right in the sight of the LORD, like David his father.</p>	<p>2 Asa did good and right in the sight of the LORD his God,</p>

<p>12 He also put away the male cult prostitutes from the land and removed all the idols which his fathers had made.</p>	<p>3 for he removed the foreign altars and high places, tore down the <i>sacred</i> pillars, cut down the Asherim, 4 and commanded Judah to seek the LORD God of their fathers and to observe the law and the commandment. 5a He also removed the high places and the incense altars from all the cities of Judah.</p>
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### The Death of Jeroboam (910n BC)

1 Kings 14:19–20	2 Chronicles 13:20b
<p>19 Now the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, how he made war and how he reigned, behold, they are written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel. 20 The time that Jeroboam reigned <i>was</i> twenty-two years; and he slept with his fathers, and Nadab his son reigned in his place.</p>	<p>20b and the LORD struck him and he died.</p>

### Nadab, Jeroboam's Son, Assumes the Throne of Israel (910n BC)

1 Kings 15:25–26
<p>25 Now Nadab the son of Jeroboam became king over Israel in the second year of Asa king of Judah, and he reigned over Israel two years. 26 He did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of his father and in his sin which he made Israel sin.</p>

### Nadab is Assassinated by Baasha (909n BC)

1 Kings 15:27–28, 31
<p>27 Then Baasha the son of Ahijah of the house of Issachar conspired against him, and Baasha struck him down at Gibbethon, which belonged to the Philistines, while Nadab and all Israel were laying siege to Gibbethon. 28 So Baasha killed him in the third year of Asa king of Judah and reigned in his place. 31 Now the rest of the acts of Nadab and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?</p>

### Baasha of Issachar Assumes the Throne of Israel (909n BC)

1 Kings 15:29–30, 33–34
<p>33 In the third year of Asa king of Judah, Baasha the son of Ahijah became king over all Israel at Tirzah, <i>and reigned</i> twenty-four years. 29 It came about as soon as he was king, he struck down all the household of Jeroboam. He did not leave to Jeroboam any persons alive, until he had destroyed them, according to the word of the LORD, which He spoke by His servant Ahijah the Shilonite, 30 <i>and</i> because of the sins of Jeroboam which he sinned, and which he made Israel sin, because of his provocation with which he provoked the LORD God of Israel to anger.</p>

34 He did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of Jeroboam and in his sin which he made Israel sin.

### God Rewards Asa's Reforms With Peace (c. 907–897 BC)

2 Chronicles 14:1b, 5b–8

1b The land was undisturbed for ten years during his days.

5b And the kingdom was undisturbed under him.

6 He built fortified cities in Judah, since the land was undisturbed, and there was no one at war with him during those years, because the LORD had given him rest.

7 For he said to Judah, "Let us build these cities and surround *them* with walls and towers, gates and bars. The land is still ours because we have sought the LORD our God; we have sought Him, and He has given us rest on every side." So they built and prospered.

8 Now Asa had an army of 300,000 from Judah, bearing large shields and spears, and 280,000 from Benjamin, bearing shields and wielding bows; all of them were valiant warriors.

### Zerah the Cushite Attacks the Southern Kingdom (897t BC)

2 Chronicles 14:9–15:7

#### Asa Asks God for Help

14:9 Now Zerah the Ethiopian came out against them with an army of a million men and 300 chariots, and he came to Mareshah.

10 So Asa went out to meet him, and they drew up in battle formation in the valley of Zephathah at Mareshah.

11 Then Asa called to the LORD his God and said, "LORD, there is no one besides You to help *in the battle* between the powerful and those who have no strength; so help us, O LORD our God, for we trust in You, and in Your name have come against this multitude. O LORD, You are our God; let not man prevail against You."

#### God Answers Asa's Prayer

12 So the LORD routed the Ethiopians before Asa and before Judah, and the Ethiopians fled.

13 Asa and the people who *were* with him pursued them as far as Gerar; and so many Ethiopians fell that they could not recover, for they were shattered before the LORD and before His army. And they carried away very much plunder.

14 They destroyed all the cities around Gerar, for the dread of the LORD had fallen on them; and they despoiled all the cities, for there was much plunder in them.

15 They also struck down those who owned livestock, and they carried away large numbers of sheep and camels. Then they returned to Jerusalem.

#### Azariah Encourages Asa to Continue/Renew His Religious Reforms

15:1 Now the Spirit of God came on Azariah the son of Oded,

2 and he went out to meet Asa and said to him, "Listen to me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: the LORD is with you when you are with Him. And if you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you.

