

1 Kings 15
January 26, 2025

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: When hard circumstances hit us, or we're really in a pickle, are we quicker to find strength and refuge in our own abilities and resources, or are we quicker to trust the Lord and rely on Him? [Let people engage]

Transition: All of us like to feel like we're in control and that we can be in charge of our own outcomes. And we may think we're "quick" to bring our issues to Him, but I have a suspicion that we like to try to solve things ourselves instead of going straight to Him!

In this chapter, we're going to be talking about four (4) kings. Two (2) in Judah and two (2) in Israel. One of the kings, King Asa, was overall a good king, but King Baasha, king of Israel, (909–886 b.c.) was a perennial enemy of Asa. Baasha ... fortified Ramah, located on the Judah-Israel border just four miles north of Jerusalem, so he could maintain control of the traffic between Israel and Judah. King Asa needed help. But instead of trusting and relying on the Lord, he looked to the King Aram and offered money to enter into a treaty with him to help remove King Baasha from Ramah! Apparently, King Aram could be bought! Let's read the story.

BOOK:

Abijah King of Judah

15 In the eighteenth year of the reign of Jeroboam son of Nebat, Abijah became king of Judah,² and he reigned in Jerusalem three years. His mother's name was Maacah daughter of Abishalom.(a variant of Absalom)

³ He (Abijah) committed all the sins his father (Jeroboam) had done before him; his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his forefather had been. ⁴ Nevertheless, for David's sake the Lord his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem by raising up a son to succeed him and by making Jerusalem strong. ⁵ For David had done what was right in the eyes of the Lord and had not failed to keep any of the Lord's commands all the days of his life—except in the case of Uriah the Hittite.

⁶ There was war between Rehoboam (Solomon's son) and Jeroboam throughout Abijah's (son of Rehoboam, father of Asa) lifetime. ⁷ As for the other events of Abijah's reign, and all he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? There was war between Abijah and Jeroboam. ⁸ And Abijah rested with his fathers and was buried in the City of David. And Asa (Abijah's son) his son succeeded him as king.

Asa King of Judah

⁹ In the twentieth year of Jeroboam king of Israel, Asa became king of Judah,¹⁰ and he reigned in Jerusalem forty-one years. His grandmother's name was Maacah daughter of Abishalom.

¹¹ Asa did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, as his father David had done. ¹² He expelled the male shrine prostitutes from the land and got rid of all the idols his fathers had made. ¹³ He even deposed his grandmother Maacah from her position as queen mother, because she had made a repulsive Asherah pole. Asa cut the pole down and burned it in the Kidron Valley. ¹⁴ Although he did not remove the high places, Asa's heart was fully committed to the Lord all his life. ¹⁵ He brought into the temple of the Lord the silver and gold and the articles that he and his father had dedicated.

¹⁶ There was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel throughout their reigns. ¹⁷ Baasha king of Israel went up against Judah and fortified Ramah to prevent anyone from leaving or entering the territory of Asa king of Judah.

¹⁸ Asa then took all the silver and gold that was left in the treasuries of the Lord's temple and of his own palace. He entrusted it to his officials and sent them to Ben-Hadad son of Tabrimmon, the son of Hezion, the king of Aram, who was ruling in Damascus. ¹⁹ "Let there be a treaty between me and you," he said, "as there was between my father and your father. See, I am sending you a gift of silver and gold. Now break your treaty with Baasha king of Israel so he will withdraw from me."

²⁰ Ben-Hadad agreed with King Asa and sent the commanders of his forces against the towns of Israel. He conquered Ijon, Dan, Abel Beth Maacah and all Kinnereth in addition to Naphtali. ²¹ When Baasha heard this, he stopped building Ramah and withdrew to Tirzah. ²² Then King Asa issued an order to all Judah—no one was exempt—and they carried away from Ramah the stones and timber Baasha had been using there. With them King Asa built up Geba in Benjamin, and also Mizpah.

