

Josiah's National Religious Reform (629t BC)

2 Kings 23:4–20

2 Chronicles 34:3b–7

4 The king ordered

Hilkiah the high priest, the high-ranking priests, and the guards to bring out of the LORD's temple all the items that were used in the worship of Baal, Asherah, and all the stars of the sky.

The king burned them outside of Jerusalem in the terraces of Kidron, and carried their ashes to Bethel.

5 He eliminated the pagan priests whom the kings of Judah had appointed to offer sacrifices on the high places in the cities of Judah and in the area right around Jerusalem. (They offered sacrifices to Baal, the sun god, the moon god, the constellations, and all the stars in the sky.)

6 He removed the Asherah pole from the LORD's temple and took it outside Jerusalem to the Kidron Valley, where he burned it.

He smashed it to dust and then threw the dust in the public graveyard.

7 He tore down the quarters of the male cultic prostitutes in the LORD's temple, where women were weaving shrines for Asherah.

8 He brought all the priests from the cities of Judah and ruined the high places where the priests had offered sacrifices, from Geba to Beer Sheba. He tore down the high place of the goat idols situated at the entrance of the gate of Joshua, the city official, on the left side of the city gate.

9 (Now the priests of the high places did not go up to the altar of the LORD in Jerusalem, but they did eat unleavened cakes among their fellow priests.)

10 The king ruined Topheth in the Valley of Ben Hinnom so that no one could pass his son or his daughter through the fire to Molech.

11 He removed from the entrance to the LORD's temple the statues of horses that the kings of Judah had placed there in honor of the sun god. (They were kept near the room of Nathan Melech the eunuch, which was situated among the courtyards.) He burned up the chariots devoted to the sun god.

12 The king tore down the altars the kings of Judah had set up on the roof of Ahaz's upper room, as well as the altars Manasseh had set up in the two courtyards of the LORD's temple. He crushed them up and threw the dust in the Kidron Valley.

13 The king ruined the high places east of Jerusalem, south of the Mount of Destruction, that King Solomon of Israel had built for the detestable Sidonian goddess Astarte, the detestable Moabite god Chemosh, and the horrible Ammonite god Milcom.

14 He smashed the sacred pillars to bits, cut down the Asherah pole, and filled those shrines with human bones.

15 He also tore down the altar in Bethel at the high place made by Jeroboam son of Nebat, who encouraged Israel to sin. He burned all the combustible items at that high place and crushed them to dust; including the Asherah pole.

16 When Josiah turned around, he saw the tombs there on the hill. So he ordered the bones from the tombs to be brought; he burned them on the altar and defiled it. This fulfilled the LORD's announcement made by the prophet while Jeroboam

3b In his twelfth year he began ridding Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, Asherah poles, idols, and images.

4 He ordered

the altars of the Baals to be torn down, and broke the incense altars that were above them.

He smashed the Asherah poles, idols and images,

crushed them up and sprinkled the dust over the tombs of those who had sacrificed to them.

<p>stood by the altar during a festival. [1 Kgs 13:1–3] King Josiah turned and saw the grave of the prophet who had foretold this.</p> <p>17 He asked, “What is this grave marker I see?” The men from the city replied, “It’s the grave of the prophet who came from Judah and foretold these very things you have done to the altar of Bethel.”</p> <p>18 The king said, “Leave it alone! No one must touch his bones.” So they left his bones undisturbed, as well as the bones of the Israelite prophet buried beside him.</p> <p>19 Josiah also removed all the shrines on the high places in the cities of Samaria. The kings of Israel had made them and angered the LORD. He did to them what he had done to the high place in Bethel.</p> <p>20 He sacrificed all the priests of the high places on the altars located there, and burned human bones on them.</p> <p>Then he returned to Jerusalem.</p>	<p>6 In the cities of Manasseh, Ephraim, and Simeon, as far as Naphtali, and in the ruins around them,</p> <p>7a he tore down the altars and Asherah poles, demolished the idols, and smashed all the incense altars throughout the land of Israel.</p> <p>5 He burned the bones of the pagan priests on their altars; he purified Judah and Jerusalem.</p> <p>7b Then he returned to Jerusalem.</p>
--	--

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 In the eighteenth year of King Josiah’s reign, the king sent the scribe Shaphan son of Azaliah, son of Meshullam,</p> <p>to the LORD’s temple with these orders:</p> <p>4 “Go up to Hilkiah the high priest and have him melt down the silver that has been brought by the people to the LORD’s temple and has been collected by the guards at the door.</p> <p>5 Have them hand it over to the construction foremen assigned to the LORD’s temple. They in turn should pay the temple workers to repair it,</p> <p>6 including craftsmen, builders, and masons, and should buy wood and chiseled stone for the repair work.</p> <p>7 Do not audit the foremen who disburse the silver, for they are honest.”</p>	<p>8 In the eighteenth year of his reign, he continued his policy of purifying the land and the temple. He sent Shaphan son of Azaliah,</p> <p>Maaseiah the city official, and Joah son of Joahaz the secretary to repair the temple of the LORD his God.</p> <p>9 They went to Hilkiah the high priest and gave him the silver that had been brought to God’s temple. The Levites who guarded the door had collected it from the people of Manasseh and Ephraim and from all who were left in Israel, as well as from all the people of Judah and Benjamin and the residents of Jerusalem.</p> <p>10 They handed it over to the construction foremen assigned to the LORD’s temple. They in turn paid the temple workers to restore and repair it.</p> <p>11 They gave money to the craftsmen and builders to buy chiseled stone and wood for the braces and rafters of the buildings that the kings of Judah had allowed to fall into disrepair.</p> <p>12 The men worked faithfully. Their supervisors were Jahath and</p>

