

Josiah's National Religious Reform (629t BC)

2 Kings 23:4–20

2 Chronicles 34:3b–7

4 Then the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, the second priests, and the keepers of the threshold, to bring out of the temple of Yahweh all of the objects made for Baal and for the Asherah and for all the host of heaven,

and he burned them outside of Jerusalem in the fields of the Kidron, and then he carried their ashes to Bethel.

5 He removed the priests whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense on the high places at the cities of Judah and around Jerusalem and who offered incense to, to the sun, to the moon, to the constellations, and to all the host of heaven.

6 He brought out the Asherah image from the temple of Yahweh outside of Jerusalem to the Wadi of the Kidron and burnt it there; then he pulverized *it* to dust and threw its dust upon the tombs of the children of the people.

7 He tore down the shrines of the male shrine prostitutes which were in the temple of Yahweh, where the women were weaving shrines for the Asherah.

8 Then he brought all of the priests from the cities of Judah and defiled the high places where the priests from Geba up to Beersheba burned incense. He tore down the high places of the gates which were at the entrance of the gate of Joshua, the governor of the city, which were on the left of each gate of the city.

9 However, the priests of the high places did not come up to the altar of Yahweh in Jerusalem, but they ate unleavened bread in the midst of their relatives.

10 He defiled the Topheth which *is* in the Valley of Ben-Hinnom, to prevent anyone causing his sons or his daughters to pass through the fire for Molech.

11 He kept the horses that the kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun from coming to the temple of Yahweh at the side room of Nathan-Melech the eunuch, which *was* in the court; and the chariots of the sun he burned with fire.

12 The altars which *were* on the roof of the upper room of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars which Manasseh had made in the two courtyards of the temple of Yahweh, the king tore down and ran from there and threw their ashes into the Wadi Kidron.

13 The high places which *were* east of Jerusalem, which *were* on the south of the Mountain of Destruction which Solomon king of Israel had built for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Sidonians and for Chemosh the abomination of Moab and for Molech the detestable thing of the Ammonites, the king defiled.

14 He also broke into pieces the stone pillars and cut down the Asherah poles and covered their sites *with* human bones.

15 Moreover, the altar which *was* in Bethel, the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had caused Israel to sin, had built, even that altar and the high place, *Josiah* tore down. Then he burned down the high place and crushed *the* pole of Asherah worship to dust and burned it with fire.

16 When Josiah turned and saw the tombs which *were* there on

3b And in the twelfth year he began to cleanse Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the Asherahs, the idols, and the images.

4 And he

destroyed before him the altars for the Baals, and he cut down the incense stands above them.

And the Asherahs, the idols, and the images he smashed.

And he ground *them* to powder and sprinkled *the dust* over the burial sites of those who sacrificed to them.

<p>the hill, he sent and took the bones from the tombs and burned <i>them</i> on the altar. <i>Thus</i> he defiled them according to the word of Yahweh that the man of God had proclaimed who had proclaimed these things. [1 Kgs 13:1-3]</p> <p>17 Then he said, “What <i>is</i> this gravestone that I <i>am</i> seeing?” The men of the city said to him, “<i>This is the</i> tomb of the man of God who came from Judah and proclaimed these things which you have done against the altar of Bethel.”</p> <p>18 So Josiah said, “Let him rest and let no man move his bones.” So they left his bones undisturbed with the bones of the prophet who had come from Samaria.</p> <p>19 Moreover, all of the shrines of the high places which <i>were</i> in the towns of Samaria which the kings of Israel had made to provoke <i>Yahweh</i>, Josiah removed, and he did to them like all of the deeds he had done in Bethel.</p> <p>20 Then he slaughtered all of the priests of the high places who <i>were</i> there, on the altars, and he burned the bones of the humans on them.</p> <p>Then he returned <i>to</i> Jerusalem.</p>	<p>6 And in the cities of Manasseh, Ephraim, Simeon, and as far as Naphtali, in their ruins all around, 7a he broke down the altars and the Asherahs and crushed the idols, grinding <i>them</i> to dust, and he cut down all the incense stands in all the land of Israel.</p> <p>5 And he burned the bones of the priests on the altars and cleansed Judah and Jerusalem. 7b Then he returned to Jerusalem.</p>
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Josiah Orders Repairs to the Temple (Tishri [October] 623 – Nisan [April] 622 BC)