²³ As for all the other events of Asa's reign, all his achievements, all he did and the cities he built, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? In his old age, however, his feet became diseased. ²⁴ Then Asa rested with his fathers and was buried with them in the city of his father David. And Jehoshaphat his son succeeded him as king.

Nadab King of Israel

²⁵ Nadab son of Jeroboam became king of 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 the Lord, walking in the ways of his father and in his sin, which he had caused Israel to commit.

²⁷ Baasha son of Ahijah of the house of Issachar plotted against him (Nadab), and he struck him (Nadab) down at Gibbethon, a Philistine town, while Nadab and all Israel were besieging it. ²⁸ Baasha killed Nadab in the third year of Asa king of Judah and succeeded him as king.

²⁹ As soon as he (Baasha) began to reign, he killed Jeroboam's whole family. He (Baasha) did not leave Jeroboam anyone that breathed, but destroyed them all, according to the word of the Lord given through his servant Ahijah the Shilonite—³⁰ because of the sins Jeroboam had committed and had caused Israel to commit, and because he (Jeroboam) provoked the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger.

³¹ As for the other events of Nadab's reign, and all he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel? ³² There was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel throughout their reigns.

Baasha King of Israel

³³ In the third year of Asa king of Judah, Baasha son of Ahijah became king of all Israel in Tirzah, and he reigned twenty-four years. ³⁴ He did evil in the eyes of the Lord, walking in the ways of Jeroboam and in his sin, which he had caused Israel to commit.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn't understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

Asa's story illustrates that we are not bound by the sins of our parents and can actively choose to follow God, even when faced with a family history of disobedience. More specifically, Asa took decisive actions to remove idols and cleanse the land to promote positive change within a community. Like Asa, we are to seek God in all of our decisions. We want to rely on God for strength and wisdom.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament (1 Kings 15). Victor Books.

B. Abijam (15:1–8).

“Like father, like son.” God allowed him to reign only three short years. Note that his mother was related to Absalom (“Abishalom” in v. 2). He declared war on Jeroboam (read 2 Chron. 13), and God gave him victory *for David's sake*. The victory was purely military; there was no spiritual revival in the nation.

C. Asa (15:9–24).

Read 2 Chron. 14–16. Asa was a *good* king, a welcome change after years of evil rulers. He tried to take away the sins established by Rehoboam (14:24). There was a brief period of rest and revival under his leadership. He even deposed his own mother because she was an idol worshiper (2 Chron. 15:16). Sad to say, his reign did not end as well as it began, for he trusted in men for protection and failed to trust in the Lord. He used the temple wealth to hire Syria to fight for him; and this ungodly alliance cost him much personally.

D. Jehoshaphat (15:24).

See also 22:41–50 and 2 Chron. 17:1–21:3. The writer here does not give the history of this good king who purged out the idolatry and who sought to teach the people the Word of God. God gave him many victories, because he “sought the Lord with all his heart” (2 Chron. 22:9).

III. The Decay of Israel (15:25–16:34)

Six kings are listed here, starting with Nadab and ending with Ahab, and all of them were evil. Nadab maintained his father's wicked idolatry; he was slain by Baasha during one of the battles with the Philistines. Baasha reigned for twenty-four years and fulfilled the prophecy of 14:14–15 that all of Jeroboam's seed would be destroyed. Jehu the prophet then came with a message for Baasha, however, predicting the destruction of Baasha's household. His son, Elah, reigned for less than two years and was killed by Zimri, one of his captains, while the king was drunk. Zimri led the nation for only one week (16:15), but during that time he wiped out the family of Baasha and fulfilled the prophecy of Jehu (16:1–4). The army revolted and appointed Omri the new king. He in turn marched against Zimri, who set fire to the palace and committed suicide by perishing in the blaze. Omri ruled for twelve years (after putting down a brief revolt of the people) and led the people into further sin. His son Ahab was married to Jezebel, and this brought Baal worship officially into the kingdom. His only claim to fame was the establishing of Samaria as the capital of the northern kingdom. Upon his death, his son Ahab came to the throne, and under his leadership the tribes declined further into idolatry and sin.

