

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

1 Kings 15:9–10

9 In the twentieth year of Jeroboam's reign over Israel, Asa became the king of Judah.

10 He ruled for forty-one years in Jerusalem. His grandmother was Maacah [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 what the LORD approved like his ancestor David had done.

12 He removed the male cultic prostitutes from the land and got rid of all the disgusting idols his ancestors had made.

2 Chronicles 14:2–5a

2 Asa did what the LORD his God desired and approved.

3 He removed the pagan altars and the high places,

smashed the sacred pillars, and cut down the Asherah poles.

4 He ordered Judah to seek the LORD God of their ancestors and to observe his law and commands.

5a He removed the high places and the incense altars from all the cities of Judah.

The Death of Jeroboam (910n BC)

1 Kings 14:19–20

19 The rest of the events of Jeroboam's reign, including the details of his battles and rule, are recorded in the scroll called the Annals of the Kings of Israel.

20 Jeroboam ruled for twenty-two years; then he passed away.

His son Nadab replaced him as king.

2 Chronicles 13:20b

20b The LORD struck him down and he died.

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

1 Kings 15:25–26

25 In the second year of Asa's reign over Judah, Jeroboam's son Nadab became the king of Israel; he ruled Israel for two years.

26 He did evil in the sight of the LORD. He followed in his father's footsteps and encouraged Israel to sin.

Nadab is Assassinated by Baasha (909n BC)

1 Kings 15:27–28, 31

27 Baasha son of Ahijah, from the tribe of Issachar, conspired against Nadab and assassinated him in Gibbethon, which was in Philistine territory. This happened while Nadab and all the Israelite army were besieging Gibbethon.

28 Baasha killed him in the third year of Asa's reign over Judah and replaced him as king.

31 The rest of the events of Nadab's reign, including all his accomplishments, are recorded in the scroll called the Annals 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's reign over Judah, Baasha son of Ahijah became king over all Israel in Tirzah; he ruled for twenty-four years.

29 When he became king, he executed Jeroboam's entire family. He wiped out everyone who breathed, just as the LORD had predicted through his servant Ahijah the Shilonite.

30 This happened because of the sins which Jeroboam committed and which he made Israel commit. These sins angered the LORD God of Israel.

34 He did evil in the sight of the LORD; he followed in Jeroboam's footsteps and encouraged Israel to sin.

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

2 Chronicles 14:1b, 5b–8

1b During his reign the land had rest for ten years.

5b The kingdom had rest under his rule.

6 He built fortified cities throughout Judah, for the land was at rest and there was no war during those years; the LORD gave him peace.

7 He said to the people of Judah: "Let's build these cities and fortify them with walls, towers, and barred gates. The land remains ours because we have followed the LORD our God and he has made us secure on all sides." So they built the cities and prospered.

8 Asa had an army of 300,000 men from Judah, equipped with large shields and spears. He also had 280,000 men from Benjamin who carried small shields and were adept archers; they were all skilled warriors.

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 marched against them with an army of 1,000,000 men (lit. "thousand of a thousand") and 300 chariots. He arrived at Mareshah,

10 and Asa went out to oppose him. They deployed for battle in the Valley of Zephathah near Mareshah.

11 Asa prayed to the LORD his God: "O LORD, there is no one but you who can help the weak when they are vastly outnumbered. Help us, O LORD our God, for we rely on you and have marched on your behalf against this huge army. O LORD our God, don't let men prevail against you!"

God Answers Asa's Prayer

12 The LORD struck down the Cushites before Asa and Judah. The Cushites fled,

13 and Asa and his army chased them as far as Gerar. The Cushites were wiped out; they were shattered before the LORD and his army. The men of Judah carried off a huge amount of plunder.

14 They defeated all the cities surrounding Gerar, for the LORD caused them to panic. The men of Judah looted all the cities, for they contained a huge amount of goods.

15 They also attacked the tents of the herdsman in charge of the livestock. They carried off many sheep and camels and then returned to Jerusalem.

Azariah Encourages Asa to Continue/Renew His Religious Reforms

15:1 God's Spirit came upon Azariah son of Oded.