	<p>Obadiah (Levites descended from Merari), as well as Zechariah and Meshullam (descendants of Kohath). The Levites, all of whom were skilled musicians, 13 supervised the laborers and all the foremen on their various jobs. Some of the Levites were scribes, officials, and guards. 14 When they took out the silver that had been brought to the LORD's temple, Hilkiah the priest found the law scroll the LORD had given to Moses.</p>
--	---

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 Hilkiah the high priest informed Shaphan the scribe, "I found the law scroll in the LORD's temple." Hilkiah gave the scroll to Shaphan and he read it. 9 Shaphan the scribe went to the king and reported, "Your servants melted down the silver in the temple and handed it over to the construction foremen assigned to the LORD's temple." 10 Then Shaphan the scribe told the king, "Hilkiah the priest has given me a scroll." Shaphan read it out loud before the king. 11 When the king heard the words of the law scroll, he tore his clothes. 12 The king ordered Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Acbor son of Micaiah, Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah the king's servant, 13 "Go, seek an oracle from the LORD for me and the people—for all Judah. Find out about the words of this scroll that has been discovered. For the LORD's fury has been ignited against us, because our ancestors have not obeyed the words of this scroll by doing all that it instructs us to do." 14 So Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Acbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, the supervisor of the wardrobe. (She lived in Jerusalem in the Mishneh district.) They stated their business, 15 and she said to them: "This is what the LORD God of Israel says: 'Say this to the man who sent you to me: 16 "This is what the LORD says: 'I am about to bring disaster on this place and its residents, the details of which are recorded in the scroll which the king of Judah has read. [cf. Deut 28:15–68] 17 This will happen because they have abandoned me and offered sacrifices to other gods, angering me with all the idols they have made. My anger will ignite against this place and will not be extinguished!" 18 Say this to the king of Judah, who sent you to seek an oracle from the LORD: "This is what the LORD God of Israel says concerning the words you have heard: 19 'You displayed a sensitive spirit and humbled yourself before the LORD when you heard how I intended to make this place and its residents into an appalling example of an accursed people. You tore your clothes and wept before me, and I have heard you,' says the LORD.</p>	<p>15 Hilkiah informed Shaphan the scribe, "I found the law scroll in the LORD's temple." Hilkiah gave the scroll to Shaphan. 16 Shaphan brought the scroll to the king and reported, "Your servants are doing everything assigned to them." 17 They melted down the silver in the LORD's temple and handed it over to the supervisors of the construction foremen." 18 Then Shaphan the scribe told the king, "Hilkiah the priest has given me a scroll." Shaphan read it out loud before the king. 19 When the king heard the words of the law scroll, he tore his clothes. 20 The king ordered Hilkiah, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Abdon son of Micah, Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah the king's servant, 21 "Go, seek an oracle from the LORD for me and those who remain in Israel and Judah. Find out about the words of this scroll that has been discovered. For the LORD's fury has been ignited against us, because our ancestors have not obeyed the word of the LORD by doing all that this scroll instructs!" 22 So Hilkiah and the others sent by the king went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum son of Tokhath, the son of Hasrah, the supervisor of the wardrobe. (She lived in Jerusalem in the Mishneh district.) They stated their business, 23 and she said to them: "This is what the LORD God of Israel says: 'Say this to the man who sent you to me: 24 "This is what the LORD says: 'I am about to bring disaster on this place and its residents, the details of which are recorded in the scroll which they read before the king of Judah. 25 This will happen because they have abandoned me and offered sacrifices to other gods, angering me with all the idols they have made. My anger will ignite against this place and will not be extinguished!" 26 Say this to the king of Judah, who sent you to seek an oracle from the LORD: "This is what the LORD God of Israel says concerning the words you have heard: 27 'You displayed a sensitive spirit and humbled yourself before God when you heard his words concerning this place and its residents. You humbled yourself before me, tore your clothes and wept before me, and I have heard you,' says the LORD.</p>

20 'Therefore I will allow you to die and be buried in peace. You will not have to witness all the disaster I will bring on this place.'"" Then they reported back to the king.	28 'Therefore I will allow you to die and be buried in peace. You will not have to witness all the disaster I will bring on this place and its residents.'"" Then they reported back to the king.
---	---

Scripture quoted by permission. All scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the NET Bible® copyright ©1996–2006 by Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C. <http://bible.org> All rights reserved. This material is available in its entirety as a free download or online web use at <http://netbible.org/>.

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.