2 Kings 22:3-7	2 Chronicles 34:8-14
<p>3 It happened in the eighteenth year of King Josiah, the king sent <i>word</i> to Shaphan the son of Azaliah the son of Meshullam, the secretary of the temple of Yahweh, saying,</p> <p>4 “Go up to Hilkiah the high priest, and let them count the money being brought to the temple of Yahweh which the keepers of the threshold have collected from the people, 5 and let them give it into the hand of those appointed doers of the work at the temple of Yahweh. Let them give it to the doers of the work who <i>are</i> at the temple of Yahweh to repair the breach of the temple: 6 to the skilled craftsmen, to the builders, to the masons, and to buy timber and hewing stones to repair the temple. 7 Only the money being given to them is not to be accounted for by them, for they <i>are</i> dealing with honesty.”</p>	<p>8 Now in the eighteenth year of his reign <i>after</i> he purged the land and the house, he sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, Maaseiah the commander of the city, and Joah the son of Joahaz, the recorder, to repair the house of Yahweh his God.</p> <p>9 And they came to Hilkiah the high priest and gave the money that was brought for the house of God, which the Levites, the guardians of the threshold, had gathered from the hand of Manasseh, Ephraim, and from the whole remnant of Israel, and from all Judah and Benjamin and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 10 And they delivered <i>it</i> into the hand of the workmen who were appointed in the house of Yahweh, and they <i>in turn</i> gave it to those doing the work who <i>were</i> at work in the house of Yahweh, to repair <i>and</i> restore the house. 11 And they dispensed <i>it</i> to the skilled craftsmen and the builders to buy stone <i>for</i> hewing and timber for the seams and for binding the houses that the kings of Judah had destroyed.</p>

	<p>12 And the men did the work faithfully. Over them as supervisors <i>were</i> appointed Jahath and Obadiah, the Levites from the Merarites, and Zechariah and Meshullam from the Kohathites. And <i>other</i> Levites, all who were skilled in instruments of song,</p> <p>13 <i>were</i> over the porters and were directing all who worked on each task. And some of the Levites <i>were</i> scribes, officials, and gatekeepers.</p> <p>14 And when they brought out the money that had been brought to the house of Yahweh, Hilkiah the priest found a scroll of the law of Yahweh by the hand of Moses.</p>
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Hilkiah the High Priest Discovers a Copy of the Torah (c. Nisan [April] 622 BC)