You will note that it was when the nation was moving into idolatry that God called His prophets forth to preach to the people. We have met an anonymous prophet in chapter 13, and we will yet meet Elijah and Elisha. Of course, Jehu and Ahijah should also be mentioned. When God's people sin, it is only the Word of God proclaimed by the servants of God that can call them back and save them.

“Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people” (Prov. 14:34, NKJV). When godly kings were ruling, God blessed His people; when ungodly men reigned, God sent judgment and defeat. How tragic it is to see this great nation, called by the Lord, now declining in spiritual things and turning away from the truth. Yes, they often had material prosperity, but this was no sign that God was pleased with their deeds. In fact, the lust for material things often led the people farther from God. The best way to build a godly nation is to have godly citizens in godly churches (1 Tim. 2:1–6).

Constable, C.L. (1985). 1 Kings. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Vol. 1, pp. 518-520) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books

D. Abijah’s evil reign in Judah (15:1–8)

1. Abijah’s wickedness (15:1–6)

15:1–2. Abijah’s three-year reign in Judah (913–911 b.c.) was within Jeroboam’s reign in Israel (931–910 b.c.). Abijah was a son of Rehoboam and Maacah, a daughter of Absalom (Abishalom is a variant spelling), David’s son. “Daughter” or son does not always mean a descendant in the very next generation; it is often used of a descendant two or more generations removed.

15:3–6. All the sins of Rehoboam refer to the same kinds of idolatrous offenses (cf. 14:23–24). The importance of one’s affections is emphasized by the reference to Abijah’s heart; one’s affections often determine his actions. God’s patience with Abijah was because of His promises to David more than to Abijah’s own character. (Him, v. 4, refers to David, not Abijah.) A lamp is a picturesque way of describing a successor or successors who would dispel all kinds of darkness; the figure refers to the whole of David’s dynasty (cf. comments on 11:36; also see 2 Sam. 21:17; 2 Kings 8:19).

The war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam (cf. 1 Kings 14:30) continued throughout Abijah’s lifetime. One episode is recorded in 2 Chronicles 13:2–20 where Abijah’s trust in God resulted in victory in spite of his being outnumbered. Abijah did not abandon the Lord even though he tolerated idolatry.

2. Abijah’s death (15:7–8)

15:7–8. On the book of the annals of the kings of Judah see comments on 14:29. The second reference to war with Jeroboam (cf. 15:6) suggests that the antagonism between Israel and Judah at this time was intense. Rested with his fathers is a euphemism for death.

E. Asa’s good reign in Judah (15:9–24)

Eight of the 19 kings of Judah were good. That is, their whole reign was evaluated by God as good even though some of their recorded deeds were evil. Four of these good kings led Judah in religious reforms designed to restore the nation to a purer form of worship and to return the people to obeying the Mosaic Law. Asa was the first good king of Judah (v. 11) and the first reformer.

1. Asa's goodness (15:9–15)

15:9–10. Asa became king just shortly before Jeroboam's reign in Israel ended in 910 b.c. Asa reigned ... 41 years (911–870 b.c.). Maacah was his grandmother (not "mother" as in some versions; cf. v. 2).

15:11–13. The divine assessment of Asa's rule was that he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, generally speaking. David, of course, was Asa's ancestor, not his immediate father. The writer of 2 Chronicles gave much more information about Asa's reign than is found in 1 Kings. Asa's reign began with 10 years of peace (2 Chron. 14:1). It was probably during this period that he instituted his first series of religious reforms (2 Chron. 14:2–5). At that time he also fortified Judah's defenses (2 Chron. 14:6–8). The peace was broken by an invasion by Zerah the Ethiopian, a commander of the Egyptian King Osarkon I. But Asa defeated the Egyptians, though Judah was greatly outnumbered, by relying on the Lord (2 Chron. 14:9–15). The Prophet Azariah warned Asa to continue to trust in God and not to think that his own power had saved him (2 Chron. 15:1–7). More years of peace followed (2 Chron. 15:19). Encouraged by God's prophet, Asa embarked on a second period of reformation (1 Kings 15:12–15; 2 Chron. 15:8–18). The expulsion of the sodomites and the destruction of idols introduced by Rehoboam and Abijah were part of this reform, as was Asa's deposing of his grandmother Maacah from the official position of queen mother because of her repulsive Asherah pole, which he burned ... in the Kidron Valley east of Jerusalem.

