

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

1 Kings 15:9–10

9 In the twentieth year of Jeroboam the king of Israel, Asa became the king of Judah.

10 He reigned forty-one years in Jerusalem, and the name of his mother 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

11 Asa did right in the eyes of Yahweh, like David his ancestor.

12 He put away the male shrine prostitutes from the land, and he removed all of the idols that his ancestors made.

2 Chronicles 14:2–5a

2 Asa did that which *was* good and right in the eyes of Yahweh his God.

3 He removed the foreign altars and high places,

broke down the stone pillars, and cut down the Asherahs.

4 And he commanded Judah to seek Yahweh, the God of their ancestors, and to keep the law and the commandment.

5a And he removed the high places and the incense stands from all the cities of Judah,

The Death of Jeroboam (910n BC)

1 Kings 14:19–20

19 The remainder of the acts of Jeroboam, how he fought and how he reigned, behold, they *are* written in the scroll of the events of the days of the kings of Israel.

20 The days which Jeroboam reigned were twenty-two years, and he slept with his ancestors.

Then Nadab his son became king in place of him.

2 Chronicles 13:20b

20b And Yahweh plagued him and he died.

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

1 Kings 15:25–26

25 Nadab the son of Jeroboam began to reign over Israel in the second year of Asa king of Judah, and he reigned over Israel two years.

26 He did evil in the eyes of Yahweh, and he walked in the way of his father and in his sin that he caused Israel to commit.

Nadab is Assassinated by Baasha (909n BC)

1 Kings 15:27–28, 31

27 Baasha son of Ahijah of the house of Issachar conspired against him, and Baasha struck him down at Gibbethon, which belonged to the Philistines. Now Nadab and all of Israel *were* laying siege to Gibbethon,

28 and Baasha killed him in the third year of Asa the king of Judah, and he reigned in his place.

31 Now the remainder of the acts of Nadab and all that he did, *are* they not written on the scroll of the events of the days of the kings of Israel?

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

1 Kings 15:29–30, 33–34

33 In the third year of Asa king of Judah, Baasha son of Ahijah had become king over all of Israel; *he lived* in Tirzah twenty-four years.

29 It happened that as soon as he became king, he killed all of the house of Jeroboam. There was no one left of Jeroboam who breathed, until he had destroyed him according to the word of Yahweh that he had spoken by the hand of his servant, Ahijah the Shilonite,

30 because of the sins of Jeroboam that he had committed and that he had caused Israel to commit *and* because of his anger *with* which he had provoked Yahweh the God of Israel.

34 He did evil in the eyes of Yahweh, and he walked in the way of Jeroboam and in his sin that he caused Israel to commit.

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

2 Chronicles 14:1b, 5b–8

1b In his days the land was at rest ten years.

5b and the kingdom had rest under him.

6 And he built fortified cities in Judah, for the land was at rest. Under him there was no war in those years, for Yahweh had given rest to him.

7 And he said to Judah, "Let us build these cities and surround *them with* walls, towers, gates, and bars while the land *is* before us, because we have sought Yahweh our God. We have sought and he has given rest to us on every side." So they built and had success.

8 And Asa had an army *of* three hundred thousand from Judah, bearing shields and spears, and two hundred and eighty thousand from Benjamin *who* carried shields and drew bows. All of these *were* mighty warriors of strength.

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

2 Chronicles 14:9–15:7

Asa Asks God for Help

14:9 Zerah the Cushite came out against them with an army of a thousand thousands and three hundred chariots. And he came to Mareshah.

10 And Asa went out before him, and a battle was put in order in the valley of Zepah at Mareshah.

11 Then Asa cried out to Yahweh his God. And he said, "O Yahweh, there is none with you to help between the great and the powerless. Help us, O Yahweh our God, for we rely upon you, and in your name we have come against this multitude. O Yahweh, you *are* our God! Let no man prevail against you!"

God Answers Asa's Prayer

12 So Yahweh defeated the Cushites before Asa and before Judah, and the Cushites fled.

13 Then Asa and the army with him pursued them to Gerar. And *many* from the Cushites fell, for they had no deliverance, for they were shattered before Yahweh and before his army. And they carried away much war booty.

14 And they struck all the cities around Gerar, for the fear of Yahweh was upon them. And they plundered all the cities, for there was much plunder in them.

15 And they also struck the tents of the herdsmen and carried away many sheep and camels. Then they returned to Jerusalem.

Azariah Encourages Asa to Continue/Renew His Religious Reforms

15:1 Now Azariah the son of Oded—the Spirit of God came upon him.

2 And he went out before Asa and said to him, "Hear me, O Asa and all of Judah and Benjamin! Yahweh *is* with you while you are with him. And if you will seek him he will be found by you. But if you forsake him he will forsake you.

