



LESSON 6

JEHOSHAPHAT'S BLINDSPOT

The Scripture says of Ahab that he “did evil in the sight of the Lord more than all who were before him” (1Kings 16.30). In our last lesson we looked at the rule of this wicked ruler of the northern kingdom, but significantly during Ahab’s reign there was a righteous king in the southern kingdom. Of Je-

Israel		Judah	
Jeroboam	931–910	Rehoboam	931–913
Nadab	910–909	Abijah	913–911
Baasha	909–886	Asa	911–870
Elah	886–885		
Zimri	885		
Omri	885–874		
Ahab	874–853	Jehoshaphat	873–848
Ahaziah	853–852		
Joram	852–841	Jehoram	848–841
Jehu	841–814	Ahaziah	841
		Athaliah	841–835
Jehoahaz	814–798	Joash	835–796
Jehoash	798–782	Amaziah	796–767
Jeroboam	793–753	Uzziah	792–740
II			
Zechariah	753		
Shallum	752		
Menahem	752–742	Jotham	750–731
Pekahiah	742–740		
Pekah	752–732	Ahaz	735–715
Hoshea	732–722	Hezekiah	729–686
		Manasseh	696–642
		Amon	642–640
		Josiah	640–609
		Jehoahaz	609
		Jehoiakim	608–598
		Jehoiachin	598–597
		Zedekiah	597–586

hoshaphat the scripture says he “walked in the way of his father Asa and did not depart from it, doing right in the sight of the Lord” (2Chron. 20.32). However, we will see that this faithful king had a blindspot: his wicked contemporary to the north.

We noted that the reign of Jehoshaphat’s father, Asa, was typified by faithfulness to the Lord, even though he had significant episodes where he failed to trust his God. The last of these occurred at the close of Asa’s reign when he contracted a disease in his feet. Rather than seek the Lord, he turned to his physicians (2Chron. 16.12). It would seem that Jehoshaphat’s reign began at this point, a coregent rule with his father for 3 years until Asa’s death. Thus, even though Asa did not die until 870 B.C., Jehoshaphat’s reign likely began in 873 B.C.

Jehoshaphat took pride in the ways of the Lord

The reign of Jehoshaphat was a clear highpoint in the history of the southern kingdom. His faithfulness to the Lord was such that the text says, “he took great pride in the ways of the Lord” (2Chron. 17.6 NASB95). Other translations read “his heart was courageous in the ways of the Lord” (ESV) or “his heart took delight in the ways of the Lord” (NKJV). Regardless of translation, it is a glowing commendation of

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Jehoshaphat's character. Let's examine some of the ways which Jehoshaphat followed the ways of the Lord.

- » He followed the example of David (2Chron. 17.3) The NASB95 reads "he followed the example of his father David's earlier days". This could mark a contrast between David's reign pre and post Bathsheba, but many believe that the reference is to his father Asa, who clearly possessed greater faith in the early portion of his reign. Regardless, the passage means that Jehoshaphat followed the righteous examples of others.
- » He did not seek the Baals, but the God of his father (2Chron. 17.3-4). The NIV reads "he did not consult the Baals" and that may better reflect the meaning of the passage. "'Consulting' refers to asking the deity for oracles. This would usually occur at a shrine dedicated to the deity, and the oracle would be mediated by the priests of that deity. In the ancient world oracular answers were often given by diviners, who would read favorable or unfavorable answers in the entrails of a sacrificed animal. Even while the Israelites fully acknowledged Yahweh as their national patron deity, some were inclined to continue to associate Baal with fertility and to consult him regarding agricultural issues. Also on daily issues such as sickness and health, they sometimes chose to look for information from Baal rather than from Yahweh (see 2 Kings 1:2)." (IVP Bible Background Commentary)
- » He instructed the people in the Law of God (2Chron. 17.7-9; 19.4). In the days of Asa, the Lord spoke through Azariah and reminded the people of a time when "for many days Israel was without the true God and without a teaching priest and without law." That was true of God's people at several point in their history, and was true of the northern kingdom since the priests and Levites had relocated to the south (See 2Chron. 11.13-17). Jehoshaphat took measures to insure that would not be true during his time! We read in 2Chron. 19.4 that Jehoshaphat's efforts were not limited to Judah, but extended to "the hill country of Ephraim".
- » He promoted justice among the people (2Chron. 19.5-11). The king's zeal for the Law was also seen in his commitment to justice. He appointed judges in all the cities (vs. 5) just as the Law prescribed (see Deuteronomy 16.18-20). Furthermore, the Law specified that the priests would render verdict in difficult cases (Deuteronomy 17.8-13), thus Jehoshaphat also appointed priests for this purpose (vss. 8-11). Note that the king wasn't interested in merely following the procedures of the Law, but their intent as well. Thus, he instructed the judges, "consider what you are doing, for you do not judge for man but for the Lord who is with you when you render judgment" (vs. 6).