3 For many days Israel was without the true God and without a teaching priest and without law.

4 But in their distress they turned to the LORD God of Israel, and they sought Him, and He let them find Him.

5 In those times there was no peace to him who went out or to him who came in, for many disturbances afflicted all the inhabitants of the lands.

6 Nation was crushed by nation, and city by city, for God troubled them with every kind of distress.

7 But you, be strong and do not lose courage, for there is reward for your work."

## The Southern Kingdom Swears Allegiance to Yahweh (Sivan [June] 896t BC)

1 Kings 15:13–15

2 Chronicles 15:8–19

13 He also removed Maacah his [*grand*]mother from *being* queen mother, because she had made a horrid image as an Asherah; and Asa cut down her horrid image and burned *it* at the brook Kidron.

14 But the high places were not taken away; nevertheless the heart of Asa was wholly devoted to the LORD all his days.

15 He brought into the house of the LORD the dedicated things of his father and his own dedicated things: silver and gold and utensils.

8 Now when Asa heard these words and the prophecy which Azariah the son of Oded the prophet spoke, he took courage and removed the abominable idols from all the land of Judah and Benjamin and from the cities which he had captured in the hill country of Ephraim. He then restored the altar of the LORD which was in front of the porch of the LORD.

9 He gathered all Judah and Benjamin and those from Ephraim, Manasseh and Simeon who resided with them, for many defected to him from Israel when they saw that the LORD his God was with him.

10 So they assembled at Jerusalem in the third month of the fifteenth year of Asa's reign.

11 They sacrificed to the LORD that day 700 oxen and 7,000 sheep from the spoil they had brought.

12 They entered into the covenant to seek the LORD God of their fathers with all their heart and soul;

13 and whoever would not seek the LORD God of Israel should be put to death, whether small or great, man or woman.

14 Moreover, they made an oath to the LORD with a loud voice, with shouting, with trumpets and with horns.

15 All Judah rejoiced concerning the oath, for they had sworn with their whole heart and had sought Him earnestly, and He let them find Him. So the LORD gave them rest on every side.

16 He also removed Maacah, the mother of King Asa, from the *position of* queen mother, because she had made a horrid image as an Asherah, and Asa cut down her horrid image, crushed *it* and burned *it* at the brook Kidron.

17 But the high places were not removed from Israel; nevertheless Asa's heart was blameless all his days.

18 He brought into the house of God the dedicated things of his father and his own dedicated things: silver and gold and utensils.

19 And there was no more war until the thirty-fifth year of Asa's reign [*counted from the division*].

## Chronological Notes

- 1) The account of Asa's reign over the Southern Kingdom as recorded in 2 Chronicles contains several chronological notes:
  - A) 2 Chr 14:1 – during the first part of Asa's reign, the land "had rest for 10 years."
  - B) 2 Chr 15:10 – the Southern Kingdom swore allegiance to Yahweh in the "third month of the fifteenth year of Asa's reign."
  - C) 2 Chr 15:19 – there was "no more war until the thirty-fifth year of Asa's reign."
  - D) 2 Chr 16:1 – "In the thirty-sixth year of Asa's reign, King Baasha of Israel attacked Judah."
  - E) 2 Chr 16:12 – "In the thirty-ninth year of his reign, Asa developed a foot disease."
  - F) 2 Chr 16:13 – "Asa passed away in the forty-first year of his reign."
- 2) These chronological markers create a significant problem for the OT chronologist: 1 Kings 15:33 records that Baasha ruled for 24 years, while 1 Kings 16:8 reports that Elah succeeded Baasha in the twenty-sixth year of Asa. Clearly, Baasha could not have been alive in Asa's thirty-sixth year where 2 Chronicles 16:1 places him.
- 3) The only current solution which harmonizes Kings and Chronicles and leaves the text of the MT as it stands is that taken by Thiele<sup>1</sup> and Steinmann<sup>2</sup>: the dates mentioned in 2 Chr 15:19 and 2 Chr 16:1 should be taken as dynastic years, dated from the division of the kingdom (hence my insertion of the words "[counted from the division]"). Noting that Rehoboam reigned for 17 years and Abijah for 3 years, we are able to subtract 20 years from the references which then become the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> years of Asa's reign and synchronize with the years of Baasha. The passage can then be read as follows: the victory celebration after the battle with Zerah in the 15<sup>th</sup> year included large numbers of Israelites who had defected from the northern kingdom to join Asa (2 Chr 15:9). This defection prompted Baasha to fortify Ramah to prevent further desertion (2 Chr 16:1b).
- 4) This solution, while ingenious, is not without problems:<sup>3</sup>
  - A) Of the hundreds of bits of data for the chronology of the divided monarchy, this would be the only occasion of dating from the schism. It would be unique to this passage and it is therefore arbitrary to appeal to it—an example of special pleading.
  - B) It ignores the plain sense of the text that these were the thirty-fifth and thirty-sixth years "of Asa's reign." The formulae used for these regnal years are identical to the formulae used throughout Chronicles as well as in Kings and generally throughout the OT to cite the regnal years of individual kings. While it is certainly allowable that the Chronicler used a doublet account to achieve his purposes, it is hard to argue that the Chronicler intended anything other than the thirty-fifth and thirty-sixth years of Asa's reign. Re-dating by eliminating the twenty years of earlier reigns in Judah also does not ease the inerrancy question: The specter remains that the Chronicler may have misunderstood some sources which dated from the schism, for this was certainly not his intent or