3 Now Israel *has been* without the true God many days, and without a teaching priest, and without law,

4 but at its trouble he returned to Yahweh, the God of Israel. They sought him, and he was found by them.

5 And in those times there was no peace for the one going out and the one coming in, for great tumults *were* upon all the inhabitants of the lands.

6 Nation was crushed by nation, and city *was* against city, for God threw them into confusion by all *sorts of* trouble.

7 But as for you, be strong and let not your hands be weak, for there is reward for your labor."

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

1 Kings 15:13–15

2 Chronicles 15:8–19

8 And when Asa heard these words, the prophecy of [Azariah the son of] Oded the prophet, he took courage and removed the vile idols from all the lands of Judah and Benjamin, and from the cities that he had taken in the hill country of Ephraim, and he repaired the altar of Yahweh that was in front of the portico of Yahweh.

9 And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin and those sojourning with them, from Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon, for many had deserted to him from Israel when they saw that Yahweh his God *was* with him.

10 And they were gathered *at* Jerusalem in the third month of the fifteenth year of the reign of Asa.

11 And they sacrificed to Yahweh on that day from the war

<p>13 Also, he had Maacah his [grand]mother removed from the office of queen mother, <i>as</i> she had made a repulsive image for the Asherah. Asa also cut down her repulsive image and burned it in the Wadi Kidron.</p> <p>14 But the high places he did not remove. Nevertheless, the heart of Asa was completely with Yahweh all of his days.</p> <p>15 He brought the holy objects of his father and his <i>own</i> holy objects to the house of Yahweh, silver and gold and utensils.</p>	<p>booty they brought back: seven hundred oxen and seven thousand sheep.</p> <p>12 And they entered into a covenant to seek Yahweh, the God of their ancestors, with all their heart and with all their inmost being,</p> <p>13 but all who will not seek Yahweh the God of Israel should be killed, from young to old, from men to women.</p> <p>14 And they took an oath to Yahweh with a great voice, with shouting, with trumpets, and with horns.</p> <p>15 And all Judah rejoiced over the oath, for they swore with all their heart. And they sought him with their whole desire, and he was found by them, and Yahweh gave rest to them all around.</p> <p>16 And also Maacah, the [grand]mother of Asa, the king removed her from <i>being</i> queen, because she had made a repulsive image for Asherah. And Asa cut down her repulsive image, and he crushed and burned <i>it</i> at the Wadi Kidron.</p> <p>17 But the high places were not removed from Israel. Nevertheless, the heart of Asa was fully devoted all his days.</p> <p>18 And he brought the holy objects of his father and his own holy objects <i>into</i> the house of God—silver and gold and vessels.</p> <p>19 And there was no war until the thirty-fifth year of the reign of Asa [<i>counted from the division</i>].</p>
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Baasha Attacks Judah (896t BC)

1 Kings 15:16–22, 32	2 Chronicles 16:1–10
<p>16 There was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all of their days.</p> <p>17 Baasha king of Israel went up against Judah, and he built Ramah to hinder the coming and going of anyone to Asa king of Judah.</p> <p>18 Asa took all of the silver and gold remaining in the storerooms of the house of Yahweh and in the treasury rooms of the house of the king, and he gave them into the hand of his servants; so King Asa sent them to Ben-Hadad the son of Tabrimmon the son of Hezion, the king of Aram, who lived in Damascus, saying,</p> <p>19 “<i>Let there be</i> a covenant between me and you, between my father and your father. Look, I have sent you a gift of silver and gold. Go, break your covenant with Baasha king of Israel that he may go up <i>away</i> from me.”</p> <p>20 Ben-Hadad listened to King Asa, and he sent the commanders of his armies against the cities of Israel and he attacked Ijon, Dan, Abel-Beth-Maacah, and all of Kinnereth, in addition to all the land of Naphtali.</p> <p>21 When Baasha heard, he stopped building Ramah, and he lived in Tirzah.</p> <p>22 Then King Asa proclaimed among all of Israel that there was no one free from obligation, so they carried the stones of Ramah and its wood with which Baasha had built, and King Asa rebuilt Geba in Benjamin with them, and the Mizpah.</p>	<p>16:1 In the thirty-sixth year of the reign of Asa, Baasha the king of Israel went up against Judah. And he built Ramah in order not to allow <i>anyone</i> to go out or come in to Asa, king of Judah. [cf. 2 Chr 15:9]</p> <p>2 Then Asa brought out silver and gold from the storehouses of the house of Yahweh and the house of the king, and he sent <i>them</i> to Ben-Hadad, king of Aram, who lived in Damascus, saying,</p> <p>3 “<i>There is</i> a covenant between me and you, <i>as there was</i> between my father and your father. Look, I am sending you silver and gold. Go, break your covenant with Baasha, king of Israel, that he might withdraw from me.”</p> <p>4 And Ben-Hadad listened to King Asa, and he sent commanders of his troops that <i>were</i> with him against the cities of Israel. And they struck Ijon, Dan, Abel-Maim, and all the storage cities of Naphtali.</p> <p>5 And it happened <i>that</i> when Baasha heard <i>this</i>, he stopped building Ramah and ceased his work.</p> <p>6 Then King Asa took all of Judah,</p> <p>and they carried away the stones of Ramah and its timber with which Baasha had been building, and he built Geba and Mizpah with them.</p> <p>7 And at that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah and said to him, “On account of your reliance upon the king of</p>