Sadly, it's important to note that while Jehoshaphat was dedicated to the Lord, his zeal didn't necessarily translate to the rest of the people. Towards the end of his reign we read, "The high places, however, were not removed; the

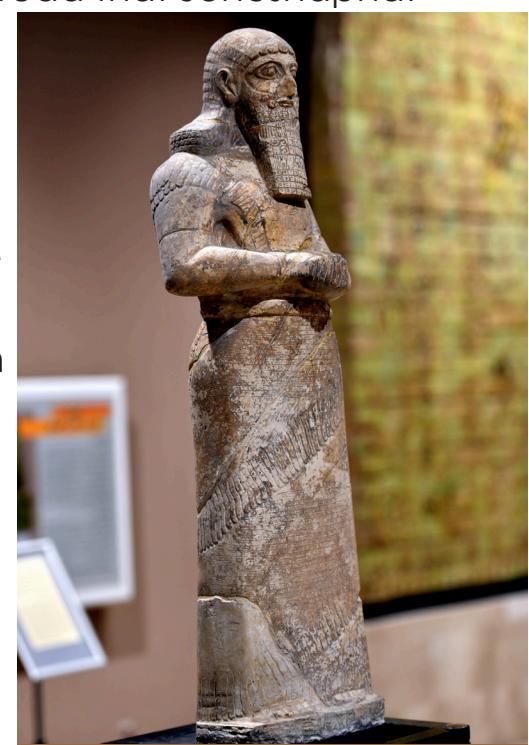
people had not yet directed their hearts to the God of their fathers" (2Chronicles 20.33). This is important to keep in mind as we continue our study; faithful kings such as Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah and Josiah could only do so much. They may have been faithful, but they could not force the people to give their hearts to the Lord. Tragically, the people did not.

The Lord established Jehoshaphat's kingdom

It should come as no surprise that Jehoshaphat's faithfulness was rewarded by the Lord. We read, "So the LORD established the kingdom in his control, and all Judah brought tribute to Jehoshaphat, and he had great riches and honor" (2Chron. 17.5). The Lord not only established Jehoshaphat's rule over Judah, but also brought the surrounding nations under his yoke (2Chron. 17.10-11). "This tribute, together with statements of military fortifications, makes it clear that the Southern Kingdom now controls the caravan routes across the Arabah and Negev and on to the Coastal Highway, providing a lucrative source of tax and tribute income for Jehoshaphat's administration. This economic and political stability will in turn allow for further military strengthening, building projects, and governmental expansion." (Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary) Jehoshaphat's might is further detailed in 2Chron. 17.12-19.

Jehoshaphat's blindspot: Ahab

It would seem that at the beginning of his reign Jehoshaphat cast a wary eye toward Ahab, his northern contemporary. We read that Jehoshaphat "placed troops in all the fortified cities of Judah, and set garrisons in the land of Judah and in the cities of Ephraim which Asa his father had captured" (2Chronicles 17.2). However, this wariness would not last and we read that this godly king had one blindspot: he allied himself with the house of Ahab.



1. Jehoshaphat entered a marriage alliance with Ahab (2Chron. 18.1). Specifically, he chose Ahab's daughter, Athaliah, for the bride of his son Jehoram (2Chron. 21.6).
2. Jehoshaphat entered military alliances with Ahab's house.
 - » The first of these occurred when Ahab went to war with Aram over the disputed city of Ramoth-gilead (2Chron. 18). There may have been other geo-political factors

Shalmaneser III

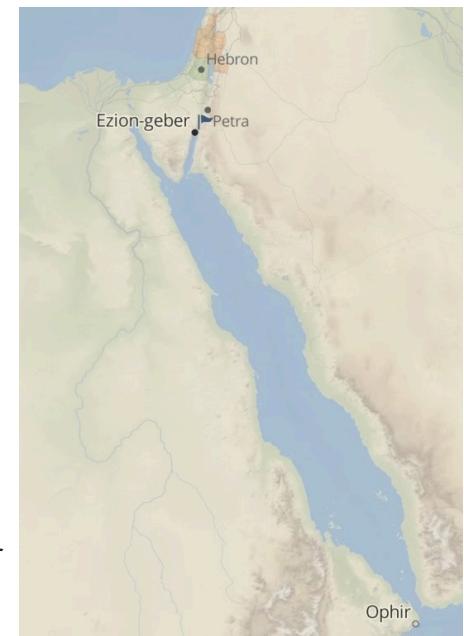
involved in this alliance. The Assyrian king, Shalmaneser III, had greatly expanded his kingdom. However, he either suffered a defeat or had a stalemate against a confederation of kings, including Ahab. Now that the Assyrian threat was diminished, the nations of Israel and Judah may have allied to further secure and expand their own borders, casting their attention on the region of Aram to the north.

- » Jehoshaphat would also ally with Jehoram, the second of Ahab's sons to rule over Israel. This was after Moab rebelled against Israel and is recorded in 2Kings 3.4-27.

3. Jehoshaphat entered into a trade alliance with Ahaziah (2Chronicles 20.35-37; 1Kings 22.47-49). Ahaziah was the first son of Ahab to rule over Israel. At this time Edom was still under Judean control, so the plan was to sail ships from Ezion-geber (at the head of the Gulf of Aqaba) down the Red Sea to Ophir in south Arabia.

Jehoshaphat's affection for Ahab and his house was a blight on an otherwise glowing resume. As one author put it, "His penchant for involvement with his ungodly colleagues from the north is beyond explanation, for he neither needed the relationship nor ever gained anything from it but sorrow." (Eugene Merrill, Kingdom of Priests 360-361). The Lord made His displeasure known in several ways.

- » The Lord rebuked Jehoshaphat through His prophets. Jehu rebuked the king when he allied with Ahab against Aram (2Chron. 19.1-3) and Eliezer when Jehoshaphat allied with Ahaziah (2Chron. 20.37).
- » Judah was invaded by the Moabites and Ammonites (2Chron. 20). The text does not say that this invasion was a result of Jehoshaphat's alliance with



Ahab, but it's a stark contrast to what was said earlier: "the dread of the Lord was on all the kingdoms of the lands which were around Judah" (2Chron. 17.10). It is likely that Israel's defeat at the hands of the Arameans emboldened Moab and Ammon.

- » And then there are the lasting consequences which would result from the marriage alliance, consequences we will discuss further in our next lesson.