2 Kings 22:8–20	2 Chronicles 34:15–28
<p>8 Then Hilkiah the high priest said to Shaphan the secretary, “I have found the scroll of the Torah in the temple of Yahweh,” and Hilkiah gave the scroll to Shaphan and he read it.</p> <p>9 Shaphan the secretary came to the king and returned the king a word, and he said, “Your servant poured out the money found in the temple, and they have given it into the hand of the doers of the work appointed <i>over</i> the temple of Yahweh.”</p> <p>10 Then Shaphan the secretary informed the king saying, “Hilkiah the priest has given me a scroll.” Then Shaphan read before the king.</p> <p>11 When the king heard the words of the scroll of the Torah, he tore his clothes.</p> <p>12 Then the king commanded Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, Acbor the son of Micaiah, Shaphan the secretary, and Asaiah the servant of the king, saying,</p> <p>13 “Go, inquire of Yahweh for me and for the people and for all of Judah concerning the words of this scroll <i>that was</i> found. For the wrath of Yahweh that is kindled against us <i>is</i> great because our ancestors did not listen to the words of this scroll to do according to all that is written concerning us!”</p> <p>14 So Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Acbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah the son of Harhas, the keeper of the robes. Now she <i>was</i> living in Jerusalem in the second district. Then they spoke to her,</p> <p>15 and she said to them, “Thus says Yahweh the God of Israel, ‘Say to the man who sent you to me,</p> <p>16 “Thus says Yahweh, ‘Look I am bringing evil to this place and upon its inhabitants, <i>according to</i> all of the words of that scroll that the king of Judah has read [cf. Deut 28:15–68]</p> <p>17 because they have abandoned me and they have burned incense to other gods, provoking me to anger with all of the works of their hands. My wrath shall be kindled against this place and not be quenched.”</p> <p>18 And to the king of Judah who sent all of you to inquire of Yahweh, thus you shall say to him, “Thus says Yahweh the God of Israel, ‘Concerning the words that you have heard,</p> <p>19 because you have a responsive heart, and you humbled</p>	<p>15 And Hilkiah answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, “I have found a scroll of the law in the house of Yahweh!” Then Hilkiah gave the scroll to Shaphan.</p> <p>16 And Shaphan brought the scroll to the king and also informed the king, saying, “All that was put into the hand of your servants they are doing.</p> <p>17 They have dispensed the money which was found in the house of Yahweh and have put it into the hand of the overseers and those doing the work.”</p> <p>18 Then Shaphan the scribe reported to the king, “Hilkiah the priest gave to me a scroll.” Then Shaphan read from it before the king.</p> <p>19 And when the king heard the words of the law, he tore his garments,</p> <p>20 and the king commanded Hilkiah, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, Abdon the son of Micah, Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah the servant of the king, saying,</p> <p>21 “Go! Seek Yahweh on my behalf and on behalf of those remaining in Israel and Judah concerning the words of the scroll that was found, for the anger of Yahweh that <i>was</i> poured out on us <i>is</i> great, because our ancestors have not kept the word of Yahweh, to do all that is written in this scroll.”</p> <p>22 Then Hilkiah and those whom the king <i>had sent</i> went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum, son of Tikvath, son of Hasrah, keeper of the garments. (Now she was living in Jerusalem in the second district.) And they spoke to her concerning this.</p> <p>23 And she said to them, “Thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel: ‘Say to the man who sent you all to me:</p> <p>24 “Thus says Yahweh: ‘Behold, I am bringing disaster upon this place and upon its inhabitants—all the curses written in the scroll that were read before the king of Judah—</p> <p>25 because they have abandoned me and burned incense to other gods so as to provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands. And my wrath will be poured out on this place and it will not be quenched.’</p> <p>26 But to the king of Judah who sent you to seek Yahweh, thus shall you say to him: ‘Thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel: As <i>for</i> the words which you heard,</p> <p>27 because your heart was responsive and you humbled</p>

<p>yourself before Yahweh when you heard how I spoke against this place and against its inhabitants to become a desolation and a curse,</p> <p>and you have torn your clothes and wept before my face, I have also heard, declares Yahweh.</p> <p>20 Therefore look, I am gathering you to your ancestors, and you shall be gathered to your tombs in peace. Your eyes will not see all of the disaster that I am bringing onto this place.” ” Then they reported the word to the king.</p>	<p>yourself before God when you heard his words against this place and against its inhabitants</p> <p>and you humbled yourself before me and tore your garments and wept before me, now I also have heard,’ declares Yahweh.</p> <p>28 ‘Behold, I will gather you to your ancestors, and you will be gathered to your grave in peace. Your eyes will not see any of the disaster that I am bringing upon this place.’ ” ”</p>
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Chronological Notes

- 1) The account of Josiah’s religious reforms in Chronicles differs from that found in Kings. According to 2 Kings 22:3ff., the reform is a one-time, all-embracing event, which took place at Josiah’s eighteenth year as a result of the discovery of the Book of the Law. In Chronicles, the reform is seen as a prolonged process, beginning in the eighth year of Josiah’s reign, with the main phase of the purge of the land belonging to the twelfth year of his reign. These stages of the reform predated the finding of the Law and may be seen, along with Jeremiah’s preaching, as its cause. The reform is concluded by the events of the eighteenth year: the renewing of the covenant and the celebration of the Passover.¹ My opinion at this time is that Kings contains a compressed account of Josiah’s reforms and that Chronicles expands that account giving the hidden chronology. Thus I have re-ordered Kings and harmonized it with Chronicles.

¹ Sara Japhet, “I & II Chronicles,” *The Old Testament Library*, pp. 1017-1018.