<p>32 There was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days.</p>	<p>Aram, and <i>since</i> you did not rely on Yahweh your God, therefore the troops of the king of Aram escaped from your hand. 8 Were not the Cushites and Libyans a mighty army with very abundant chariots and horsemen? And because of your reliance on Yahweh he gave them into your hand. 9 For the eyes of Yahweh roam throughout all the earth to strengthen those whose heart is fully devoted to him. You have been foolish in this, for from now on you will have wars.” 10 Then Asa was angry with the seer and put him in the prison, for he was enraged with him concerning this. And Asa oppressed some of the people at that time.</p>
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The Death of Baasha (886n BC)

1 Kings 16:1–7

1 The word of Yahweh came to Jehu the son of Hanani against Baasha, saying,
 2 “Because I exalted you from the dust and I made you a leader over my people Israel, but you have walked in the way of Jeroboam and you caused my people Israel to sin, to provoke me with their sins,
 3 I am now *about to* consume Baasha and his house. I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat.
 4 Those who die for Baasha in the city, the dogs will eat; those who die for him in the field, the birds of the heavens will eat.”
 7 Moreover, the word of Yahweh came to Baasha and to his house by the hand of Jehu the son of Hanani the prophet, because of all the evil that he did in the eyes of Yahweh by provoking him with the work of his hands, by being like the house of Jeroboam; and he destroyed him.
 5 The remainder of the acts of Baasha, what he did, and his powerful deeds, are they not written on the scroll of the events of the days of the kings of Israel?
 6 Baasha slept with his ancestors and was buried in Tirzah, and Elah his son became king in his place.

Elah, Baasha’s Son, Assumes the Throne of Israel (886n BC)

1 Kings 16:8

8 In the twenty-sixth year of Asa king of Judah, Elah the son of Baasha became king over Israel for two years.

Elah is Assassinated by Zimri (885n BC)

1 Kings 16:9–10, 14

9 His servant Zimri the commander of half of the chariots conspired against him. Now he had been in Tirzah drinking *himself* drunk in the house of Arza who was over the palace in Tirzah.
 10 Zimri came and struck him down and killed him in the twenty-seventh year of Asa king of Judah and became king in his place.
 14 The remainder of the acts of Elah and all that he did, are they not written in the scroll of the events of the days of the kings of Israel?

Zimri—King For a Week (885n BC)

1 Kings 16:11–13, 15–20

15a In the twenty-seventh year of Asa king of Judah, Zimri reigned seven days in Tirzah.
 11 It happened that as soon as he became king, at the moment he sat on his throne, he killed all of the house of Baasha. He left no males *among* his kindred or *any of* his friends.
 12 So Zimri destroyed all of the house of Baasha according to the word of Yahweh which he spoke against Baasha by the hand of Jehu the prophet
 13 because of all the sins of Baasha and the sins of Elah his son which they committed and which they caused Israel to sin by provoking Yahweh the God of Israel with their idols.
 15b Now the army was encamping against Gibbethon which belonged to the Philistines.
 16 The encamping army heard that Zimri had conspired and moreover had killed the king, so they made Omri the commander of the army of Israel king over all Israel in the camp on that day.
 17 Then Omri went up and all Israel with him from Gibbethon, and they besieged Tirzah.

18 It happened that when Zimri saw that the city was taken, he went to the citadel fortress of the house of the king, and he burnt the house of the king over him with fire so that he died.

19 *This happened* because of his sin which he committed by doing evil in the eyes of Yahweh, by going the way of Jeroboam and in his sin which he did by causing Israel to sin.

20 The remainder of the acts of Zimri and his conspiracy which he made, *are* they not written on the scroll of the events of the days of the kings of Israel?

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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 Thiele¹ and Steinmann²: 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 15th and 16th 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 15th 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:³
 - 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 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

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

² Andrew Steinmann, *From Paul to Abraham*, 152–153.

³ 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.

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."⁴
- 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.⁵

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.⁶

⁴ Martin J. Selman, "2 Chronicles," TOTC, 415.

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

⁶ Raymond B. Dillard, "2 Chronicles," WBC, 118.