2 He met Asa and told him, "Listen to me, Asa and all Judah and Benjamin! The LORD is with you when you are loyal to him. If you seek him, he will respond to you, but if you reject him, he will reject you.

3 For a long time Israel had no true God, or priest to instruct them, or law.

4 Because of their distress, they turned back to the LORD God of Israel. They sought him and he responded to them.

5 In those days no one could travel safely, for total chaos had overtaken all the people of the surrounding lands.

6 One nation was crushed by another, and one city by another, for God caused them to be in great turmoil.

7 But as for you, be strong and don't get discouraged, for your work will be rewarded."

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

1 Kings 15:13–15

2 Chronicles 15:8–19

8 When Asa heard these words and the prophecy of [Azariah the son of] Oded the prophet, he was encouraged. He removed the detestable idols from the entire land of Judah and Benjamin and from the cities he had seized in the Ephraimite hill country. He repaired the altar of the LORD in front of the porch of the LORD's temple.

9 He assembled all Judah and Benjamin, as well as the settlers from Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon who had come to live with them. Many people from Israel had come there to live when they saw that the LORD his God was with him.

10 They assembled in Jerusalem in the third month of the fifteenth year of Asa's reign.

11 At that time they sacrificed to the LORD some of the plunder

<p>13 He also removed Maacah his grandmother from her position as queen because she had made a loathsome Asherah pole. Asa cut down her Asherah pole and burned it in the Kidron Valley.</p> <p>14 The high places were not eliminated, yet Asa was wholeheartedly devoted to the LORD throughout his lifetime.</p> <p>15 He brought the holy items that he and his father had made into the LORD's temple, including the silver, gold, and other articles.</p>	<p>they had brought back, including 700 head of cattle and 7,000 sheep.</p> <p>12 They solemnly agreed to seek the LORD God of their ancestors with their whole heart and being.</p> <p>13 Anyone who would not seek the LORD God of Israel would be executed, whether they were young or old, male or female.</p> <p>14 They swore their allegiance to the LORD, shouting their approval loudly and sounding trumpets and horns.</p> <p>15 All Judah was happy about the oath, because they made the vow with their whole heart. They willingly sought the LORD and he responded to them. He made them secure on every side.</p> <p>16 King Asa also removed Maacah his grandmother from her position as queen mother because she had made a loathsome Asherah pole. Asa cut down her Asherah pole and crushed and burned it in the Kidron Valley.</p> <p>17 The high places were not eliminated from Israel, yet Asa was wholeheartedly devoted to the LORD throughout his lifetime.</p> <p>18 He brought the holy items that his father and he had made into God's temple, including the silver, gold, and other articles.</p> <p>19 There was no more war until the thirty-fifth year of Asa's reign [<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 Now Asa and King Baasha of Israel were continually at war with each other.</p> <p>17 King Baasha of Israel attacked Judah and established Ramah as a military outpost to prevent anyone from leaving or entering the land of King Asa of Judah.</p> <p>18 Asa took all the silver and gold that was left in the treasuries of the LORD's temple and of the royal palace and handed it to his servants. He then told them to deliver it to Ben Hadad son of Tabrimmon, the son of Hezion, king of Syria, ruler in Damascus, along with this message:</p> <p>19 "I want to make a treaty with you, like the one our fathers made. See, I have sent you silver and gold as a present. Break your treaty with King Baasha of Israel, so he will retreat from my land."</p> <p>20 Ben Hadad accepted King Asa's offer and ordered his army commanders to attack the cities of Israel. They conquered Ijon, Dan, Abel Beth Maacah, and all the territory of Naphtali, including the region of Kinnereth.</p> <p>21 When Baasha heard the news, he stopped fortifying Ramah and settled down in Tirzah.</p> <p>22 King Asa ordered all the men of Judah (no exemptions were granted) to carry away the stones and wood that Baasha had used to build Ramah. King Asa used the materials to build up Geba (in Benjamin) and Mizpah.</p>	<p>1 In the thirty-sixth year of Asa's reign, King Baasha of Israel attacked Judah, and he established Ramah as a military outpost to prevent anyone from leaving or entering the land of King Asa of Judah. [cf. 2 Chr 15:9]</p> <p>2 Asa took all the silver and gold that was left in the treasuries of the LORD's temple and of the royal palace and sent it to King Ben Hadad of Syria, ruler in Damascus, along with this message:</p> <p>3 "I want to make a treaty with you, like the one our fathers made. See, I have sent you silver and gold. Break your treaty with King Baasha of Israel, so he will retreat from my land."</p> <p>4 Ben Hadad accepted King Asa's offer and ordered his army commanders to attack the cities of Israel. They conquered Ijon, Dan, Abel Maim, and all the storage cities of Naphtali.</p> <p>5 When Baasha heard the news, he stopped fortifying Ramah and abandoned the project.</p> <p>6 King Asa ordered all the men of Judah to carry away the stones and wood that Baasha had used to build Ramah. He used the materials to build up Geba and Mizpah.</p> <p>7 At that time Hanani the prophet visited King Asa of Judah and said to him: "Because you relied on the king of Syria and did not</p>