<sup>1</sup> Edwin R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, 57–61.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Steinmann, *From Paul to Abraham*, 152–153.

<sup>3</sup> Raymond Dillard, "The Reign of Asa (2 Chronicles 14–16): An Example of the Chronicler's Theological Method," *JETS* 23:3 (Sept 1980): 207–218.

practice.

- C) This reconstruction would also play havoc with the Chronicler's argument and theological method. While in effect emending 15:19 and 16:1, it leaves the date in 16:12 untouched. This results in the following sequence: victory celebration in the fifteenth year, attack by Baasha in the sixteenth year, the rebuke of the prophet and his imprisonment, all presumably in the sixteenth through eighteenth years, and the foot disease in the thirty-ninth year. The foot disease as retribution would come over 20 years after the offense. The cycles of obedience-blessing and sin-punishment that everywhere characterize the Chronicler are thereby destroyed. If 16:12 is also reduced by twenty years so that the foot disease is contracted in the nineteenth year, then it took 22 years for it to kill him—and that will not work either.
- D) This method would also fail to take account of the Chronicler's careful introduction of chronological patterns into his accounts of various reigns to achieve his theological purposes. The example from the reign of Rehoboam has been discussed above (see Dillard's paper); the treatment of Josiah is also particularly interesting.
- 5) In conclusion, at this time and subject to further research, I have decided to present the reading as following the current harmonization solution. As Selman comments, "No solution, therefore commends itself with any confidence."<sup>4</sup>
- A) One potential solution is offered by Kohlberg: regnal overlaps for Abijah and Asa. Thus the thirty-fifth year of Asa's reign would be dated from his nomination as vice-regent to Abijah.<sup>5</sup>

### **Commentary Notes**

- 1) At first glance, the mention that Asa "removed the pagan altars and the high places" (2 Chr 14:3) seems to be in tension with the statement that "the high places were not eliminated from Israel" (2 Chr 15:17); many regard these two statements as fiat contradictions or a measure of the author's incompetence as a historian. Rather than dismiss efforts to ease the apparent contradiction as unconscionably harmonistic, it would be more plausible to assume that in the author's mind the two statements were not in tension; it is unlikely that either the author or a later editor would contradict himself in such short compass. (1) Since 15:17 occurs toward the end of Asa's reign, presumably in some proximity to his thirty-fifth year from the narrator's viewpoint (15:19), and 14:3 refers to early reforms, an intervening period of up to thirty years is possible. The two statements could be understood as no more than evidence of the resilience of the indigenous cults which plagued Judah's history and required repeated reformation. (2) It is also possible that the Chronicler's insertion of the words "from Israel" in 15:17 is intended to indicate that Asa did not remove the high places from the cities earlier belonging to the Northern Kingdom and then under his sway; contrast the explicit statement that he removed the high places "from all the cities of Judah" (14:5). This difficulty is not unique to the Chronicler's account of Asa, but recurs in his statements that Jehoshaphat did (17:6) and did not (20:33) remove the high places.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Martin J. Selman, "2 Chronicles," TOTC, 415.

<sup>5</sup> Bruno Kohlberg, "Redating the Hebrew Kings," 57–61. Online: <http://www.redatedkings.com/download/Redating.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Raymond B. Dillard, "2 Chronicles," WBC, 118.