15:14–15. Asa removed some of the high places (2 Chron. 14:3) but not all of them (1 Kings 15:14). Nevertheless, his heart was fully committed to the Lord all his life. In view of Asa's self-reliance later in his life this statement probably means that he did not tolerate idolatry but worshiped only the true God. The silver ... gold, and articles that he and his father had dedicated probably refer to the booty that Abijah had taken in his war with Jeroboam (2 Chron. 13:16–17) and what Asa had acquired in defeating the Egyptians (2 Chron. 14:12–13). Second Chronicles adds other details of Asa's reform including an account of the formal renewal of the Mosaic Covenant (2 Chron. 15:9–17).

2. Asa's victory over Baasha (15:16–22)

15:16–17. Baasha king of Israel (909–886 b.c.) was a perennial enemy of Asa. Baasha ... fortified Ramah, on the Judah-Israel border just four miles north of Jerusalem, so he could maintain control of the traffic between Israel and Judah.

15:18–21. Asa's plan to divert Baasha from strengthening Ramah included emptying his treasuries to buy a treaty with Ben-Hadad I, the king of Aram ... in Damascus (see the chart "Kings of Aram in 1 and 2 Kings," near 1 Kings 11:23–25). Asa tried to induce Ben-Hadad to break his treaty with Baasha, and Asa's plan succeeded. Ben-Hadad invaded Israel and took some towns near the Sea of Kinnereth (later known as the Sea of Galilee), forcing Baasha to move his forces from Ramah to the north. Baasha himself went to Tirzah, the capital of Israel at that time (cf. 14:17).

15:22. Asa then proceeded to confiscate the building materials (stones and timber) Baasha left behind to fortify Ramah and used them to strengthen his own defense cities of Geba and Mizpah

near Israel's border. Asa's plan was clever and successful, but it demonstrated lack of trust in God. For getting help from Aram's king, the Prophet Hanani rebuked Asa (2 Chron. 16:7–9). Asa resented the rebuke and put Hanani in prison (2 Chron. 16:10). Perhaps Asa's successes against Egypt and Israel made him think too highly of himself.

3. Asa's death (15:23–24)

15:23–24. Asa's achievements were recorded in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah (cf. 14:29; 15:7). At the end of his life Asa again failed to seek the Lord. When his feet became diseased, he did not ask for the Lord's help but relied only on the physicians (2 Chron. 16:12). Though Asa's faith was not what it might have been, all in all his relationship with God was characterized by fidelity and blessing during his long reign. Perhaps because of Asa's poor health his son Jehoshaphat reigned as coregent with him during the last years of his life (873–870 b.c.). When Asa died, Ahab (874–853 b.c.) was reigning in Israel.

F. Nadab's evil reign in Israel (15:25–32)

The scene reverts to the Northern Kingdom and shifts back in time to the early years of Asa's reign over Judah.

1. Nadab's achievements (15:25–28)

15:25–26. Nadab was the brother of Abijah who had died in childhood (14:17). Whether Nadab was older or younger than Abijah is not known. He was the second ruler of the Jeroboam dynasty, and reigned for two years (910–909 b.c.). Nadab continued the policies begun by his father which the Lord regarded as evil. The seriousness of Jeroboam's sins can be seen in that he had caused Israel to commit sin as well as sinning himself.

15:27–28. Baasha killed Nadab at Gibbethon, a strong Philistine town southwest of Israel, between Ekron and Gezer. Evidently Israel did not capture this town (cf. 16:15–17). Perhaps the siege ended when Nadab was killed. His assassin Baasha then became king of Israel (15:33–16:7).