<p>32 Asa and King [Baasha] of Israel were continually at war with each other.</p>	<p>rely on the LORD your God, the army of the king of Syria has escaped from your hand. 8 Did not the Cushites and Libyans have a huge army with chariots and a very large number of horsemen? But when you relied on the LORD, he handed them over to you! 9 Certainly the LORD watches the whole earth carefully and is ready to strengthen those who are devoted to him. You have acted foolishly in this matter; from now on you will have war. 10 Asa was so angry at the prophet, he put him in jail. Asa also 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 Jehu son of Hanani received from the LORD this message predicting Baasha's downfall:
 2 "I raised you up from the dust and made you ruler over my people Israel. Yet you followed in Jeroboam's footsteps and encouraged my people Israel to sin; their sins have made me angry.
 3 So I am ready to burn up Baasha and his family, and make your family like the family of Jeroboam son of Nebat.
 4 Dogs will eat the members of Baasha's family who die in the city, and the birds of the sky will eat the ones who die in the country."
 7 The prophet Jehu son of Hanani received from the LORD the message predicting the downfall of Baasha and his family because of all the evil Baasha had done in the sight of the LORD. His actions angered the LORD (including the way he had destroyed Jeroboam's dynasty), so that his family ended up like Jeroboam's.
 5 The rest of the events of Baasha's reign, including his accomplishments and successes, are recorded in the scroll called the Annals of the Kings of Israel.
 6 Baasha passed away and was buried in Tirzah. His son Elah replaced him as king.

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

1 Kings 16:8

8 In the twenty-sixth year of King Asa's reign over Judah, Baasha's son Elah became king over Israel; he ruled in Tirzah for two years.

Elah is Assassinated by Zimri (885n BC)

1 Kings 16:9–10, 14

9 His servant Zimri, a commander of half of his chariot force, conspired against him. While Elah was drinking heavily at the house of Arza, who supervised the palace in Tirzah,
 10 Zimri came in and struck him dead. (This happened in the twenty-seventh year of Asa's reign over Judah.) Zimri replaced Elah as king.
 14 The rest of the events of Elah's reign, including all his accomplishments, are recorded in the scroll called the Annals 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's reign over Judah, Zimri became king over Israel; he ruled for seven days in Tirzah.
 11 When he became king and occupied the throne, he killed Baasha's entire family. He did not spare any male belonging to him; he killed his relatives and his friends.
 12 Zimri destroyed Baasha's entire family, just as the LORD had predicted to Baasha through Jehu the prophet.
 13 This happened because of all the sins which Baasha and his son Elah committed and which they made Israel commit. They angered the LORD God of Israel with their worthless idols.
 15b Zimri's revolt took place while the army was deployed in Gibbethon, which was in Philistine territory.
 16 While deployed there, the army received this report: "Zimri has conspired against the king and assassinated him." So all Israel made Omri, the commander of the army, king over Israel that very day in the camp.
 17 Omri and all Israel went up from Gibbethon and besieged Tirzah.
 18 When Zimri saw that the city was captured, he went into the fortified area of the royal palace. He set the palace on fire and died

in the flames.

19 This happened because of the sins he committed. He did evil in the sight of the LORD and followed in Jeroboam's footsteps and encouraged Israel to continue sinning.

20 The rest of the events of Zimri's reign, including the details of his revolt, are recorded in the scroll called the Annals 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.