2. the end of Israel's first dynasty (15:29–32)

15:29–32. Baasha's destruction of the house of Jeroboam was intended to secure his own throne. It fulfilled Ahijah's prophecy of the destruction of Jeroboam's dynasty (14:14). The reason for this severe judgment is reiterated by the writer here (15:30). Specifically the worship at the golden-calf shrines is in view. This worship was continued by all of Jeroboam's successors and was frequently condemned by the writer of 1 and 2 Kings (cf. 1 Kings 15:34; 16:19, 26, 31; 22:52; etc.). The reference to the continual warfare in Baasha's day (15:32; cf. vv. 16–22) forms a bridge to the next section.

G. Baasha's evil reign in Israel (15:33–16:7)

1. Baasha's assessment (15:33–34)

15:33–34. Baasha took the throne of Israel in the third year of Asa and reigned in Tirzah the capital (cf. 14:17; 15:21) for 24 years (909–886 b.c.). His was the third-longest reign of the

Israelite kings. However, the brevity of his history as recorded here suggests that his reign was comparatively insignificant. He continued the religious policies begun by Jeroboam.

Mathews, K. A. (1998). The Historical Books. In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), Holman Concise Bible Commentary (p. 141). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Abijah and Asa (15:1–24). Abijah’s three-year reign was evil, but God sustained his throne as a “lamp” in Jerusalem for the sake of David.

Asa, however, received a good report from the sacred historian. His reign of forty-one years (910–869 b.c.) included reforms, though he did not remove the high places. During Asa’s reign, Baasha of Israel built a fortress near Jerusalem at Ramah. Asa entered a treaty with Ben-Hadad, king of Aram (Syria), who attacked Israel. Baasha left Ramah and dismantled the fortress.

Nadab of Israel (15:25–32). Nadab succeeded his father Jeroboam but reigned only two years (909–908 b.c.). He did evil in the sight of the Lord like his father. Baasha assassinated Nadab and killed the whole household of Jeroboam, fulfilling the prediction of Ahijah (see 14:10–11, 14).

Baasha and Elah (15:33–16:14). The dynasty of Baasha was founded by assassination and ended in the same manner. The prophet Jehu condemned the evil of Baasha and foretold the demise of his house. He reigned for twenty-four years (908–886 b.c.) and was succeeded by his son Elah (886–885 b.c.). In a drunken stupor he was assassinated by Zimri, a court official. Zimri executed the whole family of Baasha just as Jehu had prophesied.

Tatum, S. L. (1972). 1 Kings. In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), The Teacher’s Bible Commentary (pp. 201-202). Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers.

The Struggle Between Israel and Judah (1 Kings 15:1–16:34)

The passage—Family quarrels are always especially bitter. Abijam, son of Rehoboam of Judah, and Jeroboam fought as long as Jeroboam lived. His death was recorded in the preceding chapter and this chapter summarizes and relates the reign of Abijam to the last part of the reign of Jeroboam. Only for the sake of David did God tolerate Abijam in spite of his sins.

Asa became king of Judah upon the death of Abijam, and he was a refreshing change for the better. He made partial religious reforms. Asa made an alliance with Benhadad of Syria and gave him many of the treasures of the Temple.

In Israel, Nadab ruled briefly and was succeeded by Baasha who overthrew him, destroying the descendants of Jeroboam. Baasha of Israel and Asa of Judah continued the civil war. Baasha’s son, Elah, ruled briefly. Zimri overthrew him and destroyed all of his kin. He did not reign long, however, because Omri, his commander of the army, seized power. Zimri was killed in a fire that destroyed his palace. Omri began a new dynasty. He is most famous for his wicked son Ahab. Ahab did more wickedness than all of the kings before him. Jezebel, his wife, was a notorious Baal worshiper. Their wickedness was an abomination to God. His anger was great against their sins.

**The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (1 Kings 15). Grand Rapids, MI:
Zondervan.**

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